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A Qualitative Study of the Influence a 2009 Summer Bridge Program had on

Selected Participants

by

Amy Fellhoelter

A THESIS

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A Qualitative Study of the Influence a 2009 Summer Bridge Program had on
Selected Participants

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The purpose of this case study was to explore the transition of Summer Bridge Program participants to college, and their persistence beyond their first-year of enrollment at a large research Midwestern University. Participants' academic and social transitions were defined through their engagement, involvement, and desire to stay at the institution beyond their first-year.

The University has a summer transition program to assist first-year students with their transition from high school to college. The Summer Bridge program is a three-week, summer, residential, learning community that assists students with their academic and social transition to higher education. Six participants were interviewed in order to describe their individual experiences in the 2009 Summer Bridge program. As first-year students transition to higher education their experiences are unique; therefore, their stories need to be heard in order to understand their transition to college and what encouraged their persistence beyond their first-year.

This study added to previous research on first-year students' transitions and persistence beyond their first-year. In particular, Schlossberg's Transition Theory, Astin's Involvement Theory, research on student engagement, and Tinto's Theory of Student Departure were used to relate the findings of this study to the influence the Summer Bridge program had on selected participants. Schlossberg's Transition Theory was used

to further analyze the findings of this study. The study showed the Summer Bridge program positively influenced the transition of participants to college, and positively influenced their persistence beyond their first-year of enrollment at a large research Midwestern University.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Introduction

“The impact of the college experience on students is increased when they are more actively engaged in various aspects of college life” (Kuh, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 1991, p. 5). How do first-year students transition to higher education and become engaged in college life? A transition is any event or non-event that alters “roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions” (Schlossberg, 2008, p. 10). As first-year students transition from high school to college, they are bombarded with situations that alter their individual roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions. Transitioning from high school to college is difficult and each student copes with the transition differently (Tinto, 1993, p. 163). How do transitions influence student persistence beyond their first-year of enrollment in college? The majority of students who do not persist beyond their first-year in higher education depart during their first-year (Tinto, 1993, p. 14). “Transition assistance programs are designed to assist individuals overcome or at least cope with the many social and academic difficulties that arise in the transition to college” (Tinto, 1993, p. 163). How can summer transition programs be used to retain students and encourage their persistence beyond their first year?

This qualitative research used selected participants in a Summer Bridge program to describe their experiences. The study explained how the program influenced their transition to college and their persistence beyond their first-year of enrollment. Specifically, this study took into consideration participants’ academic and social transitions to college, and their involvement and engagement at a large research

Midwestern University. Astin's Involvement Theory, student engagement, and Tinto's Theory of Student Departure were discussed to explicate what is imperative for student persistence. Schlossberg's Transition Theory was used to further analyze the findings of this study which appears in the discussion of findings to describe participants' transitions to college.

Summer Bridge

Summer Bridge is a three-week, summer, residential, learning community that assists first-year students with their academic and social transition from high school to college. The following are characteristics of the program:

- The Summer Bridge program is open to first-year students who are enrolled at the University for the following fall semester and is sponsored by the Office of Undergraduate Studies.
- Students enroll in a three credit hour literature course—English 180—that fulfills general education requirements at the institution.
- Students attend class in the morning and then spend the afternoon/evening in study hours or participating in activities.
- Study hours occur daily for three hours and are established to encourage students to set aside daily time for studying once the program is complete; however, the study hours are essential throughout the program as the program does not allow much free time and a 16 week course in three weeks is very quick for first-year students.
- In 2009, the program admitted 60 students and they were divided into three different course sections. The small class size allows students to interact with

each other and their professor. Throughout the three weeks and the course, students learn what to expect out of a college course and the differences, academically, between high school and college.

- Besides being instrumental to the academic transition students experience from high school to college, Summer Bridge is important to the out-of-classroom and social transition of participants.
- Students live in a residence hall with a roommate and eat in the dining halls.
- The small size of the program allows students to form friendships that last beyond Summer Bridge. In particular, students begin their first semester with an already established friend group that assists in their transition to college.
- Students have the opportunity to explore the campus before the fall semester so they begin their first-year with confidence.
- Students visit campus offices and attend activities on campus that acclimate them to the University.
- Activities, such as movies, going out to dinner off-campus, and attending area events, allow students to experience off-campus activities that add to their transition to college. These activities promote involvement and engagement that ultimately lead to student persistence beyond their first-year.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this case study was to explore the transition of Summer Bridge participants to college, and their persistence beyond their first-year of enrollment at a large research Midwestern University. Participants' academic and social transitions were

defined through their engagement, involvement, and desire to remain enrolled at the University beyond their first-year.

Research Questions

The following grand tour question was studied: How did participants perceive that the 2009 Summer Bridge program influenced their persistence beyond their first-year of enrollment at the University?

1. How did participants describe the Summer Bridge program as influencing their transition from high school to college?
2. How did Summer Bridge prepare students academically and socially for their first-year of college?
3. What role did Summer Bridge have on participants' involvement throughout their first-year of college?
4. How did the Summer Bridge program influence participants' engagement throughout their first-year of college?
5. What influence did the Summer Bridge program have on participants' desire to remain enrolled at the University beyond their first-year?

Research Design

This qualitative research, case study, was conducted at a large research Midwestern University. Six participants were interviewed in order to describe their individual experiences as participants in the 2009 Summer Bridge program. Qualitative research was chosen because the researcher was interested in “understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (Merriam, 2009, p. 13). In particular, case study

qualitative research was chosen because the researcher explores a case over time “through detailed, in-depth, data collection” (Creswell, 2007, p. 73). Initially, participants were contacted via an email that explained the research and how their experiences would be used in the study. Students volunteered for the study upon replying to the contact email; however, after a low response rate, participants were also contacted via telephone. All participants signed an informed consent form agreeing to be interviewed and audio recorded. Interviews were conducted by the researcher and transcribed by the Bureau of Sociological Research at the University and a professional transcriptionist. Data were then analyzed based upon the detailed descriptions of individuals’ experiences in the Summer Bridge program and themes were developed. Themes help in “understanding the complexity of the case” (Creswell, 2007, p. 75). The findings are reported through the discussion of themes. Schlossberg’s Transition Theory was used to further analyze the findings of this study.

Definition of Terms

First-year student—A student enrolled at the large research Midwestern University for their first semester after graduating from high school.

Transition —Any event or non-event in an individual’s life that alters one’s “roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions” (Schlossberg, 2008, p. 10).

Involvement—“The quantity and quality of the physical and psychological energy that students invest in the college experience” (Astin, 1999, p. 528).

Engagement—“Engagement is the quality of effort students themselves devote to educationally purposeful activities that contribute directly to desired outcomes” (Hu & Kuh, 2002, p. 555).

Persistence—“Refers to the desire and action of a student to stay within the system of higher education from beginning year through degree completion” (Seidman, 2005, p. 7).

Situation—Individuals perceive the situations surrounding their transitions differently (Schlossberg, 2008, p. 47). Factors that are important in each situation are: trigger, timing, control, role change, duration, previous experience with a similar transition, concurrent stress, and assessment (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010, pp. 216-217).

Self—Personal and demographic characteristics and psychological resources impact individuals perception of their self (Evans et al., 2010, p. 217).

Support —“Support systems help individuals mobilize their resources by sharing ‘tasks,’ providing ‘extra supplies of money, materials, tools, skills,’ and giving guidance about way to improve coping” (Schlossberg, 2008, p. 64).

Strategies—There are three different types of strategies: “those that modify the situation, those that control the meaning of the problem, and those that aid in managing the stress in the aftermath” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 217).

“Moving in,” “Moving through,” and “Moving Out” —A series of phases in an individual’s transition process (Evans et al., 2010, pp. 216-218).

Significance

The purpose of this case study was to explore the transition of Summer Bridge participants to college, and their persistence beyond their first-year of enrollment at a large research Midwestern University. Participants’ academic and social transitions were

defined through their engagement, involvement, and desire to stay at the University beyond their first-year.

Summer transition programs “are designed to assist individuals overcome or at least cope with the many social and academic difficulties that arise in the transition to college” (Tinto, 1993, p. 162). Freshman-to-sophomore persistence is extremely important because “of student vulnerability at the beginning of college and because institutions can react quickly with interventions” (Seidman, 2005, p. 37). Previous qualitative research describes the potential academic and social transitions students face as they enter college. Previous qualitative research also shows the importance of student engagement and student involvement in regards to individuals’ persistence beyond their first-year of enrollment. However, qualitative research has not been conducted on the Summer Bridge program at the large research Midwestern University. What academic and social transitions did students enrolled at the University face? How did student engagement and student involvement influence their persistence beyond their first-year? A qualitative study on the Summer Bridge program provided a voice to student experiences. Qualitative research allows participants to “share their stories” and researchers to “hear their voices” to further knowledge (Creswell, 2007, p. 40). Therefore, a qualitative study on Summer Bridge was necessary to provide a voice to student experiences throughout the Summer Bridge program and the influence of the program beyond participants’ first-year.

Delimitations

Delimitations limit the scope of the study based on demographic characteristics of participants (McMillan, 2008, p. 112). Multiple delimitations exist in this study. This

study was only conducted at one large research Midwestern University. Six students participated in this study. Participants had to meet the following characteristics: participated in Summer Bridge 2009, their hometown was outside the metropolitan area, participants identified with the College of Arts and Sciences when they began their first semester, and they persisted beyond their first-year at the University. This provided a sample size of nine; however, there were not enough respondents for the central phenomenon of the study to be explained. Therefore, the characteristic of outside the metropolitan area was removed from the requirements to be interviewed. This provided six more potential participants. The College of Arts and Sciences was selected because, for the Summer Bridge Class of 2009, the college had the largest potential sample size.

Limitations

Limitations in a case study describe the specific phenomenon being studied “rather than predicting future behavior” (Merriam, 2009, p. 50). Several factors affected the findings of this study. The Summer Bridge Program is designed to meet the needs of students at the large research Midwestern University; therefore, the experiences students described may not be the same if the study is replicated at other institutions. Purposeful and convenient sampling was used in this study. Purposeful sampling is when “the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 125). Therefore, the experiences of these specific Summer Bridge participants who volunteered for the study may not be the experiences of the entire 2009 class.

Conclusion

As first-year students embark on their educational journey, there is a time of transition. This study examined the influence a transition program had on first-year students as they transitioned academically and socially into college life and the influence on their persistence beyond their first-year. Chapter 2 provides a review of literature pertaining to the importance of transition programs, students' academic and social involvements in their college setting, student engagement, other institutions' transition programs, and a review of the following developmental theories: Schlossberg's Transition Theory, Astin's Theory of Involvement, and Tinto's Theory of Student Departure. In particular, Schlossberg's Transition Theory was used to further analyze the findings of this study.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this case study was to explore the transition of Summer Bridge participants to college, and their persistence beyond their first-year of enrollment at a large research Midwestern University. Participants' academic and social transitions were defined through their engagement, involvement, and desire to remain enrolled at the University beyond their first-year.

Introduction

The purpose of this literature review was to provide background information on student persistence in higher education in order to show the need for summer transition programs like Summer Bridge. In particular, Astin's Involvement Theory, student engagement, and Tinto's Theory of Student Departure were discussed to explicate what is imperative for student persistence. The discussion of these topics leads to student transitions to higher education and the need for transition programs. Schlossberg's Transition Theory was covered in depth to show the uniqueness of this study after looking at other institutions' summer transition programs. Schlossberg's Transition Theory was used to further analyze the findings of this study.

The literature was found through books and online databases of peer-reviewed journals. A focus was placed on higher education research. The following search terms were used when searching for peer-reviewed journal articles: "transition programs," "first-year transition programs", "student persistence in higher education," "student involvement," "student engagement and NSSE," and "first-year student transitions to

college.” This literature review does not exhaust the literature on the aforementioned subjects; however, a foundation for this study was found.

Persistence

Persistence “refers to the desire and action of a student to stay within the system of higher education from beginning year through degree completion” (Seidman, 2005, p. 7). Freshman-to-sophomore persistence is extremely important because “of student vulnerability at the beginning of college and because institutions can react quickly with interventions” (p. 37). “The character of one’s experience in that year does much to shape subsequent persistence” (Tinto, 1993, p. 14). However, what influences student persistence beyond their first year? Astin’s Involvement Theory, student engagement, and Tinto’s Theory of Student Departure are used to describe what influences student persistence beyond their first-year.

Astin’s Theory of Involvement.

This theory of involvement is rooted in a longitudinal study of college student persistence from which Astin (1975) concluded that factors contributing to persistence were associated with students’ involvement in college life, whereas, factors contributing to departure from college were associated with students’ noninvolvement. (Milem & Berger, 1997, p. 387)

Student involvement:

refers to the quantity and quality of the physical and psychological energy that students invest in the college experience. Such involvement takes many forms, such as absorption in academic work, participation in extracurricular activities, and interaction with faculty and other institutional personnel. (Astin, 1999, p. 528)

“Astin’s conceptualization of involvement refers to behaviors and what students actually do, instead of what they think, how they feel, and the meanings they make of their

experiences” (Harper & Quaye, 2009, p. 4). Table 1 shows the five postulates associated with Astin’s theory of involvement:

Table 1

Astin’s Five Postulates and Explanations

Postulate	Explanation
1	“Involvement refers to the investment of physical and psychological energy in various objects.” An object can be anything from the student experience as a whole to a specific activity, such as an intramural volleyball game.
2	“Regardless of the object, involvement occurs along a continuum.” Some students will invest more energy than other students, and any particular student will be more involved in certain activities than others.
3	“Involvement has both quantitative and qualitative features.” A quantitative aspect of involvement would be the amount of time devoted to an activity; a qualitative component would be the seriousness with which the object was approached and the attention given it.
4	“The amount of student learning and personal development associated with any educational program is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement in that program.” Basically the more that students put into an activity, the more they will get out of it.
5	“The effectiveness of any educational policy or practice is directly related to the capacity of that policy or practice to increase student involvement.”

Source: Astin (1999, p. 519)

Astin’s theory of involvement considered “factors that facilitate development” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 31). Therefore, in order for “student learning and growth to occur, students need to actively engage in their environment, and educators need to create opportunities for in- and out-of classroom involvement” (p. 31).

Astin focused on students’ living experience as an essential out-of-classroom involvement. Living in residence halls allows students to “get involved in all aspects of campus life” (Astin, 1999, p. 523). Students who eat, sleep, and spend their waking hours

on campus have a better chance of “developing a strong identification and attachment to undergraduate life” than students who do not live residence halls (p. 523). Likewise, students who live in residence halls are “more likely to express satisfaction with their undergraduate experience, particularly in the areas of student friendships, faculty-student relations, institutional relations, and social life” (p. 525).

Faculty involvement with students is essential. “Students who interact frequently with faculty members are more likely than other students to express satisfaction with all aspects of their institutional experience, including student friendships, variety of courses, intellectual environment, and even administration of the institution” (Astin, 1999, p. 525). In fact, students who may be struggling socially with peers may turn to faculty for support (Berger & Milem, 1999, p. 658). This is especially important for first-year students as “early involvement with faculty may help some students who are struggling to find a niche on campus” (p. 658). Academic involvement is crucial to first-year students; however, academic involvement may influence individual students in different ways (Astin, 1999, p. 525). “Being academically involved is strongly related to satisfaction with all aspects of college life except friendships with other students” (p. 525). Peer relationships have the potential to suffer when students are intensely academically engaged (p. 525). This is problematic as “peer involvement appears to strengthen perceptions of institutional and social support and ultimately persistence” (Berger & Milem, 1999, p. 658). Therefore, summer transition programs are important to teach students the importance of balance between academics and peer relationships. “Early involvement in the fall semester positively predicts spring involvement and has significant indirect effects on social integration, academic integration, subsequent

institutional commitment, and persistence” (p. 659). Along with student involvement, student engagement also leads to first-year students’ persistence.

Student Engagement. “Engagement is the quality of effort students themselves devote to educationally purposeful activities that contribute directly to desired outcomes” (Hu & Kuh, 2002, p. 555). Educationally purposeful activities encompass inside and outside the classroom activities (Harper & Quaye, 2009, p. 2). “The impact of the college experience on students is increased when they are more actively engaged in various aspects of college life” (Kuh et al., 1991, p. 5).

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), as originated by George Kuh, is a quantitative survey instrument designed to “assess the effectiveness of institutional policies and practices” (as cited in Pike & Kuh, 2005, p. 188). Students are asked to “indicate the frequency in which they engage in activities that represent good educational practice and are related to positive learning outcomes” (p. 191). NSSE allows students to self-report the effects their institution has on their academic and social engagement and the amount of effort they put forth (p. 191). Institutions are then able to evaluate how their policies and practices are affecting students. Table 2 shows the five benchmarks of educational practice associated with NSSE. The educational benchmarks associated with NSSE show a defining characteristic of engagement: it is a “dual responsibility” of students and institutions (p. 6).

Student engagement leads to institutional commitment and, therefore, student persistence. However, as mentioned above, student engagement is the responsibility of students and institutions. Individual students will have different reasons for institutional commitment.

Table 2

Explanation of NSSE

Educational Practice	Description
Level of academic challenge	Working hard to meet professors' expectations, analyzing and synthesizing ideas, applying theories and course concepts to practical situations, studying and academic preparation activities, and composing papers of various length.
Active and collaborative learning	Asking questions and contributing to class discussions, making class presentations, working with peers on projects during class, collaborating with classmates outside of class to prepare assignments, participating in community-based projects as part of class activities, and discussing ideas from readings of course concepts with others outside of class.
Student-faculty interaction	Talking though career plans with professors and advisors, discussing ideas from readings are assignments with faculty outside of class, collaborating with faculty on committees and assorted campus activities, and working on research projects with professors.
Enriching educational experiences	Interacting across difference, taking foreign language courses, completing a culminating senior-year experience (e.g., a senior thesis), and participating in a range of value-added activities, including student organizations and campus events, community service or volunteer work, study abroad programs, internships, faculty-supervised independent study experiences, and learning communities.
Supportive campus environment	Students' perceptions of the support needed to succeed academically, thrive socially, and cope with non-academic matters, as well as the self-reported quality of relationships with other students, faculty, administrators, and staff at the institution.

Source: Harper and Quaye (2009, p. 5)

Institutional commitment may arise in a number of different ways. It may arise before entry as a result of the impact of family traditions upon college choice (e.g., the father or mother having attended the same institution), from family and/or peer pressure, or from the perception that graduation from a specific institution enhances one's chances for a successful occupational career (e.g., graduating from one of the elite colleges). (Seidman, 2005, pp. 43-44)

Students must make individual goal commitment in order to make institutional commitment and persist beyond their first year. "Goal commitment refers to a person's

commitment to personal, educational, and occupational goals. It specifies the person's willingness to work toward the attainment of those goals" (Seidman, 2005, p. 43).

Given sufficiently high goal commitment, individuals may decide to "stick it out" even in unsatisfactory circumstances because the perceived benefits of obtaining a college degree are so dependent upon obtaining that degree from a particular college. Conversely, the absence of prior commitment may lead individuals to withdraw at the first sign of difficulty. In those situations, high goal commitment may lead to transfer whereas low commitment may result in permanent withdrawal from all forms of higher education. (Seidman, 2005, p. 44)

Institutions must provide purposeful activities, academic and social, that encourage student engagement. Students' engagement occurs through "formal and informal interactions with other members of the institution, faculty, staff, and students" (Tinto, 1993, p. 50). Insufficient formal and informal contact with faculty, staff, and peers has the potential to cause student disengagement (p. 56). Academic engagement occurs in environments where students and faculty interact over a particular subject (Stevenson, Buchanan, & Sharpe, 2006-2007, p. 144). Academic disengagement is probable in environments that do not engage students in learning (Tinto, 1993, p. 119). Large-lecture halls are difficult to engage students in class discussions and students may find it difficult to ask questions (p. 119). Therefore, faculty/staff must work to engage students in "classroom discussion, collaborative learning experiences, student organizations, and contact with faculty" (Seidman, 2005, p. 136).

However, there are some things an institution can do to influence how individual students perceive their school, particularly how students think about the utility of their studies—how what they are learning can be used in their lives beyond the classroom—and the extent to which their school values intellectual activity and promotes high-quality relations between various groups on campus. (Hu & Kuh, 2002, p. 570)

Academic preparedness increases student engagement which in turn effects the length of time (persistence) students are in college (Hu & Kuh, 2002, p. 569). Academic

preparedness is especially important as students enter their first-year; therefore, transition programs are imperative to prepare students academically to be engaged in the classroom and promote institutional commitment.

Social engagement is also imperative in student engagement and institutional commitment. Student organizations that are educationally purposeful are one way to encourage social engagement (Harper & Quaye, 2009, p. 4). Student organizations allow students to:

assume responsibilities in their groups and know that others depend on them for service, guidance, and follow-through on important initiatives. Thus, they feel committed to their respective organizations and the institution at large, and are less likely than are disengaged students to leave. (p. 4)

Student organizations allow students to meet peers who are interested in the same activities. “Students who had friends with whom they engaged in common activities were more likely to persist to the second year of college” (Swenson Goguen, Hiester, & Nordstrom, 2010-2011, p. 332). The following quotation ties together academic and social engagement in regards to institutional commitment and the influence on persistence:

Other things being equal, the closer one is to the mainstream of academic and social life of the college, the more likely is one to perceive oneself as being congruent with the institution generally. That perception impacts in turn one’s institutional commitment. Both act to enhance the likelihood of persistence. (Tinto, 1993, p. 60)

After discussing student involvement and student engagement, the difference between the two subjects is important to note. “Although conceptually similar, there is a key qualitative difference between involvement and engagement: It is entirely possible to be involved in something without being engaged” (Harper & Quaye, 2009, p. 5). For example, a student may be academically involved in the classroom as they attend

everyday; however, if they do not participate in classroom discussions or even take notes, they may not be academically engaged (p. 5). Therefore, assessing “the time and energy that the student devotes to each activity” is important (Astin, 1999, p. 527).

Student engagement is imperative to student persistence beyond their first-year of enrollment in college. Academic and social engagement, along with individual goal commitment and institutional commitment, are important as institutions develop purposeful activities inside and outside of class. However, in the study of persistence, understanding why students would choose not to persist beyond their first-year is important.

Tinto’s Theory of Student Departure. Like Astin’s theory of student involvement, Tinto’s theory of student departure supports “the critical role of student involvement in positive educational outcomes for college students. Moreover, he emphasized the need to better understand the relationship between student involvement in learning and the impact that involvement has on student persistence” (Milem & Berger, 1997, p. 387). Tinto’s theory takes into consideration the importance of student’s integration into academic and social systems of an institution (p. 388). Although Tinto focused on students’ attrition from higher education, his work has been instrumental in the process of persistence; in particular, Tinto focused on the first-year of a student’s experience as this year has the tendency to shape subsequent years (Tinto, 1993, p. 14). The following quotation shows the foundation behind Tinto’s theoretical model of attrition and persistence:

Tinto (1973) produced a theoretical model of attrition and persistence that include the following components: a) pre-entry attributes (prior schooling and family background); b) goals/commitment (student aspirations and institutional goals); c) institutional experiences (academics, faculty interaction, co-curricular

involvement, and peer group interaction; d) integration (academic and social); and f) outcome (departure decision—graduate, transfer, dropout). (Metz, 2004, p. 192)

When students begin their first-year, they enter an institution with preconceived personal, family, and academic characteristics along with preconceived intentions on college attendance and personal goals (Tinto, 1993, pp. 34-81). Involvement occurs when students transition into academic and social systems of an institution; however, in order for this to happen, pre-entry attributes must become second nature and students strive to but “have not yet adopted norms and behaviors from their new environment” (Milem & Berger, 1997, p. 388). Once students have separated themselves from their pre-entry attributes and transitioned into their academic and social systems, they become incorporated with their institution. “Incorporation happens when students adapt to and adopt the prevailing norms and behavior patterns of their college or university community” (p. 388).

Although student involvement and engagement is a dual responsibility of students and institutions, “college completion requires some effort” and that effort is up to the student (Tinto, 1993, p. 42).

It is equally clear that not all entering students possess that commitment. There are among any cohort of entering students some who simply are unable or unwilling to commit themselves to the task of college completion and expend the level of effort required to complete a degree program. Their subsequent departure, whether in the form of academic dismissal or voluntary withdrawal, is less a reflection of the lack of ability or even of intention than it is of an inability or unwillingness to apply their talents to the attainment of desired goals. (p. 42)

Therefore, students must have the desire to attend college and embark on the transition to higher education.

At the very outset, persistence in college requires individuals to adjust, both socially and intellectually, to the new and sometimes quite strange world of the

college. Most persons, even the most able and socially mature, experience some difficulty in making that adjustment. (p. 45)

Tinto's theory of student departure provided an explanation as to why students do not persist beyond their first-year. However, the theory also shows the importance of students' commitment to attend college before they feel incorporated and involved in an institution. Before incorporation or involvement can occur, students must transition to their new environment. Schlossberg's Transition Theory was used to further analyze the findings of this study.

Schlossberg's Transition Theory

College students, whether traditionally or nontraditionally aged, face many changes that can have short- and long-term effects on their lives. Nancy Schlossberg's transition theory provides insights into factors related to the transition, the individual, and the environment that are likely to determine the degree of impact a given transition will have at a particular time. (Evans et al., 2010, p. 212)

“A transition can be said to occur if an even or non-event results in a change in assumptions about oneself and the world and thus requires a corresponding change in one's behavior and relationships” (Schlossberg, 1981, p. 5). There are three different types of transitions: anticipated transitions, unanticipated transitions, and nonevents. Anticipated transitions “occur predictably,” unanticipated transitions are “not predictable or scheduled,” and nonevents “are expected to occur but do not” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 215). The transitions experienced by the students in Summer Bridge were anticipated transitions. The students had graduated from high school and were taking the next step into higher education. The students had also made the decision to attend the large research Midwestern University; therefore, they anticipated the changes that were about to happen in their lives.

Although the participants in this study have the transition of graduating from high school and becoming a first-year student in common, the participants did not experience the transition the same way.

Even though we expect to experience certain transitions in our lives, we still have difficulty since any change, even elected, alters ones roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions. In addition, the fact that these transitions are common doesn't mean that everyone experiences them in the same way. (Schlossberg, 2008, p. 22)

“Every day people face transitions in their lives that are as taxing psychologically as marathons are physically. And they do this with little or no training or preparation” (p. 3).

Although transitions are inevitable, they do provide “opportunities for growth and development” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 213). However, “decline is also a possible outcome, and many transitions may be viewed with ambivalence by the individuals experiencing them” (p. 216). Transitions have an influence on individuals and are “determined by the degree to which a transition alters one’s daily life” (p. 215). An individual experiences a series of phases associated with transitions. Schlossberg identifies these phases as “moving in,” “moving through,” and “moving out” (2008, p. 218). In this study, the “moving in” phase is associated with participants beginning the Summer Bridge program, “moving through” encompasses the Summer Bridge program and the participants first-year of college, and “moving-out” is defined by participants attending the University beyond their first-year.

The Four S's.

Transitions are part and parcel of adult life. And so is the discomfort they can cause. They can disrupt your capacity to love, work, and play. But transitions needn't be overwhelming. You can master your own transitions by understanding the transition process, recognizing and harnessing your own considerable coping strengths and skills, and selectively adding new ones. (Schlossberg, 2008, p. 5)

Schlossberg suggested four factors (Schlossberg's 4's) that are imperative for individuals to consider when coping with a transition: situation, self, support, and strategies (Evans et al., 2010, p. 216).

Situation. Individuals perceive the situations surrounding their transitions differently (Schlossberg, 2008, p. 47). Table 3 shows the factors Schlossberg suggested individuals consider when evaluating and coping with a transition along with a description of each factor:

Table 3

Schlossberg's Explanation of Situation

Factor	Description
Trigger	What precipitated the transition?
Timing	Is the transition considered "on time" or "off time" in terms of one's social clock, and is the transition viewed as happening at a "good" or "bad" time?
Control	What does the individual perceive as being within his or her control (for example, the transition itself, his or her reaction to it)?
Role change	Is a role change involved, and if so, is it viewed as a gain or a loss?
Duration	Is it seen as permanent, temporary, or uncertain?
Previous experience with a similar transition	How effectively did one cope, and what are implications for the current transition?
Concurrent stress	Are multiple sources of stress present?
Assessment	Who or what is seen as responsible for the transition, and how is the individual's behavior affected by this perception?

Source: Evans et al. (2010, pp. 216-217)

Self. Individuals must take their self into consideration when coping with a transition. Schlossberg suggested two categories, personal and demographic

characteristics and psychological resources, as factors associated with an individual (Evans et al, 2010, p. 217).

Personal and demographic characteristics are described as affecting how an individual views life. This category includes socioeconomic status, gender, age (emphasizing psychological, social, and functional age over chronological), and stage of life, state of health, and ethnicity/culture. Psychological resources, aids to coping, include ego development; outlook, in particular optimism and self-efficacy; commitment and values; and spirituality and resiliency. (p. 217)

Support. “Support systems help individuals mobilize their resources by sharing ‘tasks,’ providing ‘extra supplies of money, materials, tools, skills,’ and giving guidance about way to improve coping” (Schlossberg, 2008, p. 64). Four types of support systems are important to individuals: intimate relationships, family units, networks of friends, and institutions and communities (Evans et al., 2010, p. 217). Schlossberg takes into consideration three functions of support as described by psychologists Robert Kahn and Toni Antonucci (1980), as shown in Table 4:

Table 4

Functions of Support

Function	Description
Affection	an expression that someone respects, likes, or loves you
Affirmation	an expression that someone agrees that what you have done is appropriate and understandable
Assistance or aid	an expression that someone will actually supply you with chicken soup, information, time, or whatever tangible help is necessary to get you over the crisis

Source: Schlossberg (2008, p. 64)

Strategy. Individuals must consider strategies when coping with a transition.

There are three different types of strategies: “those that modify the situation, those that control the meaning of the problem, and those that aid in managing the stress in the aftermath” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 217). Also incorporated under strategies are four coping modes: “information seeking, direct action, inhibition of action, and intrapsychic behavior” (p. 217). Individuals may use multiple strategies and coping modes when experiencing a transition (p. 217).

(Schlossberg’s) Conclusion. “Significant transitions, such as entering college, graduating from college, addressing relationship issues, and facing career decisions, can all be better understood and approached when using this model” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 235). Therefore, this model was used in the discussion of 2009 Summer Bridge participants’ transitions to college. As individuals’ experience a transition uniquely, the need for transition programs is important.

The Need for Transition Programs

The following quotation showed the importance of academic and social involvement to student engagement, and thereby student persistence, beyond students’ first-year of college.

Quite simply, the more students are academically and socially involved, the more likely they are to persist and graduate. This is especially true during the first year of university study when student membership is so tenuous yet so critical to subsequent learning and persistence. Involvement during that year serves as the foundation upon which subsequent affiliations and engagements are built. (Seidman, 2005, p. 323)

However, before students become academically and socially involved, they must transition to college. This is where summer transition programs are imperative as

“participation in summer transition program(s) enhances both the academic and social transition to college” (Wolf-Wendel, Tuttle, & Keller-Wolff, 1999, p. 7).

Transitioning from high school to college is difficult and each student copes with the transition differently (Tinto, 1993, p. 163). Many factors affect students’ transitions including: separation from the past – high school association and peer groups, separation from family, and differences in social and academic demands (p. 46). “Though past performance in high school may help prepare new students for college, the preparation is rarely perfect, the transition to college rarely without a period of sometimes quite difficult adjustment” (p. 46). Summer transition programs assist students through this potential difficult transition. Wolf-Wendel et al. (1999) explained: “For example, through a summer transition program, new students may learn their way around campus, meet new friends, register for fall classes, begin to develop relationships with faculty, and become acclimated to college coursework by enrolling in summer classes” (p. 8). Transition programs at other institutions were reviewed to show the importance of the programs to students’ transitions, and to provide an explanation into the uniqueness of the Summer Bridge program.

Transition Programs at Other Institutions

“Transition assistance programs are designed to assist individuals overcome or at least cope with the many social and academic difficulties that arise in the transition to college. These typically stress academic, social, and/or residential issues” (Tinto, 1993, p. 163). The aforementioned quotation shows the outcome of summer transition programs. Institutions’ summer transition programs vary in regards to name, population, and

mission; however, the outcome of helping students transition to college from high school is similar.

For some students, transition assistance programs emphasize the academic component of college life. These commonly stress improving study skills (e.g., writing and reading skills), study habits (e.g., learning to apportion one's time to meet academic deadlines), academic preparation (e.g., high school mathematics), the use of libraries and other institutional resources, and the writing of college-level reports and term papers. . . . But not all transition programs are entirely or largely academic in character. Transition programs may also concentrate on the social adjustments new students are required to make in entering college. . . . Whatever the content, the goals of these programs are the same, namely to help young people acquire the social skills and adopt the social norms of behavior appropriate to membership in the diverse adult communities of the college. (pp. 163-165)

Three summer transition programs at the Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, the University of Virginia, and the University of Kansas will be discussed to show the uniqueness and outcome of specific programs.

A quantitative research article by Chism, Baker, Hansen, and Williams (2008), portrayed three unique programs at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) used to assist first-year students with their transition to college: First-Year Seminars, Summer Academy Bridge Program, and Themed Learning Communities (p. 8). Although the article described all three programs, this review focused on the Summer Academy Bridge Program and the article's quantitative findings. IUPUI enrolled 2,600 incoming freshmen per year with 96% being residents of the state of Indiana and 76% commuting to the institution (p. 9).

Most IUPUI entering students need help in making a successful transition to college. Too few enroll to succeed. Most struggle with finances, and many have significant personal obligations. They also commute to campus, so it is often easier for them to stay connected to their high school friends and much more difficult for them to feel connected to IUPUI or their new classmates. They become a 'parking lot' student, who drive to campus, talk to no one, eat their lunches in their cars, and drive home. (p. 9)

The Summer Academy Bridge Program is two weeks long and held in August before fall classes begin (Chism et al., 2008, p. 10). “Students are divided into groups of twenty-five based on their interest in pursuing a particular major or in exploring various major options” (p. 10). Participants in the program make social and academic connections with “faculty, advisors, student mentors and librarians” (p. 10). Each section is “taught by an instructional team which includes a faculty member as the leader, an academic advisor, a student mentor, and a librarian” (p. 11). Students have the opportunity to meet other incoming freshmen, become acquainted with campus, and transition to the academic world of college (p. 10). The program has seen success.

Bridge students in general performed significantly better academically (fall semester cumulative grade point average) compared to non-participants . . . students had an adjusted fall grade point average of 2.67, compared to an adjusted fall grade point average of 2.47 for non-participants. (p. 12)

“Results also suggest that the Summer Academy Bridge students were retained at a significantly higher level compared to non-participants; they had an adjusted one-year retention rate of 73% compared to an adjusted one-year retention rate of 65% for non-participants” (p. 13).

A quantitative research article by Simmons (1994), depicted a summer transition program at the University of Virginia. The program focused on at-risk minority students.

According to Lang and Ford (1988):

Students who enter college with at-risk credentials—low SAT scores, low high school grades, and poor computational and writing skills—are inclined to drop out in larger numbers unless they participate in precollege programs that help ameliorate deficiencies and increase understanding of the academic culture. (as cited in Simmons, 1994, p. 42)

The Summer Transition Program occurs six-weeks during the summer before students begin their freshman year at the institution (Simmons, 1994, p. 43). Fifty first-year

students with “lower standardized test scores, poor writing, or poor mathematics skills” are invited to participate in the program by admission staff (p. 43). “For these students, enrollment as a freshman at the university is contingent on participating in and successfully completing the STP [Summer Transition Program]” (p. 43). Participants complete diagnostic tests that place them in levels for writing, mathematics, and reasoning courses (p. 43). “For example, a student with strong writing skills but weak mathematics skills would be placed in the highest level writing course and the lowest level writing course offered by STP” (pp. 43-44). Faculty at the institution instruct the students, and “students attend daily lectures and receive regular homework assignments” (p. 44). Students live in the residence halls and receive extra assistance at night by faculty and graduate assistants as they work to help them transition academically to the institution.

Daily tutorials and study groups are conducted by faculty and graduate assistants to help students develop study skills and to gain additional practice. Students having difficulties are given help by tutors each evening; many of those activities occurring in the dormitories. Faculty advisors, graduate students, and administrators also live in the residences with staff, encouraging informal advising and tutorial sessions. (p. 44)

The program proved to be beneficial to students. “Most successful STP students attributed their academic success to the head start that they had received in the summer. Those students who performed poorly said the program helped, but they didn’t study hard enough in the fall” (Simmons, 1994, p. 44).

A mixed-methods research article by Wolf-Wendel et al., (1999), described a summer transition program at the University of Kansas (KU). The program initially began to “address retention issues brought about by the institution’s open admission policy” (p. 7). Due to an increase in attrition, KU focused “attention on the academic

experiences and retention of undergraduate students, particularly freshmen and sophomores” (pp. 9-10). The following are characteristics of the program: residential program, students work towards five academic credits, work with academic advisors, and “participate in a recreational challenge course, a community service project, have a dinner with academic deans and faculty, and other residence-hall based activities” (pp. 11-12). The program is offered twice during the summer months (p. 11). A study was conducted that compared members of the program to students who did not participate in the program. Students who participated in the transition program were more likely to re-enroll for the spring semester at the institution and had a higher level of self-efficacy (p. 15). A focus group was held and students felt the program eased their transition to college through the following aspects:

- (a) academic transition (showing students what college is like academically), (b) social transition (helping them to make friends), (c) transition to adulthood (learning how to be responsible in terms of money, etc.), and (d) logistical transition (learning campus and its resources). (p. 22-23)

The study found the program did not “have a positive effect on students’ retention and grade point average compared to a matched control group. These findings are disappointing because the main goal of the program is to increase retention and academic achievement” (pp. 26-27). Although the quantitative data did not represent the findings as hoped, the qualitative data and experiences of students were encouraging (pp. 27-28).

The above programs have individual characteristics that are essential to their institution. However, the mission of these programs – to assist first-year students in their transition to college and encourage their persistence beyond their first-year – is similar. The studies conducted by these institutions were quantitative and mixed methods research; therefore, this qualitative study is unique as student experiences during Summer

Bridge were used to show the influence the program had on students' transitions to college and their persistence beyond their first-year of enrollment in college. This study is also unique as Schlossberg's Transition Theory was used to further analyze the findings of this study.

Conclusion

This chapter provided background information on student persistence, involvement, and engagement while showing the difficulties of student transitions to higher education and how summer transition program can assist students. From the information provided in this literature review, a study on the Summer Bridge program will show the influence the program had on students' transitions to college and their persistence beyond their first-year of enrollment. Chapter 3 provides an in-depth look into the methodology of this study and the interviews used to describe participants in the 2009 Summer Bridge program's experiences.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this case study was to explore the transition of Summer Bridge participants to college, and their persistence beyond their first-year of enrollment at a large research Midwestern University. Participants' academic and social transitions were defined through their engagement, involvement, and desire to remain enrolled at the University beyond their first-year.

Research Questions

The following grand tour question was studied: How did participants perceive that the 2009 Summer Bridge program influenced their persistence beyond their first-year of enrollment at the University?

1. How did participants describe the Summer Bridge program as influencing their transition from high school to college?
2. How did Summer Bridge prepare students academically and socially for their first-year of college?
3. What role did Summer Bridge have on participants' involvement throughout their first-year of college?
4. How did the Summer Bridge program influence participants' engagement throughout their first-year of college?
5. What influence did the Summer Bridge program have on participants' desire to remain enrolled at the University beyond their first-year?

Research Design

Although research has been conducted on summer transition programs, as noted in Chapter 2, each institution's program is unique. Qualitative research was chosen for this study because the researcher was interested in "understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (Merriam, 2009, p. 13). Qualitative research empowers research participants to tell their stories and allow their voices to be heard (Creswell, 2007, p. 40). As first-year students transition to higher education their experiences are unique; therefore, their stories need to be heard in order to understand their transition to college and what encouraged their persistence beyond their first-year. Qualitative research was also important in this study as the research kept "a focus on learning the meaning that the participants hold about the problem or issues, not the meaning that the researchers bring to the research or the writers from the literature" (Creswell, 2007, p. 39). One-on-one interviews with participants allowed them to express meaning to their individual transition and experience in the Summer Bridge program outside of already conducted and published research. One-on-one interviews were also more effective than surveys as participants had an opportunity to reflect on their experience, and interviews allowed for expansion questions to be asked in order to understand their transition.

A case study qualitative research method was used in this study as case studies provide a "rich and holistic account of a phenomenon" (Merriam, 2009, p. 51). Case study research allows an issue to be explained within "a bounded system (i.e., a setting, a context)" (Creswell, 2007, p. 73). A case study approach was effective in this study as a rich and holistic account of the 2009 Summer Bridge program was provided.

Participants' experiences were described in a rich, holistic way in order to fully understand their transition to college. The study was bounded in setting and context. The setting was one large research Midwestern University. The context was a specific program at the institution at a specific time – the case of the Summer Bridge class of 2009 and their first-year at the institution.

Institutional Review Board Approval

Before beginning this study, the Consortium for IRB Training Initiative in Human Subjects Protections (CITI), was completed in order to be certified for human subjects research. Approval from the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) was sought and received prior to the beginning of this study (Appendix A). After participants agreed to be interviewed, they were emailed an informed consent form that was then reviewed and signed prior to the interview (Appendix E). Initially, four participants responded to the email and agreed to interviews before further IRB approval was needed to contact students via telephone (Appendix B). After no response, IRB approval was necessary to remove the criterion "outside of the metropolitan area" from the participant requirements (Appendix C) in order to describe more students' experiences. Participant information was kept confidential and an alias was given to each student. Participants were informed the information they provided would be used to write a master's thesis, and potentially published in an educational journal or presented at an educational conference. Names, email addresses, and phone numbers of participants were provided by the Summer Bridge Program Coordinator through the Office of Undergraduate Studies.

Research Site

This study was conducted at a large research Midwestern University. The institution is a research extensive, four-year institution with a total enrollment of 24,610 in the fall of 2010 (Fact Book, 2010, p. 41). Fall semester 2010, the undergraduate population was 19,383 (p. 40).

In the year 2009 (the program year studied), the total enrollment was 24,100 with the undergraduate enrollment listed as 18,955 in the fall (Fact Book, 2009, p. 41). The 2009 freshmen class enrollment was 4,903 (p. 49). The institution offers over 150 undergraduate majors from ten different colleges.

All interviews were conducted at a large research Midwestern University. Participants were able to choose between three locations at the institution, including the student union, the multicultural center, and a residence hall, for their interview. These locations were chosen because the researcher was able to reserve quiet, conference rooms in these locations. Quiet, conference rooms were needed in order for the interviews to be audio recorded without interruption. All participants chose the institution's student union as the agreed upon location to conduct their interview.

Participants

Participants were selected for this study using purposeful and convenience sampling. Purposeful sampling allows the researcher to select "individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study" (Creswell, 2007, p. 125). Convenience sampling allows the researcher to choose "sites or individuals from which the researcher can access and easily collect data" (p. 126). The researcher chose students who had participated in

Summer Bridge 2009 and had persisted beyond their first year at the institution. Initially the following criteria were considered while recruiting participants for the study: hometown outside the metropolitan area, enrolled in the College of Arts and Sciences upon beginning their college career at the institution, and between the ages of 19-21. However, after a low response rate from potential participants, the criteria “hometown outside the metropolitan area” was removed. Participants’ names and email addresses were provided by the Summer Bridge Coordinator.

The first purposeful sample (with the criteria “hometown outside the metropolitan area”) provided nine potential participants. A recruitment email (Appendix G) was sent to the nine participants and four responded. Participants that responded received a follow-up email stating the date, time, and location of their interview (Appendix I). An informed consent form (Appendix E) was attached to the email so that the interviewees had the opportunity to review the form prior to the interview. After two weeks, the recruitment email was resent to the five remaining participants. One participant did respond to the second recruitment email; however, they never responded to an email stating when/where they would like to meet. IRB approval was then sought after to gain telephone numbers for the remaining participants (Appendix B). Telephone messages were left; however, some participants did not have a local phone number listed and the message was left on their permanent address telephone (Appendix L).

No additional participants were gained by calling the students; therefore, IRB approval was sought to remove the criteria of “outside the metropolitan area” in the study (Appendix F). This purposeful sample provided five additional participants. A recruitment email with the new criteria (Appendix H) was emailed and one participant

responded. Telephone calls were made and one additional participant agreed to participate in the study. The original follow-up email was sent to both participants and an informed consent form with the new criteria (Appendix F) was emailed. At the conclusion of the process, six students agreed to participate in the study. Interviews were held in quiet, agreed upon locations that allowed the interviews to be audio recorded. There were no limitations based on race, gender, sexual orientation, or nationality.

Participants were given an alias in this study in order to keep their identities confidential. Table 5 shows the interview number and the participants' alias.

Table 5

Participants

Interview	Alias
1	Brad
2	Joey
3	Emily
4	Luke
5	Tyler
6	Paige

The participants were interviewed in their second-year so that the grand tour question regarding their transition to college and their persistence beyond the first-year could be addressed. Also, their experience in the Summer Bridge program and their transition to college would be more prevalent in their recent past than if the participants were in their third or fourth year at the institution.

Data Collection

Before collecting data, the researcher obtained IRB approval and permission from the Dean of Undergraduate Studies (Appendix D) to conduct the research. All participants were emailed the informed consent form before the interview to review, and at the beginning of each interview the informed consent form was reviewed with participants. The participants all came with the informed consent form signed; however, the informed consent form was still reviewed and the researcher reassured participants they had the opportunity to discontinue the interview at any time. The interviews were held in quiet locations in the student union at the large research Midwestern University. Quiet locations were necessary so the interviewees were not distracted and so the interviews could be audio recorded. Interviews lasted no longer than 45 minutes.

The questions asked throughout the interviews were instrumental in answering the grand tour question and subquestions: How did participants perceive that the 2009 Summer Bridge program influenced their persistence beyond their first-year of enrollment at the University? Participants answered 12 questions and subquestions throughout the duration of the interview. The interview protocol is located in Appendix K. The questions were written to determine how the Summer Bridge program influenced participants' transitions to college and their persistence beyond their first-year of enrollment. A semi-structured interview was held with each participant. Since the interview was semi-structured, the researcher was able to restructure the order of the questions or ask follow up questions if necessary in each interview (Merriam, 2009, p. 90). For example, if the student would answer a question that touched on their involvement with student organizations, the researcher would follow up with the question

that explained their involvement at the University following the Summer Bridge program. Following the completion of the predetermined questions, the researcher would ask participants if they had anything that they would like to add to their interview. All interviews were audio recorded using a digital recorder and transcribed verbatim by the Bureau of Sociological Research at the institution and by a professional transcriptionist.

Data Analysis

Professional transcriptionists transcribed the interview verbatim. Initially, each transcript was read thoroughly for content and overall meaning. The transcripts were then read a second time to provide familiarity. Transcripts were read for a third time and memos were made in the margins to begin developing categories of in vivo codes or clusters of “exact words used by participants” (Creswell, 2007, p. 150-153). Word documents were then created for each transcript pulling out the in vivo codes before categories were then “winnowed” (or reduced) into five overall themes (p. 152). The themes that emerged were: Everything was Uncertain, Everything was New, Involved in My Environment, and A Good Fit. When developing the themes, categorical aggregation was used so that the researcher could seek a “collection of instances from the data, hoping that the issue-relevant meanings will emerge” (p. 163). After establishing the themes, separate word documents for each theme were developed and participant quotations were copied and pasted into the relevant document. For each theme, sub-themes were developed by thoroughly reading each quotation and discovering shared experiences. Color-coded font was used to distinguish between the participants. Data were analyzed and presented by theme in Chapter 4.

Researcher Reflexivity

The researcher conducted all six interviews; therefore understanding the researcher's background with Summer Bridge is imperative. The researcher was the Assistant Coordinator for Summer Bridge 2010. Therefore, the recruitment email specified the researcher's connection with the Summer Bridge program. The participant sample included one of the researcher's student staff members from Summer Bridge 2010. Throughout the participants' interview, the student staff member mentioned "during our Summer Bridge." The researcher's association with Summer Bridge provided a connection between the participants and the researcher based upon involvement with the program; however, the researcher was not associated with Summer Bridge 2009.

Verification Strategies

"Regardless of the type of research, validity and reliability are concerns that can be approached through careful attention to a study's conceptualization and the way in which the data are collected, analyzed, and interpreted, and the way in which the findings are presented" (Merriam, 2009, p. 210). Validation is needed in qualitative research in order to "assess the 'accuracy' of the findings, as best described by the researcher and the participants" (Creswell, 2007, pp. 206-207).

Member checking was used in this study in order to solicit the participants' view of the credibility of the research (Creswell, 2007, p. 208). Transcriptions were emailed to the participants so that they could make corrections or approve if their interview was correct. Two participants responded with corrections and four participants did not respond.

“Rich, thick description allows readers to make decisions regarding transferability because the writer describes in detail the participants or setting under study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 209). Participants’ words provided rich, thick description that was used in the data analysis and findings section in Chapter 5. This further provided validity because readers have the opportunity to decide if the findings of this study are applicable to their first-year transition program.

“Reliability can be enhanced if the researcher obtains detailed fieldnotes by employing a good-quality tape for recording to indicate the trivial, but often crucial, pauses and overlaps” (Creswell, 2007, p. 209). “Reliability refers to the extent in which research findings can be replicated” (Merriam, 2009, p. 220). Interviews were audio recorded with a digital recorder that captured pauses and overlaps by the participants. The interviews were transcribed verbatim by professional transcriptionists. Four interviews were transcribed at the Bureau of Sociological Research at the institution and two were transcribed by a professional transcriptionist.

Conclusion

This chapter described the methodology of this study. Before data collection began, approval was sought from IRB. Semi-structured interviews were used to answer the grand tour and research questions of this study. Member checking and rich, thick description were used in the data analysis and findings portion of this study in order to prove reliability. The data analysis led to the following themes that will be discussed in Chapter 4: Everything was Changing, Everything was New, Involved in My Environment, I am an Individual, and A Good Fit

Chapter 4

Findings

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this case study was to explore the transition of Summer Bridge participants to college, and their persistence beyond their first-year of enrollment at a large research Midwestern University. Participants' academic and social transitions were defined through their engagement, involvement, and desire to remain enrolled at the University beyond their first-year.

Description of Participants

Six students participated in this study and met the following criteria: between the ages of 19-21, enrolled in the College of Arts and Sciences upon entering the Summer Bridge program, and persisted beyond their first-year of enrollment at the University. Fourteen emails or phone calls were made with six responses to participate in the study. Each individual had past experiences that influenced their perception of the academic and social environment of college. As they moved through the Summer Bridge program, each student was influenced by the program uniquely. Therefore, this chapter will examine their perceptions of beginning college, attending Summer Bridge, and persisting beyond their first-year of enrollment at the University.

Each participant was provided with an alias to keep their identities confidential. Four males and two females participated in the study. Following is a description of each participant.

Brad is an out-of-state student who was ready to begin his college career in order to “try something new.” Brad attended a medium sized high school with approximately

1,000 enrolled students. College was going to be a fresh start for Brad and he was excited to begin college classes. After completing the English 180 course he was nervous; however, because of Summer Bridge, he knew he was ready to begin. Brad has persisted beyond his first-year at the University and attributes credit to Summer Bridge for solidifying friends.

Joey was excited to begin college and was “burnt out” from high school. He attended a small high school with approximately 275 enrolled students. Joey referred to Summer Bridge as the completion of his bridge to college. He had taken AP classes in high school and felt he already had an introduction to campus; however, Summer Bridge completed the bridge because he knew campus and he made friends prior to his first-semester beginning. Joey persisted beyond his first-year at the University because Summer Bridge reinforced friendships and allowed him to get a “little bit of feel” for college.

Emily was from a small town and attended a small high school that had fewer than 100 enrolled students. She was apprehensive about starting college because she did not know what to expect from classes; however, she knew Summer Bridge would help her develop friendships. Summer Bridge helped her transition to college academically and socially. Emily persisted beyond her first-year at the University because Summer Bridge helped her adjust to her new environment prior to the beginning of her first semester. Her academic achievements enhanced her desire to stay.

Luke was nervous to begin his first semester of college; however, he knew that if he worked hard he would succeed. He attended a large high school with approximately 2,000 enrolled students. Summer Bridge allowed him to feel like the “cool kid on

campus” because he knew other students before the school year began. Summer Bridge showed him the importance of studying and gave him a group of friends; therefore, he persisted beyond his first-year.

Tyler was anxious about being away from his parents and felt unprepared academically compared to other Summer Bridge students. However, at the end of Summer Bridge, Tyler was confident about knowing campus and starting classes. He attended a medium sized high school with approximately 1,200 enrolled students. His grade point average in college is higher than his high school grade point average. Tyler made new friends during Summer Bridge; however, once the semester started, he became better friends with students in his residence hall. Tyler’s academic success throughout Summer Bridge influenced his decision to remain at the University beyond his first-year.

Paige entered the program from a college prep high school with approximately 250 enrolled students, and felt very prepared academically to begin college. Paige felt the transition to college was a “little weird” because she was moving to a “totally different place.” Summer Bridge encouraged her confidence in finding her way around campus and gave her a friendship base. Paige persisted beyond her first year at the University, and is committed because of the institution’s academic programs.

Research Questions

The following grand tour question was studied: How did participants perceive that the 2009 Summer Bridge program influenced their persistence beyond their first-year of enrollment at the University?

1. How did participants describe the Summer Bridge program as influencing their transition from high school to college?

2. How did Summer Bridge prepare students academically and socially for their first-year of college?
3. What role did Summer Bridge have on participants' involvement throughout their first-year of college?
4. How did the Summer Bridge program influence participants' engagement throughout their first-year of college?
5. What influence did the Summer Bridge program have on participants' desire to remain enrolled at the University beyond their first-year?

Overview of Themes and Subthemes

This chapter provides the themes and subthemes that have emerged from participants' view on their transition to college and how Summer Bridge influenced their persistence beyond their first-year. Five themes and 11 subthemes are shown in Table 6. "Everything was Uncertain" theme provided details about Summer Bridge's influence on the participants' transitions to college. The theme is broken down into the following subthemes: 1) "Summer Bridge helped," 2) "I was confident," and 3) "I felt comfortable." "Everything was New" theme describes participants' academic and social apprehensions and how Summer Bridge influenced their transition. The following subthemes emerged: 1) "Excited but nervous," 2) "I was ready," 3) "A shared experience," and 4) "We're still friends." "Involved in My Environment" theme shows the influence Summer Bridge had on participants' involvement on and off campus throughout the program and into their first year. This theme is broken down into the following subthemes: 1) "I knew my way around" and 2) "I was determined to be involved." "I am an Individual" describes students' academic and social engagement and

Table 6

Themes and Subthemes

Theme	Subthemes
1. Everything was Uncertain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Summer Bridge helped b. I was confident c. I felt comfortable
2. Everything was New	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Excited but nervous b. I was ready c. A shared experience d. We're still friends
3. Involved in My Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. I knew my way around b. I was determined to be involved
4. I am an Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Professors are approachable b. Class is important
5. A Good Fit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. I am academically content b. I have friends

the following subthemes emerged: 1) “Professors are approachable” and 2) “Class is important.” The final theme “A Good Fit” explains the influence Summer Bridge had on participants’ desire to remain at the University beyond their first-year. 1) “I am academically content” and 2) “I have friends” are the two subthemes that emerged.

Themes and Subthemes

Theme: Everything was uncertain. Participants were uncertain about starting college as they described their thoughts and experiences before beginning their undergraduate career. Joey stated:

Well, at first I was, not necessarily scared, but a little alert you know, just, waiting for, you know, what’s gonna happen, what should I prepare for. I was happy to have the chance to be at Summer Bridge because that, you know, gave me a little

open, little refresher kind of like a bridge between high school and, college if you will.

Joey used the Summer Bridge program to decrease his uncertainty from high school to college. Two participants were concerned about the size of the institution. Luke said, “I was kind of nervous coming in, ‘cause like, it’s a big campus.” Emily further explained, “I thought it was gonna be really big, cause I come from a really small town . . . I guess that’s mostly what I was worried about was the size and the amount of people.”

Tyler was uncertain about beginning college academically and being away from his parents.

I was definitely not ready for anything collegiate wise. I was never one to be away from the parental influence. And the only times that I wasn’t under that parental influence was summer camp and you had counselors and all that stuff and activities and stuff like that so I definitely wasn’t ready for on my own, doing my own homework, like not having my mom say ‘do your homework’ you know, that sort of thing. I was actually in charge pretty much everything at that point. And, I was just very nervous, didn’t know what I wanted to do, didn’t know what I wanted to major in, just knew that my parents would be very mad if I didn’t go to college.

Tyler’s decision to attend college and transition from high school to college was influenced by his pre-entry attributes, and the Summer Bridge program was his way to overcome uncertainty. On the other hand, Paige felt prepared. She attended a college prep high school and she was under the impression that “you’re going to college this is what you’re doing so be prepared for it.” The individual thoughts and experiences laid the foundation for Summer Bridge program’s influence on students’ individual transitions.

Before attending Summer Bridge, students took into consideration how they felt before beginning their first semester of college. Two participants were excited but nervous at the same time. Luke mentioned, “Just, new place, nervous but excited at the

same time.” Paige reiterated, “I was really excited up until the point where I saw the stadium...and then I was just kind of really nervous and I’m like, ‘I’m not going home.’”

Socially, two participants were uncertain how they would make friends. Tyler explained, “I was scared, socially. I wasn’t sure I’d be able to meet new people and make friends as quickly as I did.” Emily stated:

I knew that Summer Bridge would help me to like, to meet people, before I knew I was going to Summer Bridge I was worried about that because I didn’t want to be in a sorority. Like I had heard that, that’s where you meet a lot of friends is if you’re in the Greek system and I was like, well I don’t want to do that. And so I was wondering like, if I would meet the people on my floor at the dorms or like where I would make friends.

Tyler and Emily had preconceived concerns about their social transition to college and used the Summer Bridge program to decrease their uncertainty. Three subthemes emerged from this theme: “Summer Bridge helped,” “I was confident,” and “I felt comfortable.”

Subtheme: Summer Bridge helped. Participants had individual experiences in the Summer Bridge program. Participants mentioned out-of-class activities, such as the Campus Recreation Challenge Course, and in-class activities, for example writing college papers, as instrumental experiences. In particular, Brad considered his academic experience.

One thing it [Summer Bridge] really did is it showed me how hard I had to work. In high school, high school classes are pretty simple for me, didn’t always have to study for a test, didn’t always have to do my homework, so it was, so it was kind of this new style of things where I needed to kind of step up my game, so to speak . . . there was definitely a big learning curve, in terms of academics and where my priorities kind of shift . . . kind of the social aspect of my life kind of has to be put on a backburner and my academics have to be you know, more significant.

Through Brad's experiences in the Summer Bridge program, he discovered the academic differences from high school to college and how he would have to put his academic life before his social life.

Tyler considered his academic and social experience in the Summer Bridge program. Academically, he felt the course was "interesting, intellectually stimulating and just generally fun;" however, he did not feel as prepared academically as his Summer Bridge counterparts. Tyler did not feel his high school had prepared him and that his peers knew more about the "books and poems and plays that we were reading about where as I didn't have much experience in that area at all." Along with his academic experience, Tyler explained his social experience in Summer Bridge.

It was just so easy to hang out with people and to start up conversations because we all had something in common, being, we're there for those three weeks, it's just us, you know, we kind of feel special and the activities that, the advisors put on, it was just so much fun, learning about campus, learning to not necessarily be on your own but to have more freedom than you would at home.

The Summer Bridge program helped Tyler feel prepared academically. The program also allowed him to feel special as he transitioned to college and developed in a new environment.

Luke and Paige considered their social experience. Luke said, "The main part I took out of it was just the social aspect and like, what it's like to live in the dorms, all the stuff you can do, also got to learn where the buildings were, which helped a lot." Paige stated, "I loved it. I . . . guess I made like a lot of friends . . . we went to like dinner together every night and we were all really good friends and I enjoyed it." Summer Bridge helped Luke and Paige prepare socially for their first-year. The participants'

experiences in the Summer Bridge program paved the way for the influence Summer Bridge had on the individuals' first semester at college.

Subtheme: I was confident. As participants reflected, they described they were confident as they completed the Summer Bridge program and began their first semester of college. Three participants stated they were more confident finding their way around campus. Joey continued his analogy of the Summer Bridge program acting like a bridge between high school and college. The program was the end of the bridge as he felt, "it assisted in the fact that I got to know the campus a lot better." Tyler was also confident knowing his way around campus.

I was so confident because I knew more about campus than anyone else I knew that weren't in Summer Bridge, and, I've given tours of campus, that first week, I was a freshman and I was giving tours on campus. Where's your class, oh that building? Oh, I'll take you to that building, sort of thing. . . . It was a type of experience I don't think people get very often because it's like a temp teaching the CEO how to do their job sort of thing because I had, I was a freshman . . . and I'm a freshman teaching other freshmen what to do and thinking back it seems like a terrible idea.

Tyler's confidence allowed him to help others at a time when a transition might have been overwhelming.

Three participants were more confident academically. Emily took into consideration the study hours Summer Bridge required each day: "I'm gonna have to make myself like, sit down and study for three hours a day. So it really prepared me, to know that I am gonna need to set aside that time to actually study." Two participants were more confident socially. Luke stated, "It definitely gave me a good group of people to know, like so I could go hang out with them some more." Paige was also more confident socially and was able to make new friends that were not from her high school. She remarked, "It [Summer Bridge] definitely gave me a bunch of people that I knew . . .

otherwise I would have just hung out with my traditional high school/grade school friends that I knew.” The uncertainty of beginning college and the experiences (socially and academically) throughout the Summer Bridge program that led to participants’ confidence was essential in how Summer Bridge helped the students cope with their transition to college.

Subtheme: I was comfortable. Participants examined how the Summer Bridge program helped them cope with their transition to college and discovered they were comfortable academically and socially. Two participants felt comfortable academically and socially, two focused on academics or socialization, and two felt more comfortable with themselves as individuals. Summer Bridge made Emily feel comfortable with her learning environment:

It [Summer Bridge] helped with, basically every aspect. The social aspect, the academic aspect, the already having friends when I moved into the dorms helped a lot because I know people who weren’t in Summer Bridge and like, they were moving into the dorms and like they didn’t know anyone so they would just sit in their room and hang out with their roommate but, when I was there like, I knew a lot of the people on my floor because they were from Summer Bridge . . . by the time classes started I was already comfortable in my like, learning environment and everything.

Emily was able to compare herself to students who had not participated in Summer Bridge, and quickly realized how comfortable she was before her first-year started. Luke also felt comfortable: “It [Summer Bridge] helped quite a bit, like the whole nervousness decreased after that. I knew where I was going, I knew what to expect with classes and I started knowing people too.” Luke was less nervous academically and socially beginning his first-semester of college and attributed the decrease in nervousness to the Summer Bridge program.

Two participants were more comfortable personally as they transitioned to their first-year of college. Joey acknowledged Summer Bridge gave him a sense of independence.

It [Summer Bridge] gave me a little more of the sense of independence . . . the second half being okay, here's what it's like on your own. Oh! Where you mean I gotta do my own laundry, and I gotta pay my own bills and etc, etc, but yeah it was just . . . a nice little connection shown—showing a little more of the independence that I'd been hoping for for a long time.

The independence Joey felt allowed him to feel comfortable at a time when everything was uncertain – such as where to do laundry and how to pay bills. Paige describe how she was already comfortable transitioning to new environments because of her personality; however, Summer Bridge gave her a support system of peers moving through the same transition.

Like I'm not usually a person that freaks out when I have to like leave home, like I'm going to Spain this summer . . . I adjust pretty well to changing environments, but it was still nice to have people that were like your own age in the same boat as you that you could hang out with that were doing the same things.

Although Paige felt comfortable transitioning to new environments, she realized the importance of a support system of peer moving through the same transition - a transition that was new.

Theme: Everything was new. Academically, participants reflected on how they felt taking college classes before attending the program. Joey said, “I kinda slacked off my last year [of high school] and I said, you know, I'm in college now I'm gonna do it right cause this is, this is either gonna make or break the career for the rest of life.” Joey looked forward to starting over in college. Socially, everything was also new to participants; however, they shared an experience with a new support system – their

friends. Four subthemes emerged from this theme: Excited but nervous, I am ready, A shared experience, and We're still friends.

Subtheme: Excited but nervous. Two participants were ready for college level courses. They were excited to start something new and had goals to do well. Brad set goals to do well in college and earn good grades; however, he was also excited but nervous.

Like I said I was really ready to do it. I wasn't . . . like I wasn't sure as to what, as to what degree there was gonna be in a change in the learning curve so, I guess I was like, I was kind of ready to see what I could or what was gonna be that giant learning curve.

Although Brad was nervous, he was excited about a new academic learning curve and what he could accomplish academically. Three participants were nervous in regards to the size and difficulty of classes. Tyler stated, "I was nervous because I had heard about the 250 students in one class." Emily was concerned:

Really worried that they were gonna be hard. I just thought that the teachers wouldn't care about me like they would just think it was my job to do everything and they'd just give out homework and I would have to know how to do it.

Emily was nervous she would be expected to know what professors were expecting right away, and she would be alone in her transition to college academics. Although participants were excited but nervous in a new environment, following the completion of Summer Bridge, they were ready.

Subtheme: I was ready. Following the completion of Summer Bridge, participants felt ready to start college classes in the fall. Although Brad had completed the Summer Bridge class he was still scared to start classes.

Honestly I was a little bit scared afterwards. During Summer Bridge they sat us down for a presentation and they kind of talked to us about different classes that we'll have to take . . . I—like that speech kind of shocked me a little bit in that

sense but, at the same time like, when Chem 109 came around and when Calc 1 came around I was, I was ready for it, I knew what to, expect.

Brad was uncertain in his new academic environment; however, as the semester progressed he realized he was ready.

Three participants felt ready to start college classes because they understood professors and the basics involved with taking a college class. Tyler felt more confident because of this knowledge.

Again, just confidence. I basically knew how things were going, I still wasn't sure how those 250 people classes were going, but, I felt more confident because I knew what office hours were and I knew I could go talk to the teacher if I really needed something.

Although Tyler was uncertain about large class sizes, he knew how to cope with the transition by communicating with professors and knowing the importance of seeking out assistance. Tyler also mentioned having fellow Summer Bridge students in his first-year classes as a means for coping with academic transitions. This also leads to Summer Bridge's influence on participants' social transitions.

Subtheme: A shared experience. As Summer Bridge participants began to prepare for their first semester of college, they already had a group of friends who assisted with their social transition to college. All six participants agreed that starting their first semester of college with friends they could rely on was extremely beneficial to their transition. Luke felt like the "cool kid on campus."

I felt like the cool kid on campus. Like, 'Hey, I know that guy, I know that guy.' And like, the new people I would meet who hadn't had Summer Bridge would be like, 'You're the only person I really talk to.' I'm like, 'Oh well I know that person, that person, that person, that person.'

Luke realized how the Summer Bridge program had influenced his social transition to a new environment.

Two participants mentioned that having a shared experience with other Summer Bridge students positively influenced their friendship. Paige explained, “I guess you had someone . . . who’d already kind of been there with you in a way and you could . . . like compare classes and talk to each other about classes, maybe be in the same classes.”

Tyler felt the shared experience allowed him to know people as he walked to class.

I walked to class and every day, every day I saw someone I knew and just the fact of seeing a friendly face, seeing someone you know, it helps so much to be able to make yourself feel comfortable. . . . Just being comfortable on campus was a fantastic opportunity for any freshman.

The shared experience with other Summer Bridge participants allowed Tyler to feel comfortable on campus at a time in which he was transitioning to a new environment.

Two participants mentioned having multiple friends to call to eat dinner with was reassuring. Joey said, “It was a little more relaxed because I knew that I could have friends that I could sit down and talk with . . . I wouldn’t be sitting alone for the most part at lunch or on campus.” Beginning their first-year of college with friends is essential to the social influence Summer Bridge had on participants. The friends participants made throughout the program are still imperative in participants’ college experience.

Subtheme: We’re still friends. As participants persisted through their first-year of college, they are still friends with fellow Summer Bridge students. All six participants still see other Summer Bridge students on a consistent basis. Paige sees Summer Bridge friends when she attends student organization meetings and sorority meetings. Emily introduced her fall semester roommate to other Summer Bridge participants.

A lot of them are still my really super good friends and like, my roommate was a random roommate, she wasn’t from Summer Bridge, like, after the semester started. And now she lives with two people that I went to Summer Bridge with. Because she got to know them so well through me, and cause we were friends all through the year and like, over Christmas break last year I went to Chicago and

stayed with two of my friends that I met at Summer Bridge that are both from Chicago. They have come home with me once like, for a weekend to spend time with my family and, a lot of them were like my best friends on entering college.

Emily entered into her first-year with friends and has maintained those friendships as she transitioned into a new environment. The Summer Bridge program helped Emily form lasting friendships.

Although all the participants still have positive relationships with other Summer Bridge students, two participants have different views on the friendships. Brad explained:

Sometimes I think it kind of hurt me at the same time cause, when the beginning of the freshmen year came around, I already had kind of a group of friends and I didn't need to go out and make new friends or anything like that, so in that sense it [Summer Bridge] kind of hurt me, but I think overall I'm still perfectly happy with my friends that I've made in Summer Bridge.

Brad was already comfortable and had a set group of friends before his first semester began; however, he felt having a group of friends before his first-year began did not encourage him to form new friendships with students outside of the program. Tyler had a different experience.

We shared an experience and so we were friendly and we became friends and it was nice while Summer Bridge was going on and the few weeks afterward. But as college started to actually get going in the fall, everyone kind of fell into their own classes, their own friends on their own floors in their own buildings and, sure, we still see each other once in awhile and I'm sure other participants had a different experience but, me, I generally become friends with people on my floor more and see them more often.

Tyler felt the friendships were positive during Summer Bridge and the few weeks after; however, he did not feel the friendships lasted beyond his first-year. As participants transitioned to a new environment and developed friendships they become became involved.

Theme: Involved in my environment. Student involvement is crucial to the first-year experience of students. Involvement occurs on and off campus and in and out of the classroom. Summer Bridge helped Emily become involved in her environment.

Basically just the, already having friends, knowing what to expect with classes, knowing that there's things to do like outside in the community like, we went to a Saltdogs game, we went bowling, we went to iHop one night, like just stuff like that was, it was fun to just socialize and to know all the different things that I could do I guess on campus and around the community.

Emily felt involved because she had friends, knew what to expect from classes, and knew her way around campus and the community. Paige was also involved in her environment.

I could help people like on my floor, my roommate, tell her where things were cause I'd already been there for like a month so it was nice I was a little more confident in campus a little more relaxed about things, because I kind of knew what was going on already.

Paige felt involved in her environment her first semester of college because she had been on campus for awhile; therefore, she was able to help others. Two subthemes emerged: "I knew my way around" and "I was determined to be involved."

Subtheme: I knew my way around. Summer Bridge played a role in participants' involvement. In general, students were comfortable eating in the dining halls and knew their way around campus prior to their first semester. Five participants said they were comfortable eating in the dining halls and would call their Summer Bridge friends to join. Emily said, "I would always eat with like, 5 or 6 people cause . . . we would just have like a group and just say a time and we'd all go to the dining hall together."

Following the completion of Summer Bridge, all six participants were comfortable finding their way around campus. Paige remarked, "I knew where my classes were for the most part . . . I knew where the student entrance to the stadium was . . . [and] I helped people find their way." Emily stated, "I was really glad that I did Summer

Bridge because before that I didn't know my way around at all, but I was a lot more comfortable after that.”

Besides being comfortable on campus, four participants also felt more comfortable off campus. Brad mentioned, “I definitely felt a lot more comfortable on campus, a lot better and kind of had a sense of direction as to where everything was and I mean, not only on campus but even off campus.” Luke said, “I knew all those places [off campus activities] . . . I went to some of those too, I knew exactly where they were, how much cost, and like how many people you need to have a good time there.” Participants knew their way around campus and felt determined to be involved in their new environment.

Subtheme: I was determined to be involved. From activities they initiated to student organizations, Summer Bridge students felt prepared to be involved outside the classroom. Two participants discussed the activities they initiated. For example, they would organize games of ping pong, Frisbee, and soccer. Two participants were involved in their residence hall floor/hall government.

Three participants mentioned they became involved in student organizations; however, they were able to rely on their Summer Bridge friends to participate in their student organization. Brad said, “I actually ended up joining the water polo club and that was part of just trying something new . . . one of my friends from Summer Bridge he joined it with me and, we had actually a really good time.” Paige was determined to be involved.

Yes, I was like determined that first semester after Summer Bridge to join everything possible and then I realized that was humanly impossible . . . but definitely I wouldn't have probably gotten involved in the Student Alumni

Association if I hadn't gone to Summer Bridge and now I applied for the board of directors.

Paige felt Summer Bridge encouraged her to be involved in student organizations and continued that involvement beyond her first-year.

Students must make a personal decision as to whether or not they want to be involved. Tyler chose not to be involved.

I tried a few clubs that first year, mostly the first semester but even in high school I didn't get involved . . . I didn't want to, I wanted to work on more of the class aspect and friends aspect than having to do extracurricular activities and stuff. So I haven't really gotten into any of the clubs or anything. But I'm happy the way I am.

Tyler was not interested in being involved in student organizations and wanted to focus on his academics. This leads to the Summer Bridge's programs influence on participants' engagement inside the classroom.

Theme: I am an individual. In order to influence participants' engagement inside the classroom, Summer Bridge class sizes range from 15-20 members. Although the class size during Summer Bridge was unique compared to the classes students would experience academically in the future, the class allowed them to feel like an individual. Two participants mentioned the small class size allowed them to feel like an individual and add to the discussion. Brad stated, "If I were to have had a big class size and everyone was required to do the same thing, I don't think I would have felt so individual in that class." Emily felt she was able to add input in class.

It was a lot easier to like discuss things in class. And I think it did make me open up a lot more and think like, when the teacher asked questions you know, you can answer them you don't have to just sit in the corner and be quiet, like you can, actually raise your hand and add to the discussion because not everyone is like, judging you cause it's just like a small group of students and they're interested in the discussion too.

Emily's experience in the Summer Bridge class encouraged her to open up and participate in class. However, the small class size also allowed her to feel like an individual and realize her peers also cared about the discussion.

Two participants discovered the small class size allowed them engage with classmates. Joey remarked, "If you have a smaller group you will all become friends pretty quick." Tyler felt the small class environment allowed him to become closer with his peers and find study partners.

It [the smaller class size] definitely helped me realize that I should be able to get closer to my peers in a smaller class environment just because they could help me in situations like 'I need to study for this or I missed this class, could you tell me what happened' and stuff like that, I no longer feel uncomfortable talking to the person next to me and asking 'Hey, do you want to switch e-mails just in case you want to study or if you miss a class I can help you' and stuff like that, I don't feel uncomfortable with that.

Following the completion of the Summer Bridge class, Tyler was comfortable in his academic environment and was able to engage with classmates. Along with classmates, the small class environment allowed participants to feel engaged with professors. Two subthemes emerged: "Professors are approachable" and "Class is important."

Subtheme: Professors are approachable. As participants completed their Summer Bridge class and began their fall classes, they found professors to be more approachable. Paige stated the small class size in Summer Bridge allowed her to feel professors were "a little more approachable, less terrifying." Joey felt more confident working with professors following Summer Bridge and remarked the Summer Bridge class size let him work "one-on-one with the professor." Working one-on-one with professors allows for more assistance in regards to assignment. Tyler further explained, "Okay here's your weak points, here's your strong points, here's what you can work on

as opposed to somebody that looks at your paper real quick and that's all they do.”

Emily's experience emphasized the importance of communication with professors.

Our professor during Summer Bridge was really open to communication and like if you would email him a question he'd email you back within a couple of hours. Like, he was really good about it so I was like, well I hope all of them are like that.

Emily's experience emphasized the importance of communication with professors.

Three participants developed strategies to be engaged in large lecture halls. All three of the participants discovered sitting in the front of the classroom allowed professors to learn more about them and feel part of the class. Paige sits in the front to be engaged throughout the class, especially in large lecture halls, because, “people will distract me with their computers open and stuff.” The strategies participants' developed encouraged the importance of class in their new academic environment.

Subtheme: Class is important. Being academically engaged includes attending and participating in class. All six participants stated that since attending Summer Bridge they had actively gone to class. However, Summer Bridge reinforced personal decisions to attend class. Brad explained his personal experience.

I've always been a person that really likes to participate, ask questions, that sort of thing. To really say that it, Summer Bridge helped me probably wasn't the best thing, but it, I would definitely say that on an academic standpoint they really you know, engrained that you need to attend class every day, you know, no one's gonna call you and ask if you're not gonna show up to a class so, that was something that was really, really helpful.

Brad felt encouraged to attend class following the Summer Bridge program; however, attending class was a personal decision before beginning the program.

Four participants attended class because they did not want to miss something important. Paige stated, “I always go to class cause I hate skipping class unless I have to

because then I have no idea what's going." Tyler referred back to his high school experiences and compared them to his personality.

In high school I was never one to skip a class . . . I didn't enjoy missing class. I always hated missing class . . . I'd have to catch up on the work . . . Summer Bridge didn't really affect my attendance of anything like that because that's just kind of who I am.

Tyler felt the Summer Bridge program did not influence his decision to attend class because of personal decisions.

In regards to participating in class, two students discussed how they were more comfortable in small classes; however, they were not as comfortable in large lecture halls. Luke said, "In lecture halls I just kinda sit there." Paige commented that in large lecture halls she was more likely to contact the professor following the class if she had a question than ask the question in a large lecture hall. She stated, "I'll call the teacher afterwards, send them an e-mail, whatever their preferred method of communication is." Paige realized she was more uncomfortable in large classes than small classes and developed a strategy to cope. As participants engaged in the classroom they realized they were individuals, professors were approachable, and class was important. This helped participants realize the institution was a good fit.

Theme: A good fit. Following the completion of Summer Bridge and their first-year, participants were asked if they had thought about leaving the University. Five responded no; however, one participant said the thought had crossed his mind. Of the five participants who responded no, three admitted to institutional goal commitment. Brad stated, "I always ask myself what university would I want to go to instead. . . . it seems like such a good fit in so many different ways, but you know, why change it." Luke said, "I always just knew I would come here, and like I started here so why not end here?"

Paige remarked, “I would think about it in speculation as in like ‘I wonder what it would be like if I went somewhere else’ but that’s about it.” Tyler is also committed to the institution.

No, actually it’s become a little bit of a problem because when I’m home, and I’m going to go back to campus, I’ll say that I’m going home, and vice versa when I’m here on campus I say I’m going home for the weekend and when I’m at home for the weekend I come back and say I’m going home. My mom gets upset when I say I’m going home ‘what this isn’t your home anymore?’

Tyler felt the institution was a good fit and considers the environment his home. The thought of leaving prior to the completion of his first-year had crossed Joey’s mind. Joey’s personal financial situation caused the thought but changed his mind since he had “FAFSA and financial aid and about 20,000 in loan debt that I won’t have to pay off until the next 2 years.” Although Joey had considered leaving, his institutional commitment was apparent. Two subthemes emerged: “I am academically content” and “I have friends.”

Subtheme: I am academically content. Summer Bridge influenced students academically and encouraged their persistence beyond their first-year. Academic success encouraged two students to remain at the institution. Emily explained, “After my first semester, I had a 4.0 and I was like, wow I can do this, and I never thought about leaving.” Throughout high school, Tyler had a 3.25 GPA; however, his college GPA is a 3.55. Tyler mentioned he was surprised and proud of his academic success and stated, “My behavior has changed since high school and that I’m actually doing more work and I actually care about my work.”

Two participants mentioned their experiences in the Summer Bridge program directly influencing their persistence. Luke suggested the study hours associated with the

program showed him the importance of studying throughout the day and not just staying up all night working on homework. Along with obtaining a higher GPA in college than high school, Tyler received an A in the English 180 course and that further encouraged his persistence and readiness for college. “The hard work that I put into it and the class itself, the fact that I got the grade I did I’m very happy about and that just made me excited to go to college.”

Paige’s institutional commitment further encouraged her academically to remain at the University. When asked if she ever felt like leaving the University for academic reasons she stated, “Not really cause my programs for my majors [the institution is] pretty known for those, like they just moved the History department from like Florida... and they’ve got some pretty awesome stuff in there. Political Science too.” As participants had academic success and developed institutional commitment, they realized the institution was a good fit. Along with academics, students developed friendships that influenced their persistence beyond their first-year

Subtheme: I have friends. Participants described the friendships that they made during Summer Bridge influenced their persistence beyond their first-year. Although Joey said Summer Bridge did not encourage his persistence beyond his first-year, he stated “[friends] reinforced it a little bit because of the friendships I made.” Joey knew he wanted to attend college; therefore, the Summer Bridge program did not encourage his persistence. However, having a group of friends was important. Three participants said having a friendship base supported their decision to remain at the University. Brad remarked, “I think it, it solidified friends . . . having that base friendship was really important to me sticking around.” Luke said, “It gave me like the whole group of friends

that I could hang out with.” Emily remarked, “It might’ve taken a lot more time to adjust and I don’t know if I would’ve adjusted if I wouldn’t have had friends already.”

Three participants said the friends they made during Summer Bridge also influenced their involvement in student organizations and increased their desire to stay at the University. Brad described his experience:

It definitely helped because I had a group of friends to come back to and I think that’s what made it a lot easier . . . I think if a person were to not have a very good group of friends, not have activities that they’re involved in it’s definitely gonna, be harder for them to stay anywhere, you know . . . being a participant, having a lot of good friends just to begin with and then, being in clubs and stuff like that yeah, it definitely helped.

Brad mentioned his group of friends and activities made him want to remain at the University beyond his first-year.

Summary of Findings

Theme: Everything was uncertain. Everything was changing as participants entered college. The students were nervous but yet excited as they embarked on the transition. The size of the institution, academics, and being away from a known support system are just a few of their uncertainties; however, Summer Bridge was their strategy to cope with this transition. The experiences the participants gained throughout Summer Bridge made them confident and comfortable academically and socially as they began their first-semester. In particular, students were confident finding their way around campus and beginning college coursework. Participants were comfortable in knowing what to expect from their classes and because they had a support system – friends.

Theme: Everything was new. As participants began their first semester everything was new – academically and socially. Students were able to leave their past behind and set new goals for their future. Although the students were nervous, Summer

Bridge allowed the participants to be academically ready as they felt comfortable beginning college classes and working with professors. Summer Bridge provided participants with the opportunity to start their semester with a support system. This new group of friends shared a common experience; however, the common experience of Summer Bridge is still influential in their lives as they remain friends beyond their first-year.

Theme: Involved in my environment. Student involvement is essential in the first-year student experience as they adjust to a new environment. Involvement in and out of the classroom and on and off campus is essential as students become involved in their environment. Participants' were comfortable finding their way around campus and the community. Summer Bridge encouraged students' involvement in student organizations and once again provided them with a support system as they joined the same organizations. However, participants had to make a personal decision as to whether or not they wanted to be involved.

Theme: I am an individual. Small class sizes are designed by Summer Bridge in order to encourage participants' engagement in the classroom. Class sizes range from 15-20 and allow the student to feel like an individual. Participants felt comfortable adding to discussions and asking questions. The small class size allowed engagement with peers and encouraged participants to find those relationships during their first-semester. Participants discovered professors are approachable and are willing to help them in any way possible. Students also developed a strategy to sit in the front row in large lecture halls so that they can be an individual in large classes. Participants understood the

importance of attending classes; however, they struggled to be engaged in large lecture halls compared to their experience in Summer Bridge.

Theme: A good fit. The institution is a good fit for the participants in this study. Five participants had never considered leaving the University. One student had considered leaving; however, only because of financial issues and not academic or social reasons. Participants are academically content and have success in the classroom; therefore, encouraging their persistence beyond their first-year. Academic programs at the institution led to participants' institutional commitment. The institution was a good fit for participants because they had friends. Summer Bridge solidified friendships and encouraged participants' desire to stay at the University beyond their first-year.

Chapter 5 discusses the results of this case study, provides implications from the results, and suggests recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this case study was to explore the transition of Summer Bridge participants to college, and their persistence beyond their first-year of enrollment at a large research Midwestern University. Participants' academic and social transitions were defined through their engagement, involvement, and desire to remain enrolled at the University beyond their first-year.

Research Questions

The following grand tour question was studied: How did participants perceive that the 2009 Summer Bridge program influenced their persistence beyond their first-year of enrollment at the University?

1. How did participants describe the Summer Bridge program as influencing their transition from high school to college?
2. How did Summer Bridge prepare students academically and socially for their first-year of college?
3. What role did Summer Bridge have on participants' involvement throughout their first-year of college?
4. How did the Summer Bridge program influence participants' engagement throughout their first-year of college?
5. What influence did Summer Bridge program have on participants' desire to remain enrolled at the University beyond their first-year?

Summary of Findings

The findings of this study showed that Summer Bridge had a positive influence on students' transitions to college and their persistence beyond their first-year of enrollment at the University. Each participant had a unique experience but identified that Summer Bridge helped them feel more confident and comfortable academically and socially. Participants began their first semester ready to begin college classes. They understood professors and the basics involved with taking a college class. The small class size during Summer Bridge, allowed participants to feel like an individual. They felt comfortable taking part in class discussions, asking questions, and engaging socially with their classmates. Participants learned that professors are approachable and communications with professors was essential. Their academic success and academic contentment influenced their persistence beyond their first-year.

Socially, participants had an established group of friends before the semester began that shared a common experience. Participants felt like the "cool kid on campus" and were comfortable calling fellow participants to eat in the dining halls on campus. Summer Bridge encouraged participants to be involved outside the classroom. These involvements included organizing their own activities, being involved in their residence halls, and joining student organizations. Following the completion of Summer Bridge, participants were comfortable finding their way around campus and around the community. Participants were still friends beyond their first-year, and the friendships influenced their persistence and desire to remain at the University beyond their first-year.

Discussion

This study added to previous research on students' persistence beyond their first-year. In particular, Schlossberg's Transition Theory, Astin's Involvement Theory, research on student engagement, and Tinto's Theory of Student Departure was used to relate the findings of this study to the influence Summer Bridge had on selected participants.

Research Question 1: How did participants describe the Summer Bridge program as influencing their transition from college to high school? According to Schlossberg (1981), "as people move through life they continually experience change and transitions, and that these changes often result in new networks of relationships, behaviors, and new self-perception" (p. 2). Schlossberg suggested four factors that are imperative for individuals to consider when coping with a transition: situation, self, support, and strategies (p. 216).

Situation. Individuals perceive the situations surrounding their transitions differently (Schlossberg, 2008, p. 47). However, they all experienced an anticipated transition because attending Summer Bridge was a planned event (Evans et al., 2010, p. 215). As participants considered their transition to college, academically and socially, everything was uncertain. The situation surrounding their transition was unique for each participant as Paige had attended a college prep high school and felt prepared academically. On the other hand, Tyler's situation was different because he did not feel prepared academically despite what he had learned in high school. Two participants were concerned about the size of the institution based upon their past situations. Emily said, "I thought it was gonna be really big, cause I come from a really small town." Participants'

situations changed as they moved through Summer Bridge and learned what to expect from a college course before their first semester began. Academic preparedness increases student engagement which in turn affects the length of time (persistence) students are in college (Hu & Kuh, 2002, p. 569). Following the completion of Summer Bridge, students were prepared for their transition.

Self. Schlossberg suggested two categories, personal and demographic characteristics and psychological resources, as factors associated with an individual (Evans et al., 2010, p. 217). “Psychological resources, aids to coping, include ego development; outlook, in particular optimism and self-efficacy; commitment and values; and spirituality and resiliency” (p. 217). As participants began their transition to college, two participants were nervous but excited. Paige stated, “I was really excited up until the point where I saw the stadium...I was just kind of really nervous and I’m like, ‘I’m not going home.’” Two participants were scared because they were uncertain how they would make friends. Tyler, explained, “I was scared, socially. I wasn’t sure I’d be able to meet new people and make friends as quickly as I did.”

As participants moved through Summer Bridge and began their first semester of college they were confident. Summer Bridge gave them a sense of independence. Three participants mentioned being more confident finding their way around campus. Joey said, “it [Summer Bridge] assisted in the fact that I got to know the campus a lot better.” Three participants were more confident academically. Emily stated, “So it [Summer Bridge] really prepared me, to know that I am gonna need to set aside that time to actually study.” Socially, they were more confident because they had friends. In particular, Paige was more confident because she had a new group of friends and she would not have to rely on

her high school friends. After moving out of the Summer Bridge program, participants knew they were ready to handle their first semester of college.

Support. “Support systems help individuals mobilize their resources by sharing ‘tasks,’ providing ‘extra supplies of money, materials, tools, skills,’ and giving guidance about ways to improve coping” (Schlossberg, 2008, p. 64). Four types of support systems are important to individuals: intimate relationships, family units, networks of friends, and institutions and communities (Evans et al., 2010, p. 217). Before beginning the Summer Bridge program, all of the participants had support systems. Three participants mentioned having family as a support system prior to beginning their first semester and two mentioned having groups of high school friends. However, as students moved through and moved out of Summer Bridge they developed a new support system – Summer Bridge friends. Friends assist students in their transition and influence their persistence because they have social support (Berger & Milem, 1999, p. 658). Participants shared an experience with a peer group; therefore, providing a connection with the institution before their first semester. Although Paige was comfortable with her transition to college she mentioned, “it was still nice to have people that were like your own age in the same boat as you that you could hang out with that were doing the same things.” Following the completion of their first-year, all six participants shared a positive connection with these friends; however, one participant did not feel the friendships were essential beyond his first-year. Tyler said:

We shared an experience and so we were friendly and we became friends and it was nice while Summer Bridge was going on and the few weeks afterward. But as college started to actually get going in the fall, everyone kind of fell into their own classes, their own friends on their own floors in their own builds and um, sure, we still see each other once in awhile and I’m sure other participants had a

different experience but, um, me, I generally become friends with people on my floor more and see them more often.

Strategy. Schlossberg determined that there are three different types of strategies: “those that modify the situation, those that control the meaning of the problem, and those that aid in managing the stress in the aftermath” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 217). “Transition assistance programs are designed to assist individuals overcome or at least cope with the many social and academic difficulties that arise in the transition to college” (Tinto, 1993, p. 163). As participants prepared for the first-year of college they had a strategy – Summer Bridge. Although everything was uncertain, Summer Bridge provided participants with individual experiences that encouraged a positive academic and social transition. Participants learned the differences between academics in high school and college. “Though past performance in high school may help prepare new students for college, the preparation is rarely perfect, the transition to college rarely without a period of sometimes quite difficult adjustment” (Tinto, 1993, p. 46). Brad realized there was going to be a different learning curve.

One thing it [Summer Bridge] really did is it showed me how hard I had to work. In high school, high school classes are pretty simple for me, didn’t always have to study for a test, didn’t always have to do homework so . . . I needed to kind of step up my game.

Participants also gained a support system that gave them someone to call to eat with in the dining halls or to take part in outside-of-class activities. Emily said, “I would always eat with like, 5 or 6 people cause . . . we would just have like a group and just say a time and we’d all go to the dining hall together.”

Research Question 2: How did Summer Bridge prepare students

academically and socially for their first-year of college? The persistence of students beyond their first-year of enrollment “requires individuals to adjust, both socially and intellectually, to the new and quite strange world of college” (Tinto, 1993, p. 45). First-year transition assistance programs assist students as they “overcome or at least cope with the many social and academic difficulties that arise in the transition to college” (p. 163). Incorporation of students into their new environment occurs when “students adapt to and adopt the prevailing norms and behavior patterns of their college or university community” (Milem & Berger, 1997, p. 388). This study confirmed previous research on the academic and social transition of first-year students.

Summer Bridge prepared students academically and socially by requiring participants to take a college course and by providing them with a support system. Prior to their first semester, participants were excited to start a new adventure; however, academically they were nervous. Three participants were nervous in regards to the size and difficulty of the classes. Tyler stated, “I was nervous because I had heard about the 250 students in one class.” Emily was concerned about professors: “I just thought the teachers wouldn’t care about me like they would just think it was my job to do everything and they’d just give out homework and I would have to do it.” Following the completion of the course, although at times still nervous, participants were ready. Three participants felt ready to start college classes because they understood professors and the basics involved with taking a college class. Tyler mentioned having fellow Summer Bridge students in his first-year classes as a means for coping with academic transitions.

Summer Bridge prepared students socially because they began their first-year with a support system – friends – who shared the Summer Bridge experience. All six participants agreed that starting their first semester of college with friends they could rely on was extremely beneficial to their transition. Their friends helped them feel comfortable on campus because they saw friendly faces, had someone to talk about academics, and they had a group of friends to eat with in the dining halls. Paige mentioned, “I guess you had someone . . . who’d already kind of been there with you in a way and you could . . . like compare classes and talk to each other about classes, maybe be in the same classes.” As they persisted beyond their first-year, participants still have their support system and all six participants mentioned seeing other Summer Bridge students consistently around campus. Paige sees Summer Bridge friends when she attends student organization meetings and sorority meetings. The preparation Summer Bridge provided socially allowed participants to assist other students as they introduced their friends to other Summer Bridge students and new friendships formed. Emily introduced her fall semester roommate to other Summer Bridge participants and a lasting friendship formed as her roommate is now roommates with other Summer Bridge participants.

Research Question 3: What role did Summer Bridge have on participants’ involvement throughout their first-year of college? Summer Bridge positively influenced participants’ involvement on and off campus and in and out of the classroom. “Astin’s conceptualization of involvement refers to behaviors and what students actually do, instead of what they think, how they feel, and the meanings they make of their experiences” (Harper & Quaye, 2009, p. 4). Therefore, in order for “student learning and growth to occur, students need to actively engage in their environment, and educators

need to create opportunities for in- and out-of classroom involvement” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 31). This study confirmed previous research on student involvement.

Following the completion of Summer Bridge, all six participants knew their way around campus and the community. They were involved in their environment, knew where their classes would be located, and were even able to help peers who were not in Summer Bridge become comfortable in their environment. Emily mentioned,

Basically just the, already having friends, knowing what to expect with classes, knowing that there’s things to do like outside in the community . . . to know all the different things that I could do . . . on campus and around the community.

Paige explained being able to help peers who were not in Summer Bridge: “I could help people like on my floor, my roommate, tell her where things were cause I’d already been there for like a month so it was nice I was a little more confident in campus.”

Peer involvement “appears to strengthen perceptions of institutional and social support and ultimately persistence” (Berger & Milem, 1999, p. 658). Summer Bridge encouraged participants to join student organizations. The support system Summer Bridge developed gave participants a peer group to attend student organization meetings and gave them opportunities to initiate their own outside activities with each other. Two participants discussed activities they initiated, such as soccer, and two were involved in their residence hall floor/hall government. Three participants mentioned they became involved in student organizations; however, they were able to rely on their Summer Bridge friends to also participate. “Students who had friends with whom they engaged in common activities were more likely to persist to the second year of college” (Swenson Goguen et al., 2010-2011, p. 332).

Although Summer Bridge encouraged student involvement, the decision to be involved was the students. Postulate two of Astin's Theory of Involvement stated, "Some students will invest more energy than other students, and any particular student will be more involved in certain activities than others" (Astin, 1999, p. 519). Tyler made the decision to not be involved and was content with that decision.

I tried a few clubs that first year, mostly the first semester but even in high school I didn't get involved . . . I didn't want to, I wanted to work on more of the class aspect and friends aspect than having to do extracurricular activities and stuff. So I haven't really gotten into any of the clubs or anything. But I'm happy the way I am.

Research Question 4: How did the Summer Bridge program influence participants' engagement throughout their first-year of college? Students'

engagement occurs through "formal and informal interactions with other members of the institution, faculty, staff, and students" (Tinto, 1993, p. 50). Academic engagement occurs in environments where students and faculty interact over a particular subject matter (Stevenson et al., 2006-2007, p. 144). This study confirmed previous research on student engagement.

The Summer Bridge class size positively influenced participants. Two participants felt like an individual and were comfortable adding to discussion. Brad stated, "If I were to have had a big class size and everyone was required to do the same thing, I don't think I would have felt so individual in that class." Two participants were able to engage with their classmates and further developed their friendships. Joey remarked, "If you have a smaller group you will all become friends pretty quick." Following the completion of the course, four participants realized professors were approachable and generally cared about their success. Paige stated the small class size during Summer Bridge allowed her to feel

professors were “a little more approachable, less terrifying.” All six participants stated that since attending Summer Bridge they had actively gone to class.

Large-lecture halls are difficult to engage students in class discussions and students may find it difficult to ask questions (Tinto, 1993, p. 119). Although the small class size positively influenced the students during Summer Bridge, participants were still apprehensive about participating in large lecture halls after beginning their first-semester. Two participants mentioned they were not as comfortable in large lecture halls. Luke said, “In lecture halls I just kinda sit there.” Paige commented that in large lecture halls she was more likely to contact the professor following the class if she had a question than ask the question in a large lecture hall.

Research Question 5: What influence did the Summer Bridge program have on participants’ desire to remain enrolled at the University beyond their first-year?

Summer transition programs allow participants to “learn their way around campus, meet new friends, register for fall classes, begin to develop relationships with faculty, and become acclimated to college coursework by enrolling in summer classes” (Wolf-Wendel et al., 1999, p. 8). Institutional and individual goal commitment was attributed to participants’ desire to remain at the University beyond their first-year.

Five of the participants had never thought about leaving the institution; however, one participant said the thought had crossed his mind. Brad stated, “I always ask myself what university would I want to go to instead. . . . it’s such a good fit in so many different ways, but you know, why change it.” Luke said, “I always just knew I would come here, and like I started here so why not end here.” One participant, Joey, considered leaving the institution for financial reasons but changed his mind since he had “FAFSA and financial

aid and about 20,000 in loan debt that I would have to pay off until the next 2 years.” One participant said the perception of graduation from a specific institution was their reason for institutional goal commitment (Seidman, 2005, pp. 43-44). When asked if she ever felt like leaving the University Paige said, “Not really cause my programs for my majors [the institution is] pretty known for those, like they just moved the History department from like Florida... and they’ve got some pretty awesome stuff in there. Political Science too.”

Individual goal commitment was also prevalent in participants’ desire to stay at the University. “Goal commitment refers to a person’s commitment to personal, educational, and occupational goals” (p. 43). Academic success, during Summer Bridge and throughout their first year, led to individual goal commitment of two participants. Emily explained, “After my first semester, I had a 4.0 and I was like, wow I can do this, and I never thought about leaving.”

Having a support system – friends – also attributed to participants’ desire to stay at the institution beyond their first-year. Three participants said having a friendship base supported their decision to remain at the University. Brad remarked, “I think it, solidified friends . . . having that base friendship was really important to me sticking around.” Three participants said the friends they made during Summer Bridge also influenced their involvement in student organizations and increased their desire to remain at the institution. Brad said, “Being a participant, having a lot of good friends just to begin with and then, being in clubs and stuff like that year, it definitely helped.”

Implications

The findings of this study indicated the 2009 Summer Bridge program positively influenced participants' transition to college, and positively influenced their persistence beyond their first-year of enrollment at a large research Midwestern University. In general, the results of this study confirmed previous research on first-year students' transition to college, efforts that encourage their persistence beyond their first-year, and transition programs.

Academic disengagement is probable in environments that do not engage students in learning (Tinto, 1993, p. 119). Large-lecture halls are difficult to engage students in class discussions and students may find it difficult to ask questions (p. 119). Following the completion of Summer Bridge, this study found students were not as comfortable in large-lecture halls as they were with the small class size of Summer Bridge. Luke said, "In lecture halls I just kinda sit there." Paige commented that in large lecture halls she was more likely to contact the professor following the class if she had a question than ask the question in a large lecture hall. She stated, "I'll call the teacher afterwards, send them an e-mail, whatever their preferred method of communication is." Therefore, one of the conclusions is that faculty members should add a component during the Summer Bridge program that teaches students to cope with the large-lecture hall environment.

Institutional goal commitment for students arises in many different ways including: family members were alumni of the institution, family and/or peers encourage attendance, or the individual has a specific perception of the institution (Seidman, 2005, pp. 43-44). Participants in this study had never considered leaving the institution because of strong family encouragement and a positive perception of the institution; therefore,

confirming previous research. This study showed the participants persisted beyond their first-year; however, this study did not take into consideration participants of the 2009 Summer Bridge program who did not persist beyond their first-year. Therefore, a recommendation would be to connect with participants of the 2009 Summer Bridge program who did not persist at the University and discover what the program could have done differently to assist in their academic and social transition to the institution.

Summer transition programs “are designed to assist individuals overcome or at least cope with the many social and academic difficulties that arise in the transition to college” (Tinto, 1993, p. 162). Freshman-to-sophomore persistence is extremely important because “of student vulnerability at the beginning of college and because institutions can react quickly with interventions” (Seidman, 2005, p. 37). This study showed an intervention by a large research Midwestern University in the transition of first-year students to college. Participants mentioned the positive influence the program had on their academics, social connections, and involvement and engagement at the University. However, only 60 students are admitted annually into the summer program. Therefore, a recommendation would be to expand the number of students in the program or to create other programs like Summer Bridge to reach more first-year students at the institution.

Future Research

The findings of this study reaffirmed previous research on first-year student transitions and their persistence beyond the first-year. However, more qualitative research would allow participants in summer transition programs to “share their stories” and researchers to “hear their voices” to gain further knowledge on first-year student

transitions and persistence (Creswell, 2007, p. 40). This study focused on six participants that completed the program in 2009 and were in their second year at a Midwestern University. Yet, what about students who were in their third or fourth year at the University? Did their previous experiences, such as attending a rural or urban high school, influence their experience in the Summer Bridge program and ultimately their persistence? Did ethnicity, gender, or socioeconomic status influence their experience in the Summer Bridge program and ultimately their persistence? Did the skills and strategies they learned in the Summer Bridge program, affect their persistence to graduation? Do they still have the support system they gained during the Summer Bridge program?

“Every day people face transitions in their lives that are as taxing psychologically as marathons are physically. And they do this with little or no training or preparation” (Schlossberg, 2008, p. 3). “Quite simply, the more students are academically and socially involved, the more likely they are to persist and graduate” (Seidman, 2005, p. 323). This study focused on six participants who had participated in a summer transition program, but what about first-year students who did not participate? A qualitative study comparing the transition and persistence of students who participated in Summer Bridge to students who did not participate in Summer Bridge would provide insight into the differences of the transitions and persistence of students.

This study focused on six participants in the Summer Bridge program who persisted beyond their first-year. However, what about the participants who attended the program but did not persist beyond their first-year? Did the participants attend rural or urban high schools and how did their previous experiences influence their decision to not persist beyond their first-year? Did ethnicity, gender, or socioeconomic status influence

their decision to not persist beyond their first-year? The findings of a study of this nature would provide recommendations to the Summer Bridge program about what characteristics of the program could be added/altered.

This study found Summer Bridge had a positive influence on students' academic engagement. The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), as originated by George Kuh, is a survey instrument designed to "assess the effectiveness of institutional policies and practices" (as cited in Pike & Kuh, 2005, p. 188). Students are asked to "indicate the frequency in which they engage in activities that represent good educational practice and are related to positive learning outcomes" (p. 191). NSSE allows students to self-report the effects their institution has on their academic and social engagement and the amount of effort they put forth (p. 191). Quantitative research could be conducted to compare the engagement of first-year students who participated in Summer Bridge to first-year students at the institution who did not participate in the Summer Bridge program. In particular, the student-faculty interaction benchmark could be a variable in a t-test to compare the difference between the two groups. This could also become a mixed methods study, and a focus group of Summer Bridge participants and students who did not participate in Summer Bridge could be held. This would allow those who did not participate in Summer Bridge to indicate whether or not they felt a first-year transition program would have helped them become more academically engaged their first-year at the University.

Conclusion

First-year students' "participation in summer transition program(s) enhances both the academic and social transition to college" (Wolf-Wendel et al., 1999, p. 7). This study

explored the transition of Summer Bridge participants to college, and their persistence beyond their first-year of enrollment at a large research Midwestern University.

Participants' academic and social transitions were defined through their engagement, involvement, and desire to stay at the University beyond their first-year of enrollment.

The study showed the Summer Bridge program positively influenced the transition of Summer Bridge participants to college, and positively influenced their persistence beyond their first-year of enrollment at a large research Midwestern University.

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Appendix A

IRB Approval Letter



November 9, 2010

Amy Fellhoelter
Department of Educational Administration
2224 U Street Lincoln, NE 68503

Richard Hoover
Department of Educational Administration
119 TEAC, UNL, 68588-0360

IRB Number: 20101111303 EX
Project ID: 11303
Project Title: A Study on the Impact the 2009 NU Start Program had on Selected
Participants Using Schlossberg's Transition Theory

Dear Amy:

This letter is to officially notify you of the approval of your project by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects. It is the Board's opinion that you have provided adequate safeguards for the rights and welfare of the participants in this study based on the information provided. Your proposal is in compliance with this institution's Federal Wide Assurance 00002258 and the DHHS Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46) and has been classified as Exempt Category 2.

You are authorized to implement this study as of the Date of Final Approval: 11/09/2010. This approval is Valid Until: 05/05/2011.

1. The approved informed consent form has been uploaded to NUgrant (file with - Approved.pdf in the file name). Please use this form to distribute to participants. If you need to make changes to the informed consent form, please submit the revised form to the IRB for review and approval prior to using it.

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:

- * Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;
- * Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that

involves risk or has the potential to recur;

- * Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;
- * Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or
- * Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

This project should be conducted in full accordance with all applicable sections of the IRB Guidelines and you should notify the IRB immediately of any proposed changes that may affect the exempt status of your research project. You should report any unanticipated problems involving risks to the participants or others to the Board.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at 472-6965.

Sincerely,

Becky R. Freeman, CIP
for the IRB



Appendix B

IRB Approval Participant Phone Numbers



January 3, 2011

Amy Fellhoelter
Department of Educational Administration
2224 U Street Lincoln, NE 68503

Richard Hoover
Department of Educational Administration
119 TEAC, UNL, 68588-0360

IRB Number: 2010111303 EX
Project ID: 11303
Project Title: A Study on the Impact the 2009 NU Start Program had on Selected
Participants Using Schlossberg's Transition Theory

Dear Amy:

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects has completed its review of the Request for Change in Protocol submitted to the IRB.

1. You have received approval to contact participants via phone. NU Start has agreed to release the phone numbers to you.

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:

- * Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;
- * Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves risk or has the potential to recur;
- * Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;
- * Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or
- * Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

This letter constitutes official notification of the approval of the protocol change. You are therefore authorized to implement this change accordingly.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at 472-6965.

Sincerely,

Becky R. Freeman, CIP
for the IRB



Appendix C

IRB Approval without Metropolitan Area



January 25, 2011

Amy Fellhoelter
Department of Educational Administration
2224 U Street Lincoln, NE 68503

Richard Hoover
Department of Educational Administration
119 TEAC, UNL, 68588-0360

IRB Number:
Project ID: 11303
Project Title: A Study on the Impact the 2009 NU Start Program had on Selected
Participants Using Schlossberg's Transition Theory

Dear Amy:

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects has completed its review of the Request for Change in Protocol submitted to the IRB.

1. It has been approved to remove the hometown of outside the Lincoln/Omaha area criteria from the participation requirements.
2. The approved informed consent form has been uploaded to NUgrant (file with - Approved.pdf in the file name). Please use this form to distribute to participants. If you need to make changes to the informed consent form, please submit the revised form to the IRB for review and approval prior to using it.

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:

- * Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;
- * Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves risk or has the potential to recur;
- * Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;
- * Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or

* Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

This letter constitutes official notification of the approval of the protocol change. You are therefore authorized to implement this change accordingly.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at 472-6965.

Sincerely,

Becky R. Freeman, CIP
for the IRB



Appendix D

Institutional Approval Letter



OFFICE OF THE DEAN OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES

October 8, 2010

Dear NU Grant,

I give Amy Fellhoelter permission to use information provided by AnnMarie Williams regarding 2009 NU Start participants. This information will include name, major, college, and current contact information to complete her study.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

Rita C. Kean, Dean
Office of Undergraduate Studies

Appendix E

Informed Consent Form (Outside Metropolitan Area)



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES
Department of Educational Administration

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Identification of Project:

A Study on the Impact the 2009 NU Start Program had on Selected Participants Using Schlossberg's Transition Theory

Purpose of the Research:

This is a research project that will be used to describe the transitions and experiences of students who participated in NU Start in 2009. You were selected for this project because you participated in NU Start 2009, your hometown is outside the Omaha/Lincoln area, you identified you were in the College of Arts and Sciences when you began your first semester, you are between the ages of 19-21, and you persisted beyond your first-year at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. This information was provided by the NU Start Program Coordinator, AnnMarie Williams. The research will be conducted mid-October through November 2010. The research will lead to a thesis which should be completed by April 2011.

Procedures:

A one-on-one interview will be conducted with you in order to describe your transition to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and your experiences in NU Start. The interview will last no longer than 45 minutes to one hour and will be conducted at an agreed upon location (Nebraska Union, Gaughn Multicultural Center, or a study room in Neihardt Residence Hall).

Risks and/or Discomforts:

There are no risks associated with this study.

Benefits:

This interview will allow you to talk about your experiences at UNL and NU Start. They will be used to further the direction of the NU Start program.

Confidentiality:

The information you provide will be used by the primary investigator in this study to write a master's thesis. Results may be published in a professional publication or potentially presented at a professional conference. Your name and information will be kept confidential and an alias will be assigned in the thesis in order to maintain your confidentiality. Observations made by the primary investigator during the interview may be used to describe findings in the research. The data will be stored on the primary investigator's personal computer and will be deleted following completion of the project in May 2011. Audio recordings will be erased following transcription.

Compensation:

There will not be any compensation.

Participant Initials



Opportunity to Ask Questions:

You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study. Or you may call the primary investigator at any time at (308) 279-0108 or the secondary investigator at (402) 472-3058. Please contact the investigator:

- if you want to voice concerns or complaints about the research

Please contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board at (402) 472-6965 for the following reasons:

- you wish to talk to someone other than the research staff to obtain answers to questions about your rights as a research participant
- to voice concerns or complaints about the research
- to provide input concerning the research process
- in the event the study staff could not be reached

Freedom to Withdraw:

Participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time throughout the interview

Consent, Right to Receive a Copy:

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

_____ Initial if you agree to be audio recorded during the interview.

Signature of Participant:

Signature of Research Participant

Date

Name and Phone number of investigator(s)
Amy Felthoelter, Principal Investigator
Richard Hoover, Secondary Investigator

Phone: (308) 279-0108
Office (402) 472-3058

Appendix F

Informed Consent Form (without Outside Metropolitan Area)



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES
Department of Educational Administration

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

IRB# (Labeled by IRB)

Identification of Project:

A Study on the Impact the 2009 NU Start Program had on Selected Participants Using Schlossberg's Transition Theory

Purpose of the Research:

This is a research project that will be used to describe the transitions and experiences of students who participated in NU Start in 2009. You were selected for this project because you participated in NU Start 2009, you identified you were in the College of Arts and Sciences when you began your first semester, you are between the ages of 19-21, and you persisted beyond your first-year at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. This information was provided by the NU Start Program Coordinator, AnnMarie Williams. The research will be conducted mid-October through November 2010. The research will lead to a thesis which should be completed by April 2011.

Procedures:

A one-on-one interview will be conducted with you in order to describe your transition to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and your experiences in NU Start. The interview will last no longer than 45 minutes to one hour and will be conducted at an agreed upon location (Nebraska Union, Gaughn Multicultural Center, or a study room in Neihardt Residence Hall).

Risks and/or Discomforts:

There are no risks associated with this study.

Benefits:

This interview will allow you to talk about your experiences at UNL and NU Start. They will be used to further the direction of the NU Start program.

Confidentiality:

The information you provide will be used by the primary investigator in this study to write a master's thesis. Results may be published in a professional publication or potentially presented at a professional conference. Your name and information will be kept confidential and an alias will be assigned in the thesis in order to maintain your confidentiality. Observations made by the primary investigator during the interview may be used to describe findings in the research. The data will be stored on the primary investigator's personal computer and will be deleted following completion of the project in May 2011. Audio recordings will be erased following transcription.

Compensation:

There will not be any compensation.

Participant Initials



Opportunity to Ask Questions:

You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study. Or you may call the primary investigator at any time at (308) 279-0108 or the secondary investigator at (402) 472-3058. Please contact the investigator:

- if you want to voice concerns or complaints about the research

Please contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board at (402) 472-6965 for the following reasons:

- you wish to talk to someone other than the research staff to obtain answers to questions about your rights as a research participant
- to voice concerns or complaints about the research
- to provide input concerning the research process
- in the event the study staff could not be reached

Freedom to Withdraw:

Participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time throughout the interview.

Consent, Right to Receive a Copy:

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

_____ Initial if you agree to be audio recorded during the interview.

Signature of Participant:

Signature of Research Participant

Date

Name and Phone number of investigator(s)

Amy Fellhoelter, Principal Investigator
Richard Hoover, Secondary Investigator

Phone: (308) 279-0108
Office (402) 472-3058

Appendix G

Recruitment Email (Outside Metropolitan Area)

Dear _____,

My name is Amy Fellhoelter and I am a graduate student in the Educational Administration Department. I was also the NU Start Assistant Coordinator throughout the summer of 2010.

I am currently conducting research for a master's thesis and I need **your help!** The topic being studied is the persistence of NU Start participants beyond their first-year at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. You are **one of nine students** who have been selected for this study because you were a part of NU Start 2009, you were in College of Arts and Sciences when you participated in the program, your hometown is outside the Lincoln/Omaha area, and you are between the ages of 19-21.

A one-on-one interview that will last no longer than 45 minutes to one hour will be conducted in order to describe your transition to UNL, and how your NU Start experience affected this transition. The interview will take place in an agreed upon location such as the Nebraska Union, Gaughn Multicultural Center, or a study room in Neihardt Residence Hall.

Would you be willing to be a part of this study?! Please contact me at 308-279-0108 or afellhoelter@unlnotes.unl.edu.

Thank you!

Amy Fellhoelter
Graduate Student
Educational Administration

Appendix H

Recruitment Email (without Metropolitan Area)

Dear _____,

My name is Amy Fellhoelter and I am a graduate student in the Educational Administration Department. I was also the NU Start Assistant Coordinator throughout the summer of 2010.

I am currently conducting research for a master's thesis and I need **your help!** The topic being studied is the persistence of NU Start participants beyond their first-year at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. You have been selected for this study because you were a part of NU Start 2009, you were in College of Arts and Sciences when you participated in the program, and you are between the ages of 19-21.

A one-on-one interview that will last no longer than 45 minutes to one hour will be conducted in order to describe your transition to UNL, and how your NU Start experience affected this transition. The interview will take place in an agreed upon location such as the Nebraska Union, Gaughn Multicultural Center, or a study room in Neihardt Residence Hall.

Would you be willing to be a part of this study?! Please contact me at 308-279-0108 or afellhoelter@unlnotes.unl.edu.

Thank you!

Amy Fellhoelter
Graduate Student
Educational Administration

Appendix I

Follow-up Email

Dear _____,

Thank you for agreeing to be a part of my study! Your interview date, time, and location is:

TIME
DATE
LOCATION

Attached is an informed consent form you will need to sign in order to participate in this study. We will discuss it in more detail prior to your interview. Please set aside an estimated time of *45 minutes to one hour* for this interview.

Please contact me at 308-279-0108 or afellhoelter@unlnotes.unl.edu if you have any questions. I very excited to meet you and discuss your experiences in NU Start!

Sincerely,

Amy Fellhoelter
Graduate Student
Educational Administration

Appendix J

Interview Script

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me! My name is Amy Fellhoelter and I am a graduate student in the Educational Administration Department. Before we begin visiting about your NU Start experience and your first semester at the University, let's review this informed consent form. I will need your signature before we can proceed with the interview.

[WALK THROUGH PURPOSE OF RESEARCH, PROCEDURES, RISKS AND/OR DISCOMFORTS, BENEFITS, CONFIDENTIALITY, COMPENSATION]. If you agree to this point, please initial here. [WALK THROUGH OPPORTUNITY TO ASK QUESTIONS, AND FREEDOM TO WITHDRAW]. Do not hesitate to stop me at any point throughout the interview to ask questions or to ask me to clarify. [WALK THROUGH CONSENT, RIGHT TO RECEIVE A COPY]. Please initial here if you agree to be audio recorded. Please sign and date here if you agree to be a part of this study. Thank you for signing! Here is a copy of the informed consent form for your records. Let's get started!

QUESTIONS

This concludes the interview! Thank you so much for your time and answers! I really appreciate your help with my study! Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions

Appendix K

Interview Protocol

Interview Questions

Name _____

Date _____

Location _____

- Describe your thoughts and experiences as you began your undergraduate career at UNL.
- Before attending NU Start, how did you feel about beginning your first semester of college at the University?
 - Probes: being away from home the first time; academic apprehension; social apprehensions; size of the University/Lincoln compared to hometown
- Describe your experiences in the NU Start Program.
 - Probes: first semester at UNL
- Before attending NU Start, how did you feel about beginning college classes?
- After attending NU Start, how did you feel about beginning your first semester?
 - Probes: How did your experiences in NU Start affect your first semester at UNL?
- After attending NU Start, how did you feel about beginning college classes?
 - How did you feel about working with professors?
 - How did the small class size during NU Start impact your experience?
 - Probes: Explain your experiences during the class you took throughout NU Start?
- Explain the friendships you made with other NU Starters.
 - What was it like beginning the first semester knowing other NU Starters?
 - What are those friendships like now after you completed your first-year at UNL?
 - Probes: cope/handle, friends, roommates, NU Start staff
 -
- Overall, how did NU Start help you cope with your transition to the University from high school?
 - Probes: academically, socially, self
- Did NU Start encourage your involvements in the University?
 - Explain how NU Start affected your involvements academically.
 - Did you attend class?
 - Did you feel comfortable in your classes?

- Did you feel comfortable asking questions and generally participating in classes?
- Explain how NU Start affected your social involvement at UNL?
 - Did you feel comfortable going to the dining halls?
 - Did you feel comfortable finding activities outside of academics to participate in during your free time
 - Probes: plays, Campus Rec, Morrill Hall, movie theaters, etc.
 - In general, were you comfortable finding your way around campus?
- Did NU Start encourage you to become involved in student organizations or other co-curricular activities at UNL?
 - How?
 - Did these activities help you stay at UNL beyond your first-year at the University?
 - Probe: Did your extracurricular involvement help you feel at home UNL and increase your desire to stay at the University?
- At any time over the last year, did you ever think about leaving the University?
 - If yes, why?
 - If no, why?
 - Probes: academically, socially, self
- How did your participation in NU Start, encourage you to stay at the University beyond your first-year?
 - Probes: academically, socially, self

Appendix L

Phone Script

Hello!

My name is Amy Fellhoelter and I am a graduate student in the Educational Administration Department. I was also the NU Start Assistant Coordinator throughout the summer of 2010. I am currently conducting research for a master's thesis and I need your help! The topic being studied is the persistence of NU Start participants beyond their first-year at the UNL. I sent you an email the first of November; however, I was wondering if you would be interested in helping with my study. The interview will take 45 minutes to an hour and will be conducted in order to describe your transition to UNL, and how your NU Start experience affected this transition. You were selected for this study because you were a part of NU Start 2009, you were in College of Arts and Sciences when you participated in the program, your hometown is outside the Lincoln/Omaha area, and you are between the ages of 19-21.

Would you be willing to meet with me, after you return next semester, to discuss your experiences?

IF YES:

Thank you so much! When would you be available to meet? What time would you be available? And, where you like to meet between the Guaghn Multicultural Center, the Nebraska Union, and the Neihardt Residence Center?

I will reserve a room and send you an email confirming our interview. Included in the email will be an informed consent form that you will need to sign for the interview.

Thank you so much!

IF NO:

Thank you so much for your time!

IF A VOICEMAIL IS LEFT:

My name is Amy Fellhoelter and I am a graduate student in the Educational Administration Department. I am currently conducting research for my master's thesis regarding the persistence of NU Start participants beyond their first-year at the UNL. Your name was given to me because you participated in NU Start 2009, you were in College of Arts and Sciences when you participated in the program, your hometown is outside the Lincoln/Omaha area, and you are between the ages of 19-21. Please call me back at 308-279-0108 at your earliest convenience. Once again, the number is 308-279-0108. Thank you!

Appendix M

Transcriptionist Confidentiality Statement

Transcriptionist Confidentiality Statement

I _____ (name of transcriptionist) agree to hold all information contained on audio recorded tapes/ and in interviews received from _____ (Name of PI), primary investigator for _____, (Name of the project) in confidence with regard to the individual and institutions involved in the research study. I understand that to violate this agreement would constitute a serious and unethical infringement on the informant's right to privacy.

I also certify that I have completed the CITI Limited Research Worker training in Human Research Protections.

Signature of Transcriptionist

Date

Signature of Principle Investigator

Date

Appendix N

List of Codes

Theme: Everything was Uncertain – Influence of program on participants' transition from high school to college,

a little alert
 waiting for what's gonna happen
 what should I prepare for
 nervous coming in
 it's a big campus
 really big
 really small hometown
 worried about size and amount of people
 classes have hundreds of people
 100 people in high school
 bigger than hometown
 little bit nervous
 more cautious
 not ready
 never one to be away from parental influence
 just very nervous
 didn't know what I wanted to do
 didn't know what I wanted to major in
 parents would be very mad
 you're going to college
 this is what you're doing
 nervous but excited
 excited until I saw the stadium
 I'm not going home
 scared, socially
 worried
 didn't want to be in a sorority
 wondering where I would make friends

Subtheme: Summer Bridge helped.

showed how hard I had to work
 high school classes pretty simple/didn't always have to study
 new style of things
 step up my game
 big learning curve in terms of academics
 priorities kind of shift
 social aspect backburner
 academics more significant
 interesting, intellectually stimulating
 generally fun
 high school did not prepare
 didn't have much experience

easy to hang out with people
 had something in common
 feel kind of special
 learning about campus
 have more freedom
 social aspect
 what it's like to live in the dorms
 learn where buildings were
 helped a lot
 I loved it
 made like a lot of friends
 went to dinner together
 really good friends
 I enjoyed it

Subtheme: I was confident

end of bridge
 got to know campus better
 I was so confident
 I knew more about campus than anyone else
 I was giving tours
 I'll tak you to that building
 temp teaching the CEO
 freshman teaching other freshmen
 even more like confident about it
 make myself sit down and study
 it really prepared me
 good group of friends to know
 again, just confidence
 gave me a bunch of people I knew
 otherwise hung out traditional high school/grade school friends

Subtheme: I felt comfortable

helped with basically every aspect
 academic aspect
 already having friends
 knew a lot of people on my floor
 already comfortable
 learning environment
 nervousness decreased
 I knew where I was going
 what to expect with classes
 starting knowing people too
 sense of independence

here's what it's like on your own
 gotta do my own laundry
 gotta pay my own bills
 nice little connection
 adjust pretty well to changing environments
 nice to have people your own age in the same boat

Theme: Everything was New – How did Summer Bridge prepare students academically and socially?

slacked off in high school
 now I'm in college
 gonna do it right

Subtheme: Excited but nervous

more excited
 burnt out from high school
 nervous but excited at the same time
 I was really ready to do it
 ready to see what I could or what was gonna be that giant learning curve
 nervous 250 students in one class
 worried gonna be hard
 thought teachers wouldn't care

Subtheme: I was ready

little bit scared afterwards
 I was ready for it
 I knew what to expect
 again, just confidence
 I basically knew how things were going
 more confident because I knew what office hours were
 knew I could talk to teacher
 feel for college

Subtheme: A shared experience

cool kid on campus
 I know that person, that person...
 I know that guy, I know that guy
 we all had something in common
 big web of friendships
 had someone who had already been there with you
 compare classes
 talk to each other about classes

be in the same classes
 everyday I saw someone I knew
 seeing a friendly face
 make yourself feel comfortable
 comfortable on campus
 friends that I could sit down and talk with
 nice to have friends

Subtheme: We're still friends

I see them all over the place
 in my sorority house so I see them all the time
 my really super good friends
 we were friends all through the year
 went to Chicago
 came home with me once
 best friends entering college
 we found more common ground recently
 met one of my closest friends
 already had a ground of friends
 I didn't need to go out and make new friends
 everyone kind of feel into their own classes
 become friends with people on my floor
 background helped boost that relationship
 one guy is actually in my building

Theme: Involved in my environment – Role Summer Bridge had on participants' involvement.

already having friends
 knowing what to expect from classes
 knowing thing to do outside in the community
 things that I could do on campus
 I could help people on my floor
 I'd already been there for a month
 confident in campus
 I knew what was going on

Subtheme: I knew my way around

I would always eat with like 5 or 6 people
 I knew how the dining halls worked
 I don't ever feel uncomfortable in a dining hall
 I knew where my classes were
 I knew where the student entrance to the stadium was
 I helped people find their way

before that I didn't know my way around
 more comfortable
 more comfortable on campus
 sense of direction on campus but even off campus
 I went to some of those
 knew exactly where they were
 how much they cost
 how many people to have a good time

Subtheme: I was determined to be involved

treasurer of our floor
 I went to the meetings downstairs in my residence hall
 floor representative
 I've gotten pretty involved in the government at my building
 helped a lot with Homecoming
 watch movies in our room
 Frisbee or soccer
 go to the Rec or play on the residence hall green
 shoot some hoops on the basketball courts
 play some ping pong
 ended up joining water polo
 friends from Summer Bridge joined me
 a really good time
 determined to join everything possible
 involved in Scarlet Guard
 applied for the board of directors
 tried a few clubs that first year
 even in high school didn't get involved
 work on more of the class aspect
 I'm happy the way I am

Theme: I am an individual – Role played on participants' engagement.

a lot easier to discuss things in class
 make me open up a lot more
 answer then and not sit in corner and be quiet
 raise your hand
 add to discussion
 not everyone's judging you
 small group of students interested in the discussion too
 big class size not so individual
 smaller class all become friends
 closer to peers
 no longer felt uncomfortable
 switch e-mails

miss a class I can help you
tell me what happened

Subtheme: Professors are approachable

little more approachable
less terrifying
work one-on-one with professor
here's your weak points
here's your strong points
open to communication
email him a question
I hope all of them are like that
professors are nice to work with
always sit in the front row
people will distract me

Subtheme: Class is important

really like to participate, ask questions
engrained that you attend class
no one's going to call you
I always go to class
I hate skipping class
high school never one to skip class
I didn't enjoy missing class
I'd have to catch up on the work
that's who I am
lecture halls I just kinda sit there
contact the professor following class
preferred method of communication

Theme: A good fit – Role Summer Bridge had on participants' desire to stay enrolled beyond their first-year.

what university would I want to go to instead
just seems like such a good fit
I just always knew I would come here
I started here so why not end here
think about it in speculation
I'm going home
FAFSA and financial aid

Subtheme: I am academically content

wow I can do this
I never thought about leaving
my behavior has changed since high school
I actually care about my work
hard work I put into it
study hours
institution is known for my major
pretty awesome stuff here

Subtheme: I have friends

reinforced because of the friendships I made
solidified friends
really important to me sticking around
whole group of friends
taken more time to adjust
don't know if I would have adjusted
group of friends to come back to
good friends to begin with