

PSYCHOSOCIAL ADJUSTMENT FOR TRANSFER STUDENTS AT A FOUR-YEAR
URBAN RESEARCH INSTITUTION IN THE PSYCHOLOGY MAJOR

by

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ABSTRACT

ELAINE MARIE O'REILLY. Psychosocial adjustment and intentions to persist for transfer students in the psychology major at a four-year urban research institution (under the direction of DR. SANDRA DIKA)

This study examined factors related to the psychosocial adjustment and intentions to persist of transfer students in the psychology major at a large urban research institution in the southeastern United States. Psychosocial adjustment was operationalized as sense of belonging at the receiving institution. A correlational design was used to explore two related research questions, based on responses from a questionnaire administered to psychology transfer students (n=39) near the end of the second semester of study. First, the extent to which experiences and preparation prior to entering the institution (transfer capital) and experiences during the first year at the institution (university experiences) were related to a sense of belonging was estimated using a multiple regression model. Next, the researcher used logistic regression to estimate the extent to which transfer capital, university experiences, and sense of belonging were related to the likelihood of strong intentions to persist and graduate with a degree from the institution. The findings indicated that transfer capital and university experiences contribute significantly to a sense of belonging, however, only university experiences was significant in increasing the odds of intentions to persist to graduation at the institution. These findings emphasize the importance of accessibility of departmental faculty and staff, and student responsibility to prepare for and participate in class during the first year after transfer as instrumental in psychosocial adjustment and in plans to continue to graduation.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

College enrollment is presently on the rise. In 2014, 3.4 million students graduated from high school (NCES, 2014). With the number of students graduating from secondary institutions, enrollment in college is estimated to reach 20.2 million by 2023 (NCES, 2014). Between 2001 and 2011, enrollment increased 32 percent, from 15.9 million to 21.0 million (NCES, 2011). Between 2001 and 2011, the number of full-time students increased by 38 percent, and part-time student enrollment rose 23 percent.

Students who start their postsecondary education at either a two or four-year institute are transferring to four-year institutions at an increasing rate (Gonzalez, 2012). In 2013-14, 46 percent of students who completed a degree at a four-year institution had previously been enrolled in a two-year institution (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2015). Of the 46 percent, 17 percent of those previously enrolled in a two-year institution had been enrolled within the last year of their studies before they earned their bachelor's degree. On average, the highest rate of time to degree attainment after transfer from a two to a four-year institution was between 2 and 3 years. In 2012 the transfer rate from two- to four-year institutions was only 41.2 percent compared to 46 percent just two years later.

The Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study sponsored through the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) collected data on topics that include student transfer and degree attainment. Data are collected through surveying cohorts at the end of their first year, and then three and six years after the cohorts started their first

year in higher education (2014). In 2008-09, 37.2 percent of students surveyed transferred from a two-year to a four-year institution, and 22.4 percent transferred from a four-year to a four-year. Additionally, data from the Postsecondary Education Transcript Study (2009) followed a sample of 17,000 students in the United States beginning in 2003-04 for a period of six years. NCES requested transcript from every institution represented between July 2003 and June 2009; of those institutions, 86 percent provided transcripts. The findings revealed that 35 percent of first-time beginning undergraduate students had transferred or coenrolled at least once during the time of the study. On average, 21 percent transferred or coenrolled one time, and 11 percent transferred or coenrolled more than once. Most of the transfers began their education at public two-year institutions.

Data released through The National Student Clearinghouse Research Center and in the studies through NCES represent a trend in increasing numbers of transfers from two to four-year institutions who complete their degree at the four-year institution. This information is important to faculty and administrators at both two-year and four-year institutions as the rates increase the policies that serve the transfer population may need be re-evaluated to ensure a quality transfer process in order to increase persistence rates.

Transfer students are also drawing national attention, which may be attributed in part to President Obama's plan to eliminate two years of tuition for some community colleges statewide (Stratford, 2015). As announced during his State of the Union address in January 2015, Obama proposes to eliminate tuition at community colleges thus permitting students who would be eligible to receive federal financial aid to use those monies for items such as books, supplies, and transportation (Stratford, 2015). A fact

sheet released from the White House (January 2015) reported that if states have excess grant money after eliminating tuition, those funds could be spent on "expanding quality community college offerings, improving affordability at four-year public universities, and improving college readiness." If tuition is eliminated in community colleges, the result could be a considerable increase in transfer students from community colleges to four-year institutions.

Transfer students are a unique population, different from the native student population and often experience more difficulty adapting at the new institution due to the transfer (Tinto, 1982; Astin, 1984; Berger & Malaney, 2003; Townsend, 2008). Laanan, (2004, 2007) has referred to transfer capital and university experiences as impacting adjustment during and after transfer. Transfer capital refers to any advising experience students received prior to entering the new institution, and university experiences center on students' engagement and readiness with course work. These two areas will be explained in greater depth in chapter two.

An increase of incoming transfer students would add to the heavy demand already present for advisors working with transfer students, and it would be beneficial to understand their unique experiences of the transfer process in order to serve them well (Vander Schee, 2010). Serving this population well means gaining a deeper understanding of how they experience the transfer process at the new institution, and consequently use that knowledge to implement policy and practice tailored to their needs.

In this study, the researcher examined the psychosocial adjustment and intentions to persist for transfer students who entered one particular major – psychology - at a large four-year urban research university in the southeastern United States where transfer

students make up about half of the entering population each year. Specifically, the researcher examined the relationship of experiences prior to transfer, experiences during the first year, and psychosocial adjustment near the end of the first year with plans to persist and graduate at the institution. In this chapter, the researcher presents the background of the study, specifies the problem, provides an overview of the methodology used including limitations and delimitations, and includes definitions and the plan of the dissertation.

Statement of the Problem

During the past decade, there has been an increase and heavy emphasis on orienting and advising incoming first-year students to make certain they have a positive adjustment experience (Vander Schee, 2007). Given the growing population of transfer students, institutions have also incorporated various methods for orientation to address their unique needs. However, there is still disagreement in the field regarding the needs of these students, with some asserting that academic and social integration is absolutely necessary to ensure a connection to, and thus persistence at, the institution (Astin, 1984; Tinto, 1997, 1998), and others de-emphasizing the importance of integration for transfer students, who tend to be at different developmental stages than the traditional first-year student (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). A considerable amount of research has been done to classify transfer students and understand reasons for transfer, academic and social fit, and persistence to completion of degree, particularly for community college students who transfer to four-year institutions. Less attention has been paid to the psychosocial adjustment of transfer students and its role in their persistence and degree completion,

and there are few frameworks for advising transfer students that are aligned with literature in psychology and student development.

Due to the limited amount known about the psychosocial adjustment of transfer students and how adjustment impacts students' decisions to remain and complete their degree at the new institution, a study on the adjustment process during the first semester for transfer students is warranted. This study may shed light on how experiences in the first two semesters after transfer are related to adjustment and intentions to persist.

Together, both student development and psychosocial adjustment theories may provide a lens to gain insight on adjustment for transfer students. This study may provide insight to transfer student experiences and adjustment that could contribute to creating a model of advising for this population.

This study addressed factors that could possibly enhance or detract from psychosocial adjustment during the first semester of transfer at a four-year southeast urban research institution. Specifically, this research investigated the early academic and psychosocial adjustment and experiences of transfer students. Two related questions guided this investigation. Among psychology transfer students at a large, four-year urban research institution in the southeastern United States,

1. To what extent are transfer capital and university experiences related to a sense of belonging at the end of the first year?
2. To what extent do transfer capital, university experiences, and a sense of belonging affect likelihood of intentions to persist at the institution?

Student Success and Transfer Students

A great deal of research has been conducted on first-year experiences (e.g., Tinto, 1989; Pascarella & Terenzini 2005; Townsend & Wilson, 2006, Laanan, 2007). Transfer students are a

population that is often neglected during the transition from a community college into a four-year institution (Townsend & Wilson, 2006). Personal, sociological, and psychological factors all work in concert toward adjustment and attainment of a baccalaureate degree (Wang, 2009). Understanding how these factors relate to integration and success (i.e., adjustment) of transfer students as they transition into a four-year institution is important in order to identify what factors are related to psychosocial adjustment and consequently, time to degree.

Traditionally, college student success is measured using GPA, continued enrollment at the current institution, and completions of degree; however, Kuh, Kinzie, and Buckley (2006) determined several other factors that may define student success. These factors include academic achievement, engagement in educationally purposeful activities, satisfaction, acquisition of desired knowledge, skills and competencies, persistence, attainment of educational objectives, and post-college performance (Kuh et al., 2006). While these factors are considered to be precursors or indicators of success, they may also impact student adjustment as well. While the importance of these factors has been well-established for first-year student success (Wild & Ebbers, 2002), it is important to understand that transfer students may be affected differently in terms of adjustment and, subsequently success.

Students transfer between institutions for several reasons, including articulation agreements, sidestepping entrance criteria, cost, and the desire to earn a bachelor's degree (Tinto, 1996). Several classifications have been developed to describe transfer students, including vertical, horizontal, reverse, swirling, and double-dipping (Kirk-Kuwaye and Kirk-Kuwaye, 2007; McCormick, 2003; Townshend and Dever, 1999). Vertical transfers enter a four-year institution from a two-year institution, horizontal transfers move from a four-year to a four-year institution. Students who make a lateral transfer to a four-year

institution often desire a change in location or a better academic and social fit (Wang, 2009). They may have not had the experience they desired in the previous institution and desire a smaller or larger environment, to be closer or farther from home, or the new institution has academic programs that are more aligned with their educational goals.

Transfer students differ from native students because, unlike incoming first-year students, they have college experience and may assume that the practices and policies of the new institution are the same as their previous school. Having had prior experience in college may create a schema of what the new institution will be like and may create a false perception based on their familiarity with the prior institution. These perceptions may facilitate or detract from their adjustment. Based on the different origins or type of transfer student, there are potentially different factors at play that may enhance or detract from their transfer experiences, which may affect their time to degree. Regardless of their transfer classification, students will experience some kind of adjustment during the transfer process.

Psychosocial factors may play a role in transfer students' decision to persist at a new institution thus promoting time to degree. Themes have emerged from the literature regarding the engagement and adjustment of transfer students and include transfer shock (Diaz, 1992), rejection (Alexander, Ellis, & Mendoza-Denton, 2009), satisfaction (Berger & Malaney, 2003), and expectations at the new institution (Owen, 2010). There has also been a heightened focus on transfer students' sense of belonging at the new institution as a factor that may facilitate the adjustment process (Townshend & Wilson, 2006). Comfort has been discussed as a factor that increases the likelihood that the student has made a good academic and social fit with the new institution (Eggleston & Laanan, 2001).

Laanan (2004, 2007) is one of the foremost researchers on transfer student experience; he developed the Laanan Transfer Student Questionnaire (L-TSQ©) to understand non-cognitive key factors that impact the adjustment process for transfer students. Laanan (2004, 2007) proposed transfer capital and university experiences; constructs measured by the L-TSQ©; both have a significant influence on transfer students' adjustment. Transfer capital refers to academic counseling experiences, perceptions of the transfer process, and experiences with faculty at the previous institution prior to transfer. University experiences pertain to the student's perceptions of social and academic fit at the new institution.

Thus, while there is evidence to support the notion that transfer student engagement improves student success and persistence towards degree completion, few studies exist that address the psychosocial adjustment of college transfer students. The researcher has designed and conducted a dissertation study to address this gap in the literature.

Design of the Study

The researcher used a correlational study design to examine psychosocial adjustment and intentions to persist among psychology transfer students at a large, four-year urban research institution. Student development and psychosocial development literature were the two main bodies that guided this study. Laanan's work (2004, 2007) on transfer students, and particularly the development of the Laanan-Transfer Student Questionnaire (L-TSQ ©), was the framework for the survey used. The final survey instrument included two of Laanan's scales (transfer capital and university experiences);

and the researcher added a third scale to examine sense of belonging based on the literature (Townsend & Wilson, 2006).

The survey was piloted prior to distribution to the intended cohort of transfer students. Ten transfer students who had been at the institution for two years or more were asked to respond to the pilot survey so that the author could determine if the questions were valid, approximately how long it took to complete the survey, and whether a need existed for clarification, removal or addition of survey items. Upon completion of the pilot, the recommended changes were made on the instrument. The new survey was distributed via email. The time of administration was chosen as a point where the students had enough time to experience university academics.

The study used a volunteer sample of transfer students who entered the psychology major at institution under study in the fall of 2013. All 138 students in the cohort were invited to participate, and 39 students returned complete responses. The students in this cohort were students who had attended orientations summer 2013 prior to enrollment and registration. Participants in the sample had previously attended a community college, a four-year, institution, or both a four-year and two-year institution.

The data analysis was conducted in three steps: 1) descriptive analyses of item and scale means and bivariate correlations between variables; 2) multiple regression analysis to understand the extent to which transfer capital and university experiences were related to sense of belonging (research question 1); and 3) logistic regression analysis to understand the extent to which transfer capital, university experiences, and sense of belonging would increase the likelihood of intentions to persist at the institution.

Hypotheses

The researcher hypothesized that transfer capital and university experiences would positively contribute to sense of belonging and that transfer capital, university experiences, and sense of belonging would increase likelihood of intentions to persist towards degree attainment.

Delimitations

The following parameters defined the study.

1. Only transfer students in psychology department at the institution under study were included in the sampling frame for the study.
2. The study occurred during the second semester after transfer to permit adequate time for students to report perceptions of university experiences and sense of belonging. Thus, any students who may not have returned after the first semester are not included.
3. Psychosocial adjustment is operationalized as sense of belonging at the transfer institution.

Limitations

Limitations of the study are those characteristics that limit the ability to generalize the results of the study.

1. The final sample size is small ($n=39$) and represented only 28% of the student cohort invited to complete the survey.
2. The participants were primarily White women; however this is representative of the general lack of diversity in the psychology program both at the institution and across programs in the nation.

3. The researcher used existing instruments and research literature to develop the survey instrument; however, it was not possible to generate validity evidence for the constructs due to the small sample size.

Definitions

1. Transfer capital (TC) refers to any skill, experience or knowledge that assisted the student with the transfer process. This includes courses needed, academic counseling, and perceptions of the transfer process, learning and study skills, and interactions with faculty, financial awareness, mentoring, and motivation to transfer into the new institution (Laanan, 2004, 2007).
2. University experiences (UE) include the students' relationship to faculty and staff, how they handled navigation of a new campus, level of class participation, if they felt alienated, and finally, whether the student was overwhelmed by the size of the new institution (Laanan 2004, 2007).
3. Sense of belonging (BE) is defined as feeling comfortable at the new institution in the classroom and on campus, and feelings of acceptance from faculty and staff and other students. Sense of belonging is the indicator of psychosocial adjustment for this study (Townsend & Wilson, 2006).
4. Persistence is defined as the intention to remain at the receiving institution and complete a bachelor's degree.

Significance of the Study

Increased numbers of transfer students in U.S. higher education have resulted in increased efforts to understand the needs of these students (Vander Schee, 2007).

Personal, sociological, and psychological factors all work in concert toward adjustment

and attainment of a baccalaureate degree (Wang, 2009), and understanding how these factors relate to integration and success of transfer students as they transition into a four-year institution is important to enhance advising practices and assist them through their academic careers.

This study may shed light on factors that influence transfer students to continue on in the following semester and complete their degree. Specifically, the study's findings may lead to the development of a practical framework for advising transfer students that is aligned with survey results and the literature on transfer students. The researcher's inquiry into psychosocial adjustment stems from her clinical background in counseling and current role as a teacher and adviser to psychology transfer students. Pursuing a degree in educational leadership, combined with a psychology background creates a unique approach grounded in both areas to explore psychosocial adjustment for this population.

Summary

This dissertation presents a study that examined psychosocial adjustment and intentions to persist for transfer students coming from both two- and four-year institutions into a psychology department in a large southeastern urban four-year research institution. The combination of the themes present in the literature (transfer shock, rejection, satisfaction and expectations) as well as the psychological stages of development and higher education transition theories served as the conceptual foundation regarding transfer students' perceptions of their transfer capital, university experiences, and a sense of belonging. Transfer capital, university experiences and a sense of belonging pertained to psychosocial adjustment for transfer students. Positive psychosocial adjustment was

posited as a precursor to remaining at the institution and transfer students' intent to complete a bachelor's degree at the institution.

This study is presented in five chapters. In chapter one, the problem, its significance, and mode of inquiry are presented. A review of the literature pertaining to transfer students, student development, and psychosocial development theories is presented in chapter two, along with the conceptual framework for the study. The methods used to gather and analyze the data from the survey instrument are presented in chapter three. Chapter four provides the research findings and analysis of the data. In chapter five, a summary, conclusion, implications, and suggestions for future research are discussed.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Transfer students are of great interest to college administrators, faculty, and staff as the need to ensure completion to degree has increased in most higher education institutions for financial and political reasons. Much of the focus has been on transfer students who come from community colleges and enter a four-year institution, stemming from articulation agreements in many states between community colleges and four-year institutions that aim to allow students to earn an associate's degree at a community college and make a seamless transition to a four-year institute to obtain a bachelor's degree within two years. The need to understand what happens to the community college transfer student after entering the four-year institution, and the investigation of time to degree after transfer, has spurred the literature on transfer students coming from community colleges.

In order to understand transfer students it is helpful to understand the development of college students in general. The conceptual framework for the study was developed through an inquiry into developmental theories from the fields of psychology and student development in higher education, followed by review of research on the adjustment of transfer students to make connections between the psychological and student development theories and the notions of transfer capital and university experiences. The literature review presented in this chapter begins with a description of the types of transfer. Next, the conceptual framework for the study is presented through discussing the psychological and student development theories on which it is based.

Finally, themes from the research literature transfer students will be highlighted with an emphasis on the most recent work and studies on the adjustment of transfer students.

Transfer Student Categories

Every transfer student has a particular story and reason(s) for changing institutions. Each path varies and may be influenced by many factors. It may be impossible to identify a prototype of the transfer student due to the variations amongst all transfers, but it is helpful to categorize the “types” of transfer students that are known. According to Kirk-Kuwaye & Kirk –Kuwaye (2007), transfer students fall into one or more of the following categories:

- Vertical transfer,
- Horizontal transfer,
- Reverse transfer,
- Swirling transfer,
- Double dipping transfer.

The vertical transfer student is one who began at a community college with intentions to either earn an associate’s degree or accumulate a number of credits and then transfer into a four-year institution to attain a bachelor’s degree (Kirk-Kuwaye & Kirk-Kuwaye, 2007). Many institutions have articulation agreements in place between community colleges and four-year institutions to address the needs of the vertical transfer student. Horizontal transfer students are those who move from a four-year institution to another four-year institution. The pursuit is linear as with the vertical transfer student, however these students often have a more difficult time adjusting at the new institution despite the fact that they had already attended a four-year institution.

Townsend and Dever (1999) categorized reverse transfer students into one of two subsets: (1) Students who begin their education at a four-year school and then transfer to a two-year school and stay there for a while, perhaps to degree completion (the more common subset and the one that is typically meant by the term); or (2) Students who attend a two-year college, often during the summer, simply to earn a few credits that can be transferred back to their four-year college. Reverse transfer students also can be those students who have earned a bachelor's degree and return to a four-year institution to earn a second bachelor's degree. Reverse transfer students may have a positive experience and show an increase in GPA after they transfer (Townshend & Dever, 1999).

McCormick (2003) discussed two other definitions of transfer students: swirling and double-dipping. Swirling transfer students are a group of students who may go back and forth between two and four-year institutions may not matriculate in a program at either institution, may transfer between terms. The non-committal nature of the student who moves back and forth between institutions may demark the lack of direction and motivation to complete a degree. Double-dipping transfer students may be enrolled in one institution while supplementing their course load by taking a class at another institution simultaneously, with the intention to complete the degree requirements at the home institution. This behavior may be more indicative of taking a difficult class in a place other than the home institution with plans to transfer it back in, and may not exactly meet the criteria of a transfer.

There are many ways to examine and understand the challenges that transfer students might face in terms of adjustment based on the type of transfer status they occupy. Regardless of the type, it is understandable that all transfer students must make

an adjustment by virtue of changing institutions, and that the change may be positive or negative based on their perceptions, preparation, and reasons for the transfer.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical background and framework for this study was developed iteratively, by examining identity development theories from psychology along with student development theories from higher education. These served as the background for the investigation, however it was Lanaan's (1998, 2004, 2007) work on transfer student adjustment, specifically transfer capital and university experiences (refer to chapter one for definitions), that guided the investigation of psychosocial adjustment and intentions to persist among transfer students.

Erik Erikson (Santrock, 2005) and Arthur Chickering (1993) both proposed stages of psychological development. Chickering's work was centered on college student development and how students acclimate to the college environment and successfully transition into their new role as a college student. Erikson's stages of psychosocial development come from the field of psychology and encompass the stages of growth from birth until death. They are similar in the respect that they both address the traditional age of college students, yet they differ because Chickering focused solely on the development of the college student while Erikson's stages represent opportunities for growth at specific junctures in human development throughout the lifespan. Marcia (1966) extended the work of Erikson on identity development, while Tinto (1993) and others focused on adjustment and persistence in college. Each of these four theories was reviewed to provide a framework for the review of literature on transfer adjustment and outcomes.

Relationship with Identity Development Theories in Psychology

Perhaps one of the most salient theories in the field of psychology that applies to all of the themes and barriers in the literature regarding adjustment for transfer students are two stages of Erik Erikson's stages of identity development (Santrock, 2005).

Despite the fact that Erikson posited that certain stages parallel specific age ranges, one could argue that college transfer students entering a four-year institution experience issues surrounding identity vs. role confusion, and intimacy vs. isolation. Within all of Erikson's stages exists a crisis or a change that the person must successfully work through and negotiate in order to develop a healthy identity and sense of self. According to Erikson, Identity vs. Role Confusion calls into question one's sense of self and if a clear sense of self isn't established, the result is role confusion (Santrock, 2005). This stage is typical for adolescents, which makes sense due to the fact that the adolescent naturally is growing into himself and trying on different roles until he grows cognitively and socially enough to integrate a consistent sense of self. This stage can also be reflective of the transfer student coming into an unfamiliar and often larger institution compared to the previous community college. One of the tasks of the transfer student is to establish his identity in a new situation. If the student does not seek out or find supports such as peers, advisors, groups, his identity in the new institution may take longer to establish. A ramification of prolonging one's identity in a new institution may be a lack of connection, clarity, and result in feelings of confusion.

Intimacy vs. Isolation is directed at emerging adults into adulthood (Santrock, 2005). It could be argued that intimacy vs. isolation is a life-long issue as establishing intimate relationships requires a level of having a solid sense of self but also requires

vulnerability. For transfer students moving into a four-year institution, vulnerability could be a key factor in the experience. The goal is to establish connections so one does not feel isolated, yet in some of the literature transfer students did feel rejected and isolated (Alexander, Ellis, & Mendoza-Denton, 2009; Owens, 2010; Wang, 2009). Therefore, establishing connections is paramount to internalizing a sense of intimacy and belonging. This does not mean all transfer students need to make excessive friends or join groups yet it does reflect the importance of establishing some kind of connection either with a peer, academic advisor, or faculty member (Tinto, 1993).

James Marcia (1966) developed an extension of Erikson's work on identity development. Marcia expanded and elaborated on Erikson's theory with a focus on the adolescence stage of *Identity versus Role Confusion*. He identified patterns and various issues operating in youths exploring adolescent identity issues (Table 1).

Table 1: Marcia's ego identity statuses

Identity Status	Outcome
Diffusion	no crisis/no commitment
Foreclosure	no crisis/no commitment
Moratorium	crisis/no commitment
Achievement	crisis/commitment

According to Marcia (1996), in order to attain a mature identity, the person needs two variables that Erikson identified previously: crisis and/or exploration. Crisis and exploration can be understood as synonymous with opportunity and seeking. The adolescent reaches certain impasses and hence a "crisis" is presented, yet it is really an

opportunity to seek out further clarification of their role. Marcia added the commitment aspect. Commitment pertains to the extent that the individual is able to make choices about and have allegiance to aspirations, goals, values, beliefs and occupations (Bilsker & Marcia, 1991). Applying these criteria of the absence or the presence of crisis/exploration as well as that of commitment to Erikson's adolescence stage *Identity vs. role confusion*, four identity statuses emerge and provide the conceptual structure for Marcia's taxonomy of adolescence (Marcia, Waterman, Matteson, Archer, & Orlofsky, 1993).

1. The *identity-diffused* person has not experienced any identity crisis or exploration and therefore hasn't made any commitment to vocation or a set of beliefs.
2. The *foreclosure* person hasn't experienced any identity crisis or exploration but has committed to goals, values and beliefs based on influences from parents or significant others.
3. The person in the *moratorium* stage is in an acute state of crisis/exploration and actively seeking to define personal identity and establish values, beliefs and goals. Due to the active seeking state, the person will experiment with alternative roles but not make a commitment to the roles, values or beliefs attached to those roles.
4. *Identity achievement* reflects a person's experience of an identity crisis and has resolved the crisis on his own. The result is establishing a personal value system, a vocation, spiritual or religious beliefs, and is able to resolve his view towards values of sexuality.

It is appropriate to argue that the transfer student may be experiencing a combination of the Moratorium and Identity Achievement statuses. The crisis in the moratorium stage

may revolve around the circumstances that led to the transfer, and the commitment hasn't been made until the student begins to reform his/her identity at the new institution.

Relationship with Identity Development Theory from Higher Education

Chickering (1993) studied college student development by building on the premises of Erikson's discussion of identity and intimacy (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010). Chickering believed that establishing identity was a core factor for college students. He saw that college students must try to resolve many issues while in college that all may contribute to the students' growing sense of self. If the student could successfully address issues during this phase of life, they may build a stronger sense of identity and therefore aid in successfully navigating and resolving issues later in life.

According to Chickering, identity formation is the result of *vectors of development* and hence, he proposed that seven vectors influence identity formation and growth during the college years (1993). He noted, unlike Erikson, that students might move through these vectors at different rates while dealing with issues of development. Erikson's theory is based on stages and completion of one stage before moving to the next. Unlike stage development, students "move through vectors at different rates, that students may deal with issues from one or more vector at the same time, and that vectors can interact with each other" (Evans et al., 2010, p. 66). Emotional, interpersonal, ethical, and intellectual aspects of development are imbedded in the *seven vectors* within his Identity Theory. After Chickering published his initial theory, he worked with Reisser (Chickering & Reisser, 1993) and drew on and included others' research that was related to his identity theory. Together they revised Chickering's initial theory and published a revised edition of his work (Table 2).

Table 2: Chickering & Reisser's Seven Vector Theory

Vector	Goal
Developing Competence	intellectual, physical and manual competence
Managing Emotions	respond appropriately to emotions
Moving Through Autonomy Toward Independence	achieving emotional interdependence
Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships	developing deeper and meaningful relationships
Establishing Identity	comfort with self, sexual orientation, and esteem
Developing Purpose	goal clarification and commitment to creating plans
Developing Integrity	values and beliefs have implications in action

Each of these vectors reflects a specific goal or outcome that facilitates development during the college years. Together, both Erikson and Chickering have proposed theories that while focused on development would inherently be part of adjustment during the college years, and more specifically adjustment for transferring students.

Relationship to Academic and Social Adjustment in Higher Education

Personal, sociological, and psychological factors all work in concert towards adjustment and attainment of a baccalaureate degree (Wang, 2009). Academic and social adjustment has been discussed as feeling connected to the institution and having chosen a major and institution that is aligned with the students' goals and abilities (Pascarella, 1985).

According to Tinto (1982), optimal adjustment in a college setting creates stronger social, academic, and institutional integration that naturally leads to a stronger goal commitment of obtaining a degree. He later proposed (1993) that if students have academic experiences that create conflicts with their beliefs and values, they might find it difficult to integrate into the institution. The lack of integration may increase the probability of the student dropping out and therefore not obtaining their degree. Bean's research (1980; Bean & Metzner, 1985) supported Tinto's model of social, academic, and institutional integration and provided five additional factors including goal commitment, social support, general stress, academic stress, and depression. These five factors expanded Tinto's (1993) frame for integration thus expanding awareness of the many factors that are inherent in adjusting to college. In a meta-analysis on psychosocial factors as determinants of performance and persistence in college students, Robbins et al. (2004) found that performance and goal-based motivation, along with social connectedness were predictors of academic performance and persistence.

Understanding the adjustment issues transfer students face as they transition into a new institution is important in order to create appropriate policies, practices, and procedures to help them transition well and support persistence to degree obtainment.

One major principle to understanding the adjustment experiences of transfer students has been attributed to a temporary dip in GPA during the first semester at the new institution known as “transfer shock” (Hills, 1965; Diaz, 1992). Laanan, Starobin, and Eggleston (2011) built on Pascarella’s model of student learning to create hypothetical models of academic and social adjustment for transfer students (Woods, 2012). The purpose of the models was to measure the role of various social and psychological variables in students’ transition from community colleges to four-year institutions. These models examined how transfer student capital, which refers to the knowledge and experiences community college transfer students bring with them to the four-year university, impacted their adjustment (Woods, 2012). Lanaan’s work, and its connection to the theories in the conceptual model, will be explored in the following review of literature on transfer students.

Adjustment of Transfer Students

After exploring the theories related to identity development and adjustment in psychology and higher education, the researcher conducted a comprehensive review of the research literature on adjustment and psychosocial experiences of transfer students. Most studies focus on an aspect or outcome of the transfer process, including expectations, transfer shock, rejection, and satisfaction. Study of transfer shock is most dominant in the literature; studies exploring the social and psychological adjustment for community college transfer students during and after the transfer represent a much smaller body of work. More recently, work by Laanan (2004, 2007) and others has examined the process of transfer adjustment, considering experiences both prior to and

after transfer. Each body of literature is examined in relation to the guiding theories in the conceptual framework.

Expectations

Expectations can be central to how one adjusts through transitions (Nevid & Rathus, 2010). If transfer students arrive at the new institution with expectations that they will be well received and supported, will establish meaningful relationships, and feel that they belong at the institution, chances are they will adjust well and continue enrollment if these expectations are met. If experiences are the opposite of expectations, this could hinder adjustment and cause a student to decide to leave the institution.

Owens (2010) examined community college students' perceptions of the transfer process at a large research university using e-journaling. The students received interview questions via email and could respond in their own time. Owens classified the questions using the following classifications:

Descriptive: What occurred that is significant to you in your transfer adjustment process?

Metacognitive: What were your perceptions and feelings?

Analytic: What do you understand as the reasoning surrounding this issue?

Evaluative: What were the implications for you?

Reconstructive: What changes would you recommend?

Common transfer adjustment themes emerged and included expectations prior to entering the university, expectations that the new institution would be different from their community college and feelings of excitement and hesitation about fitting in at the university. The students perceived higher education as a commodity and themselves as

consumers and expected to receive services typical of those offered in the service industry. They were concerned about adapting and functioning in their new environment and chose many routes to achieve this, and also found it acceptable to work around policies and procedures in order to meet their needs. From a psychosocial perspective, their identities shifted and changed during the initial part of the transfer process. Community college transfer students expressed the need for attention, importance, and the desire for ego extension, dependence, and appreciation.

Transfer Shock

A great deal of literature has focused on the “transfer shock” community college transfer students experience during their first year at a four-year institution resulting in a temporary drop in GPA (Hills, 1964; Cejude, 1998; Diaz, 1992). Diaz analyzed several studies and found that 79% of community college transfers experienced “transfer shock”; however 34% of the studies she analyzed showed that transfer students recovered completely and 32% showed almost complete recovery with 32% showing partial recovery. This work shed some light on the academic side of “transfer shock” and the results were positive in the sense that after the initial drop in GPA most students were able to recover and improve their grades. Several of the studies that were examined offered various reasons for transfer shock including a change in grading practices and adjustment to a larger institution.

Other researchers (Berger, 2003; Flaga, 2006; Laanan, 2004; Townsend, 1995) have indicated additional factors that may contribute to “transfer shock.” These include being underprepared for the rigor at a four-year institution and a lack of guidance and engagement on behalf of the faculty and staff at the four-year institution. These issues

are certainly reflected in Erikson's fifth stage of Identity vs. Role Confusion. As the transfer student enters the new collegiate setting he may question his identity in this new place, in relation to others, and his ability to maintain any successes he experienced at the previous institution.

Rejection

Entering a four-year institution after attending a community college presents various challenges. Alexander, Ellis, and Mendoza-Denton (2009) found that a portion of community college students who transferred into a four-year institution experienced rejection by the native students. In this study the transfer students even went so far as to hide their transfer status when they interacted with native students. Entering a new environment and trying to fit in can have damaging effects if one feels the need to hide their identity. This behavior can decrease connections with other students, create reluctance to initiating or participating in study groups, and can have negative social and academic consequences (Alexander et al., 2009). Astin (2011) made a case that student involvement facilitated a physical and psychological investment and created a connection with academics. This investment is thwarted if students are hiding their identity status as a transfer student. Students who experience barriers when moving in to the new institution may experience a difficult adjustment and it may be difficult to experience a sense of commitment to the institution (Evans et al., 2009). Rejection as it relates to Identity vs. Role Confusion may play a significant psychological role as transfer students' questions their decisions whether to reveal transfer status and risk rejection, or become comfortable with transfer status as they adjust to the new collegiate environment.

How a student resolves the above mentioned challenges would be linked to a sense of identity or confusion.

Satisfaction

Berger & Malaney (2003) surveyed 392 community college students at a large public four-year university. The focus of their research centered on achievement and student satisfaction in a multiple campus experience. The survey consisted of a 4-point Likert scale that inquired about the students' satisfaction regarding their university experience, academic progress, sense of community, academic advising, accessibility of faculty, and the ability to make friends. The findings showed that students' levels of satisfaction were consistent across the indicators of satisfaction. The lowest level of satisfaction was with academic support. An interesting finding regarded time spent studying and doing homework; those students who spent the most time studying and doing homework during their time at the community college were the least likely to be satisfied with academic support at the university. Perhaps this needs to be viewed in light of offering a stronger initial connection with advisors and resources upon entry into the four-year institution. Chickering (1993) clearly stated that academic support is crucial to developing self-competence.

In response to the narrow cognitive focus in the "transfer shock" literature, Flaga (2006) conducted a qualitative study that tracked 35 students during their first year at a four-year institution. The purpose of the study was to capture a deeper picture of the transfer process and included psychological aspects of students' experiences. The research question was two-fold and explored a) the nature of transition for the community

college transfer students during their first semester and b) how their experiences changed between their first and second semester at the new institution.

Through interviews and analysis, the findings revealed five dimensions of transition; Learning Resources, Connecting, Familiarity, Negotiating, and Integrating (Flaga, 2006). Learning Resources included both structured activities such as orientation, dealing with faculty, staff and advisors, and informal Learning Resources captured the exchange of information between the transfer students and their friends and alumni. The Connecting dimension centered on relationships that the transfer students developed with others in academic, social, and the physical environment within the institution. Familiarity occurred after the students had internalized all of the new information they received upon entrance to the school and as they moved away from comparing the new institution to the community college they attended. As students adjusted their behavior to their new surroundings over time, they developed the Negotiation dimension. Finally, the Integration dimension was reflected as a developmental change that occurred for some students resulting in a shift in perception or identity. Some of Chickering's vectors of psychosocial development appear to be reflected in these dimensions. Developing competence, moving through autonomy toward independence, and establishing identity are essential in the need to experience learning, establish connections with faculty and peers, and being able to integrate the overall experience into their sense of self and identity.

Flaga's (2006) work provided a different framework from the "transfer shock" paradigm and revealed a more complex picture for understanding the dynamics involved in the transfer process for community college students. This approach offered a deeper

and wider spectrum beyond the traditional use of GPA to assess the adjustment of transferring into a four-year institution.

How transfer students' experience satisfaction can be linked to Erikson's fifth and sixth stages of psychosocial development as it presents the issue of Identity vs. Role Confusion and Intimacy vs. Isolation. Erikson's eight-stage theory of psychosocial development worked from a premise that in order to develop a healthy sense of self, one needed to pass through eight stages that range from birth to death. The purpose of each stage is to deal with a "conflict" or "crisis" that will result in either one of the tasks of the transfer student is to become integrated in the new environment and integration can emerge through the establishment of satisfying relationships. If the student is able to do this he may feel that he belongs to and is part of the institution. These feelings of connection may stem from establishing meaningful relationships on campus or with classmates. Lack of success in establishing relationships may lead to feelings of isolation, which could result in loneliness and may thwart motivation to stay at the new campus and thus delay time to graduation.

Laanan's Study of the Transfer Student Experience

Like the researchers that studied rejection, satisfaction, and expectations, Laanan (2004) also moved away from the "transfer shock" concept by developing the Laanan-Transfer Students' Questionnaire (L-TSQ) ©, a survey instrument designed to measure transfer students' non-cognitive traits. The traits included students' attitudes, values, and interests in different areas. Laanan used this instrument in a study conducted at a large four-year research university specifically to investigate the experiences and performance of community college transfer students. The results revealed that students who had

greater difficulty adjusting at the four-year institution were those who had a negative perception about the four-year institution upon entry, needed a lot of guidance in the previous community college, expressed a low intellectual self-concept, and who spent many hours studying.

In subsequent research, Laanan (2007) focused on the student's background, community college experiences, experiences related to the transfer, and experiences at the receiving institution. Experiences in the student's background included their socioeconomic status, their financial needs for college, and if they held a job outside of school and if so, how many hours were worked. In addition to background information, Laanan considered the experiences the student had at the community college with faculty, staff, overall program, other students, advising, and any assistance provided prior to the transfer. This led to his development of two scales - Transfer Capital and University Experiences.

Laanan coined the term "transfer capital" to define the preparation students' experience prior to transferring into a four year university setting. Transfer capital refers to any skill, experience or knowledge that assists the student with the transfer process. This includes courses needed, academic counseling, and perceptions of the transfer process, learning and study skills, interactions with faculty, financial awareness, mentoring, and motivation to transfer into the new institution.

University experiences are reflected in student relationships to faculty and staff, how they prepared themselves for classes, the way they handled navigation of a new campus, and their participation level in class were included as university experiences. Laanan also considered any feelings of alienation experienced at the new institution along

with perceptions of stress level. Finally, the university experiences considered whether the student was overwhelmed by the size of the new institution.

Social and Academic Adjustment for Transfer Students

Differences in adjustment may be linked by a shift in physical environment from the smaller, more focused environment at the community college that naturally promoted social and academic engagement. Like Laanan (2007), Ishitani & McKitrick (2010) found that community college transfer students were used to having their classrooms serve as the center for social and academic engagement and were frustrated when this was not naturally replicated in the new institution. Further, transfer students were less engaged than native students. Engagement is at the foundation of Tinto's (1993); if engagement doesn't occur the full college experience may be dampened and commitment could also suffer possibly resulting in dropping out of college.

Townsend and Wilson (2006) cited the lack of research on the academic and social integration of community college transfer students as well. Using Tinto's (1993) idea of academic and social integration being extremely important for student engagement and retention at a four-year institution, they employed a qualitative study to examine the applicability of academic and social integration to community college transfer students' persistence in a large research university. In an initial study conducted in 2004, the researchers interviewed 19 community college transfer students to explore their perceptions of what facilitated their long-term academic, social integration and persistence. They followed up with these student in a 2008 study to see if they were still enrolled, graduated, dropped out, and what experiences contributed to their academic and

social integration. Eleven of the original students were still on campus and were interviewed.

The interview data suggested that academic integration occurred because the students persisted for several semesters after they transferred. The factors that facilitated persistence were having transferred at least 60 credit hours, having a GPA between 3.0 and 4.0, working with professors on research projects, and joining fraternities or major related clubs. Aside from those who did join clubs there was little social integration (Townsend & Wilson, 2009). Most students held jobs outside of school and perceived that they didn't have time to participate in university-sponsored activities nor the need to make friends. Despite the lack of social integration, students expressed that their persistence and success were fueled by the goal of attaining a bachelor's degree.

The conceptual theoretical framework that guided this study was two-fold, first, the inquiry of if, and how transfer capital and university experiences might increase a sense of belonging. The second area was to examine if transfer capital, university experiences, and a sense of belonging would increase the likelihood of intentions to persist. See Figure 1.

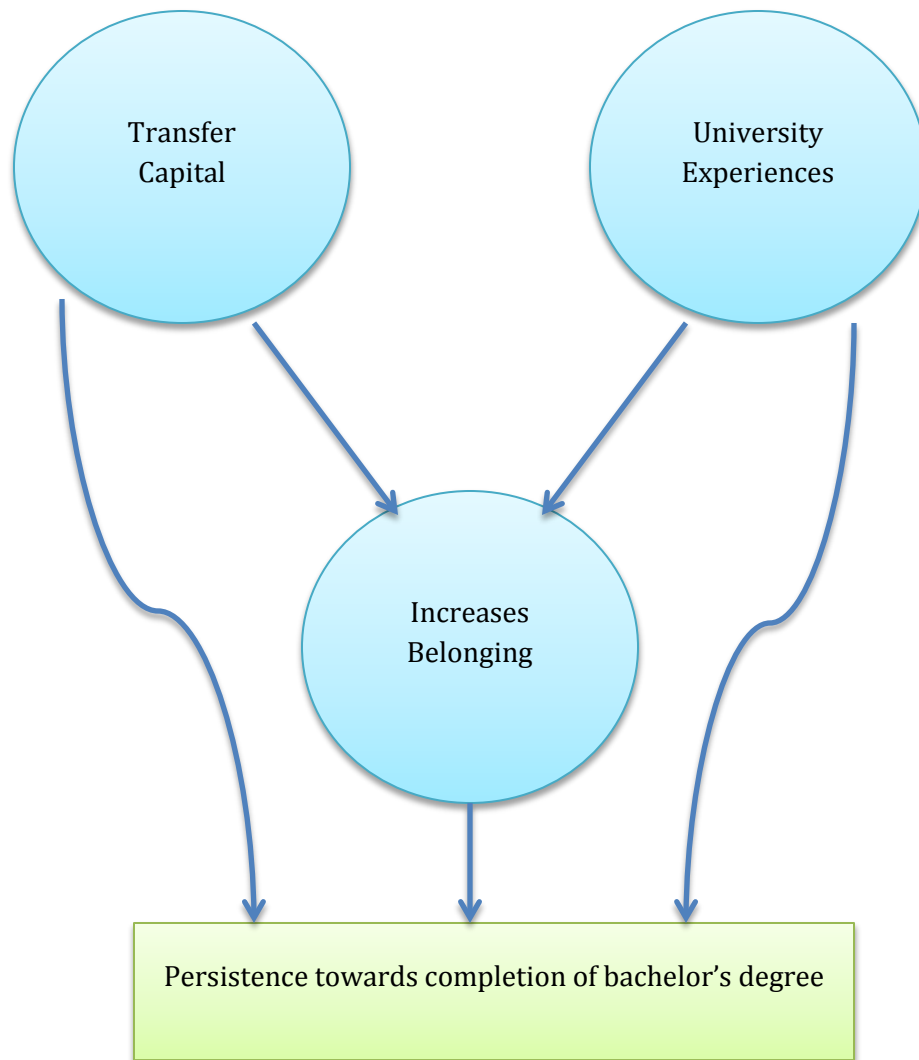


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of study

Discussion and Summary

The review of theories in psychology and student development in higher education demonstrate some overlap between the two disciplines that address psychosocial adjustment, and more specifically, successful adjustment indicating a sense of comfort. The combination of these theories can provide a lens in which to view the adjustment experiences for transfer students based on their psychological and student

development tasks. Laanan's (2004, 2007) work on transfer capital and university experiences in relation to a sense of belonging and ultimately adjustment is a way to gain more information about transfer student adjustment. Utilizing the salient aspects of each of these theories can provide a grounded approach to explore the transition for transfer students as they enter a new institution.

While it is apparent that transfer students experience various aspects of adjustment, or lack thereof when they enter a new institution, there are some contradictions regarding their adjustment needs. An argument exists that transfer students need to feel academically and socially connected to their institution in order ensure time to degree (Tinto, 1993). There is also an argument that transfer students do not need social connections to persist, but must have a goal in mind that drives their behavior to remain at the new institution and complete their degree (Townsend & Wilson, 2008). These conflicting views about what transfer students need and whether internal and external forces promote persistence provides an unclear conclusion.

Understanding if transfer capital and university experiences increase a sense of belonging, therefore feeling comfortable with the psychosocial adjustment, may garner important information for understanding their process as they transition into a new institution. This knowledge could provide opportunities to ensure that practices can be put into place to assist their transition. Understanding the tenets of transfer students' adjustment may shed some light on what factors, if any, serve to increase a sense of belonging and also intent to persist to degree.

Research that helps to explain what, if any, factors enhance psychosocial adjustment during the first semester of transfer is suggested. A study that examines

psychosocial adjustment for transfer students in their first semester may clarify what factors either enhances or detracts from their trajectory to obtain a degree. Research that investigates the early academic and psychosocial adjustment and experiences of transfer students at a large southeast urban research institution could contribute to what we already know about transfer adjustment and further extrapolate factors that contribute to their experiences of adjustment.

This chapter presented information regarding the categories of transfer students and discussed student development, psychosocial development, and the themes that have emerged regarding transfer students' experiences of the transfer process and settling in at the new institution. Erikson's theory of psychosocial adjustment, Chickering's seven vectors for college students, Marcia's identity status theory, and academic and social adjustment theories were explored. Together, these theories provided insight into the psychosocial dynamics at play for college students. The emergent themes from the body of literature on transfer students were included with connections to student development and psychosocial theories. Finally, Laanan's seminal work with community college students was included to introduce the instrument (L-TSQ ©) that he developed to measure non-cognitive factors of adjustment before, during, and after the transfer process.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore psychosocial adjustment for transfer students after their first semester in a large southeast urban research institution in the department of psychology. Two related questions guided this investigation.

Among psychology transfer students at a large, four-year urban research institution in the southeastern United States,

1. To what extent are transfer capital and university experiences related to a sense of belonging at the end of the first year? and,
2. To what extent do transfer capital, university experiences, and a sense of belonging affect likelihood of intentions to persist at the institution?

This study considered that experiences prior to transfer and during the first year would contribute to a sense of belonging, and would act as precursors to intent to finish a degree at the new institution. Research on adjustment of transfer students is limited primarily to the study of transfer shock, and there is a lack of research focusing on transfer by major. This study specifically explored whether transfer capital, university experiences, and a sense of belonging at the new institution influenced the students to stay at the institution after their first semester with intent to complete their degree.

Hypotheses

It was assumed that if students had positive experiences with transfer capital and university experiences during the first year, that they would report positive sense of belonging. Also, it was assumed that transfer capital, university experiences, and sense

of belonging would all increase the likelihood of intention to persist toward degree attainment.

Context and Site of Study

The study took place in an undergraduate psychology department of a large, four-year urban research institution in the Southeastern United States. The psychology undergraduate major serves on average of 1,300 students per semester and is one of the largest majors in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. The psychology department was chosen because on average, 47% of transfer students declare psychology as their major upon entry to the institution. Due to the size of most psychology majors, the student population tends to be large and representative of transfer students in other large majors. In addition to being a large major, psychology is a popular major and all but three classes are available to students from all majors. When transfer students come into the psychology major, they are often closed out of classes that have been filled with native students. Another relevant reason the department was chosen was because the researcher is the academic advising coordinator in the psychology department and has been working with transfer students for the past seven years.

Research Design and Procedure

The study employed a correlational design to address the two research questions on adjustment and intentions to persist among psychology transfer students at the institution under study. Data were collected using a survey developed by the researcher based on Laanan's (2004, 2007) instrument. A pilot study approved by the Institutional Review Board (Appendix A) was conducted prior to distribution to the intended cohort of transfer students in March 2014. Ten transfer students who had been at the institution for

two years were invited to participate (Appendix B, Appendix C) and respond to the pilot survey (Appendix D) so that the researcher could determine if the questions were valid, approximately how long it took to complete, and whether there was a need for further clarification, removal or addition of survey items. When the pilot was completed, the researcher held individual meetings with each of the pilot participants and changed the wording on questions 4 and 5 under the sense of belonging scale. It was estimated that the survey took on average 10-15 minutes of the respondents' time.

After the pilot phase was completed and the revised questionnaire and study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (Appendix E), the population of psychology transfer students (N=138) received an email requesting participation in the study (Appendix F) including a letter of consent (Appendix G). Participants were asked to provide an email address as an identifier, and then were sent a link to the survey (Appendix H). Once they entered the survey arena, they were asked to read and electronically sign a consent form. A signature on the consent form allowed the participant to move ahead and answer the survey questions. Data collection for this study occurred 10 weeks after the cohort finished the first semester. The time of collection was chosen because the students had completed their first semester, and had time to adequately reflect on their adjustment experiences before and during their first semester.

Participants

All transfer students in the psychology department at the institution of study received an invitation to participate in the study. A total of 39 complete responses were received. Twelve incomplete responses were not considered for the study. Among the 39 participants, the majority was female (77%), with an age range of 19-51. The average age

of participants was 27 years old. The participants, on average worked outside of the university 14 hours per week. Of the participant pool, 74% reported coming from a two-year institution and 26% reported transferring from a four-year institution. Most students identified as Caucasian (62%), while the remaining demographic makeup was reported as 28% African American, 8% Latino, and 2% Native American. See Table 3.

Table 3: Demographics of participants compared to all transfer students in Psychology fall 2013

	Participants n=39	Transfer Population in Psychology n=158
Age Range	19-51 <i>M</i> (27.86) <i>SD</i> (10.34)	18-54 <i>M</i> (24.10) <i>SD</i> (16.9)
Previous College		
two-year	74%	66%
four-year	26%	34%
Gender		
Male	23%	26%
Female	77%	74%
Ethnicity		
Caucasian	62%	60%
African American	28%	20%
Latino	8%	10%
Native American	3%	0.01%
Asian	0%	0.02%
Multiple	0%	0.03%
Unknown	0%	0.01%

The data source for this study was student responses to a survey developed by the researcher adapting items from the Laanan Transfer Student Questionnaire (L-TSQ©, 2004, 2007) and additional items created to measure sense of belonging based on the social and academic adjustment literature of transfer students (Eggleston & Laanan, 2001). Four variables used in the examination of the research study were measured using the questionnaire: transfer capital, university experiences, sense of belonging, and intentions to persist. In this section, the researcher describes the instrument development and measurement of the variables used in the data analysis (Figure 2).

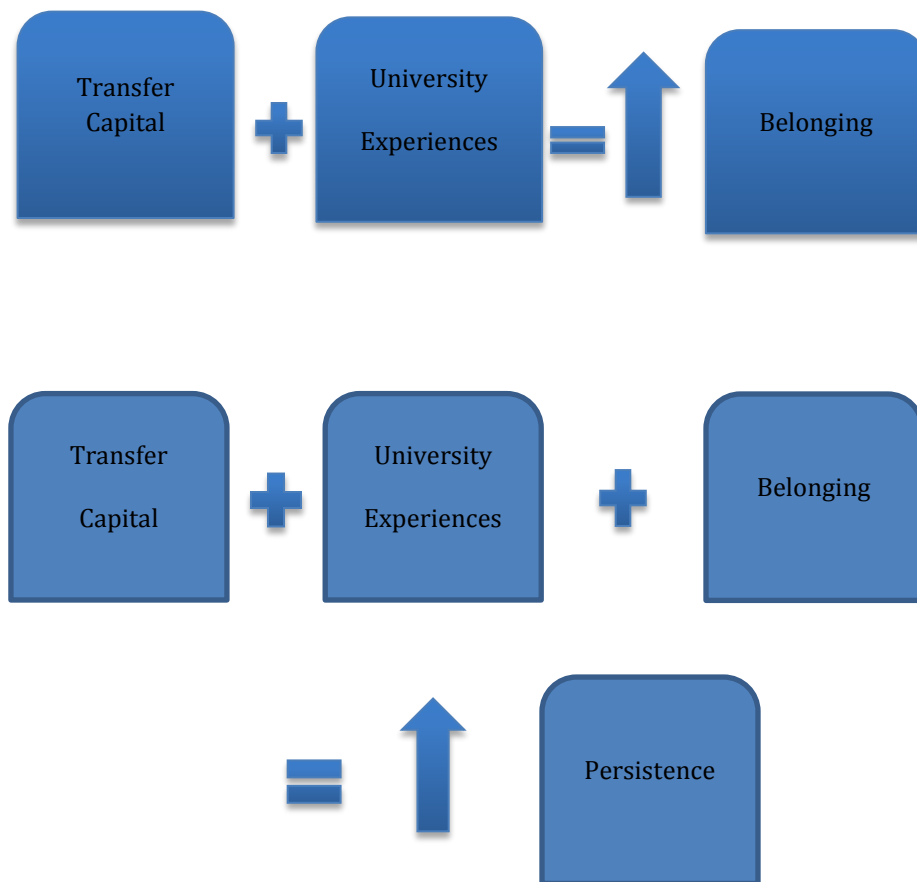


Figure 2: Variables and expected outcomes

Instrumentation

Researchers often create their own instruments because none exist that include all of the variables the researcher wishes to study. A survey should be brief, attractive, and easy for respondents to understand (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009). Structured, or closed-ended, items should be used and questions should relate directly to the topic without leading the respondent to answer a specific way. The framework for the survey instrument used in this study is Laanan's (2004, 2007) work on the Laanan Transfer Survey Questionnaire (L-TSQ©). Laanan's L-TSQ© is based on Astin's (1975, 1977, 1984, & 1993) Student Development theory and Pace's (1980) Quality of Effort theory. Both of these theories were guiding forces for Laanan to understand more about the adjustment process for community college students who transferred into a four-year institution.

The survey developed for this study contained 25 items (Appendix H). Of the 25, 4 questions pertained to transfer capital (TC), 8 to university experiences (university experiences), and 6 fell under the category of belonging (BE). The full wording of each item used in the study is shown in Appendix H and Chapter 4, Table 5. Responses to these items were on a four-point Likert-type scale, strongly agree (4), agree (3), disagree (2), and (1) strongly disagree. A single item on how likely the student was to finish the degree at the institution was on a five-point Likert-type scale, including very unlikely (1), unlikely (2), undecided (3), likely (4), and very likely (5). The questions were close-ended in order to seek a clear response from the respondent. Additional demographic questions were included to determine gender, type of institution(s) previously attended, work hours per week, and financial aid status.

Variables

Three independent variables were measured in this study using the survey instrument. Scale scores for transfer capital (TC), university experiences (UE), and sense of belonging (BE) were created by calculating the mean score of the related items (see Chapter 4, Table 4 for the item and scale statistics). Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted on the items proposed for these three scales to examine the number of factors extracted based on eigenvalues of 1 or higher. The EFA clearly showed a division in the UE items, with four items indicating a positive perception of university experiences and the other four indicating a negative perception of university experiences. In consultation with the dissertation chair, the researcher decided to include only the positive UE construct in the regression analyses.

An intention to persist at the institution was measured by a single item, as described above. Because of the distribution of the responses to the item (most choosing “very likely”), the researcher elected to dichotomize this variable to separate students with high intentions to persist from those with moderate intentions to persist.

Analysis

The data analysis for this study was conducted in three steps. First, descriptive analysis of item and scale means and standard deviations, along with bivariate correlations between TC, UE, and BE. The second step involved multiple regression analysis to examine the first research question about the extent to which transfer capital and university experiences are related to sense of belonging. The final step was to conduct a logistic regression analysis to examine the extent to which transfer capital, university experiences, and sense of belonging were related to the likelihood of intentions

to persist. All analyses were conducted using SPSS 20 or 21, and all statistical tests were evaluated at $\alpha=0.05$.

Reliability and Validity in Quantitative Research

Reliability

Reliability refers to consistency or stability in the scores obtained on a given assessment (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). The statistical coefficient used to indicate internal consistency is Cronbach's Alpha. The more reliable an instrument is the more confident one can be in the scores obtained through analysis of the instrument. The reliability coefficients for the scores in this study were acceptable - TC $\alpha=0.73$, UE $\alpha=0.76$, and BE $\alpha=0.87$.

Validity

This study used constructs previously developed and validated by Laanan (2004, 2007). Construct validity for the three scores in this study was limited, but generally supported for transfer capital and sense of belonging using exploratory factor analysis. While Laanan proposed that university experiences was a single construct, the EFA for the data in this study showed that the items seemed to be dividing into positive and negative university experiences. The researcher decided to focus only on positive experiences, to have more parsimonious regression models. In addition, sample size was a consideration in retaining a limited number of variables for the regression analyses.

Limitations

The following limitations were set to give definite parameters for the study.

1. The study was limited to transfer students in the psychology department at a large urban southeastern research institution;

2. The participants were in their second semester;
3. A limitation of the study is that the researcher defined psychosocial adjustment based on the psychological literature on comfort and is specific to this population only.

Delimitations

Due to the small sample size and select group from a southeastern urban research institution, the results of the study may not be generalizable to other student populations; however, the findings may be important regarding transfer students in their major and set the stage to create practices that will better serve this population.

Conclusion

This study examined the psychosocial adjustment for transfer students at a large, southeastern urban research institution in a psychology major. The two goals of the study were to look at whether transfer capital and university experiences contributed to a sense of belonging for transfer students, and also to explore if the students' perceptions of transfer capital, university experiences, and sense of belonging had any impact on the likelihood of intent to persist to degree. Analysis of the data included the use of descriptive statistics, bivariate correlation to examine correlations between transfer capital, university experiences, and sense of belonging, then using multiple regression to examine whether transfer capital and university experiences would predict sense of belonging, and finally, conducting a logistic regression to see if transfer capital, university experiences, and sense of belonging would predict intention to persist. The survey data allowed the researcher to understand the factors involved in either promoting or preventing a positive adjustment for transfer students in their first semester and

consequently deciding to stay at the institution. The findings may lead to creation or changing current policies for orienting and supporting transfer students during their initial semester at the institution.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the psychosocial adjustment of transfer students by adapting questions from transfer capital and university experiences categories of the pre-existing L-TSQ© Survey Instrument (Laanan, 2004, 2007). A third scale was added to examine a sense of belonging. The study used a newly adapted instrument to measure whether transfer capital and university experiences contributed to sense of belonging and if transfer capital, university experiences, and sense of belonging had any significant impact on the likelihood of intent to persist towards degree completion at the new institution.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of psychosocial adjustment in the intentions to persist among transfer students in the psychology major. Two related questions were explored in this study.

Among psychology transfer students at a large, four-year urban research institution in the southeastern United States,

1. To what extent are transfer capital and university experiences related to a sense of belonging at the end of the first year?
2. To what extent do transfer capital, university experiences, and a sense of belonging affect likelihood of intentions to persist at the institution?

The data were analyzed in three steps. First, the researcher examined the descriptive statistics for the individual items and the constructs, including bivariate correlations. In the second step, an ordinary least squares (OLS) multiple regression analysis was conducted to evaluate research question 1 about the extent to which transfer capital and university experiences are related to a sense of belonging. Finally, in the third step, a logistic regression analysis was run for research question 2, examining the extent to which transfer capital, university experiences, and sense of belonging are related to the likelihood to persist at the institution.

Descriptive Information

Cronbach's alpha means, and standard deviations for each construct are displayed in Table 4. The means for transfer capital ($M=2.82$) and sense of belonging ($M=2.76$) fall

between “Disagree” and “Agree” on the four-point scale. University experiences had the highest mean ($M=3.20$), but the lowest variance. Among the items means, students reported lowest agreement with transfer capital items, and the least agreement with the item that they had sought access to academic advisors at the four-year institution before transfer ($M=2.40$).

Table 4: Descriptive characteristics for constructs and questionnaire items (n=39)

	M	SD
Transfer Capital ($\alpha=0.73$)	2.82	0.07
I sought access to academic advisors at the institution before transfer to assist me in planning.	2.40	1.13
I made sure I understood the advice provided by my advisors regarding the transfer process.	2.80	1.05
The information I received from advisors at the institution was consistent with my previous institution.	2.80	0.95
I made sure that I was aware of what was required of me prior to transferring to this institution.	3.30	0.75
University Experiences ($\alpha=0.76$)	3.20	0.50
It is easy for me to reach out to faculty and staff in the Psychology Department at this institution.	3.10	0.79
It has been easy to find my way around campus.	3.10	0.80
I am prepared for my classes prior to the class meeting.	3.40	0.66
I participate often in my classes.	3.20	0.70
Sense of Belonging ($\alpha=0.87$)	2.76	0.65
I have a lot in common with other students in my classes.	2.70	0.80
I feel a sense of belonging with the university.	2.70	0.86
I have a close friend or classmate whom I can turn to if I need support.	2.70	0.94
I feel a sense of belonging when I am in my classes.	2.80	0.72
I feel a sense of belonging when I go to the department.	2.90	0.91

Participants were asked how likely they would be to finish their degree at the institution as the main outcome of interest in this study (intentions to persist). 72% reported “very likely,” 22% reported “likely,” 3% reported “very unlikely,” and 3% reported that they were undecided. Given this distribution, the outcome variable was dichotomized into “high” (72%) and “moderate” (28%) intentions to persist.

The strongest correlation between variables was between university experiences and sense of belonging, $r(39) = 0.61, p < .05$, followed by the correlation between transfer capital and sense of belonging, $r(39) = 0.53, p < .05$. Transfer capital was positively correlated with university experiences, but this correlation was not statistically significant, $r(39) = .26, p = .117$. Results of the correlations suggested the multiple regression analysis was the appropriate next step.

Multiple Regression Analysis

The total variance explained for sense of belonging by transfer capital and university experiences was moderately high and statistically significant ($R^2 = 0.52, p < .05$). Transfer capital and university experiences both contributed uniquely and significantly to explaining sense of belonging at the end of the first year (Table 5).

Table 5: Prediction of sense of belonging

Model	B	β	S.E.	p
Transfer Capital	0.36	0.403	0.107	0.002
University Experiences	0.66	0.505	1.56	0.000

Logistics Regression Analysis

In the final step of the analysis, a logistic regression analysis was performed on intent to finish degree as the dichotomous outcome (coded 0 = moderately likely to complete degree and 1 = very likely to complete degree) and transfer capital, university experiences, and sense of belonging as independent variables.

A test of the full model with all three predictors against a constant-only model was statistically significant, $\chi^2 (1, n = 39) = 8.204, p = .009$, indicating that the predictors reliably distinguished between subjects who were very likely to finish their degree and those who expressed moderate likelihood. Based on Cox and Snell R^2 equal (0.19) and Nagelkerke R^2 (0.27), the model showed limited fit to the data. Predicted success was adequate, with 71.8 of the participants correctly predicted. Among the three predictors, only university experiences significantly improved the odds of intentions to persist at the institution (OR=22.096, $p < .05$). Table 6 shows the regression coefficients, Wald statistics, statistical significances, and Exp(B) for each of the predictors.

Table 6: Prediction of odds of intentions to persist

Predictors	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>Wald</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig <.01</i>	<i>OR</i>
Transfer Capital	.915	.798	1.317	1	.251	2.497
University Experiences	3.095	1.378	5.047	1	.025	22.096
Sense of Belonging	-1.379	1.602	1.687	1	.194	.252
Constant	-7.981	3.770	4.481	1	.034	71.8

Summary

The findings show three important outcomes related to psychosocial adjustment and intentions to persist among psychology transfer students in this study. First, the bivariate correlations between transfer capital and sense of belonging and between university experiences and sense of belonging were both positive and statistically significant. The multiple regression results indicated that both transfer capital and university experiences contribute significantly to a sense of belonging. Finally, positive university experiences significantly increase the odds of intentions to persist to degree completion. These findings and their implications will be further discussed in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the study in retrospect. Herein, the researcher will revisit the research problem; review of the methodology, summary of the results, interpretations of findings, implications and suggestions for further research will be discussed.

Statement of the Problem

Research has been conducted on transfer students, such as classifying transfer students, reasons for transfer, academic and social fit, as well as potential completion of degree. However, there is a gap in the literature regarding the psychosocial adjustment for transfer students. Further, most of the research has focused on community college students who transfer to four-year institutions, with less attention to overall adjustment of transfer students during their first year. A comprehensive framework aligned with the literature regarding adjustment and transfer student experiences is needed to be able to understand and advise different types of transfer students from both two and four-year institutions.

This study addressed factors that could possibly enhance or detract from psychosocial adjustment during the first semester of transfer at a four-year southeast urban research institution. Specifically, this research investigated the early academic and psychosocial adjustment and experiences of transfer students. Two related questions guided this investigation. Among psychology transfer students at a large, four-year urban research institution in the southeastern United States,

1. To what extent are transfer capital and university experiences related to a sense of belonging at the end of the first year?
2. To what extent do transfer capital, university experiences, and a sense of belonging affect likelihood of intentions to persist at the institution?

Due to the limited amount known about psychosocial adjustment among transfer students, and the extent to which adjustment impacts student decisions to remain and complete a degree at the new institution, a study on the adjustment process during the first semester for transfer students was conducted.

Review of the Methodology

This study used a correlational design based on data gathered from psychology transfer students using a survey instrument developed by the researcher. Student development and psychosocial development literature were the two main bodies that guided this study. Laanan's work (2004,2007) on transfer students, and particularly the development of the Laanan-Transfer Student Questionnaire (L-TSQ©), was the framework for the survey used. The final survey instrument used two of Laanan's scales; transfer capital (TC) and university experiences (UE); and the researcher developed a third scale to examine psychosocial adjustment as a sense of belonging. Development of the questions for the third scale was based on student and psychological theories as well as the themes that had emerged from the literature on transfer students that support the students' experience of a sense of belonging at the new institution (Townshend & Wilson, 2006). The researcher conducted correlational and regression analyses using SPSS 20 to explore the two related research questions on psychosocial adjustment and intentions to persist among psychology transfer students at the institution of interest.

Summary of Results

Figure 3 summarizes the two major findings related to the research questions. Transfer students' experience of transfer capital and university experiences was related to increased sense of belonging, based on overall amount of variance predicted and significant regression coefficients for each variable. Research question 1) was that positive university experiences significantly increased odds of intentions to persist at the institution, and that the model showed reasonable fit in ability to distinguish between students who had high vs. moderate intentions to persist at the institution (research question 2). See Figure 3.

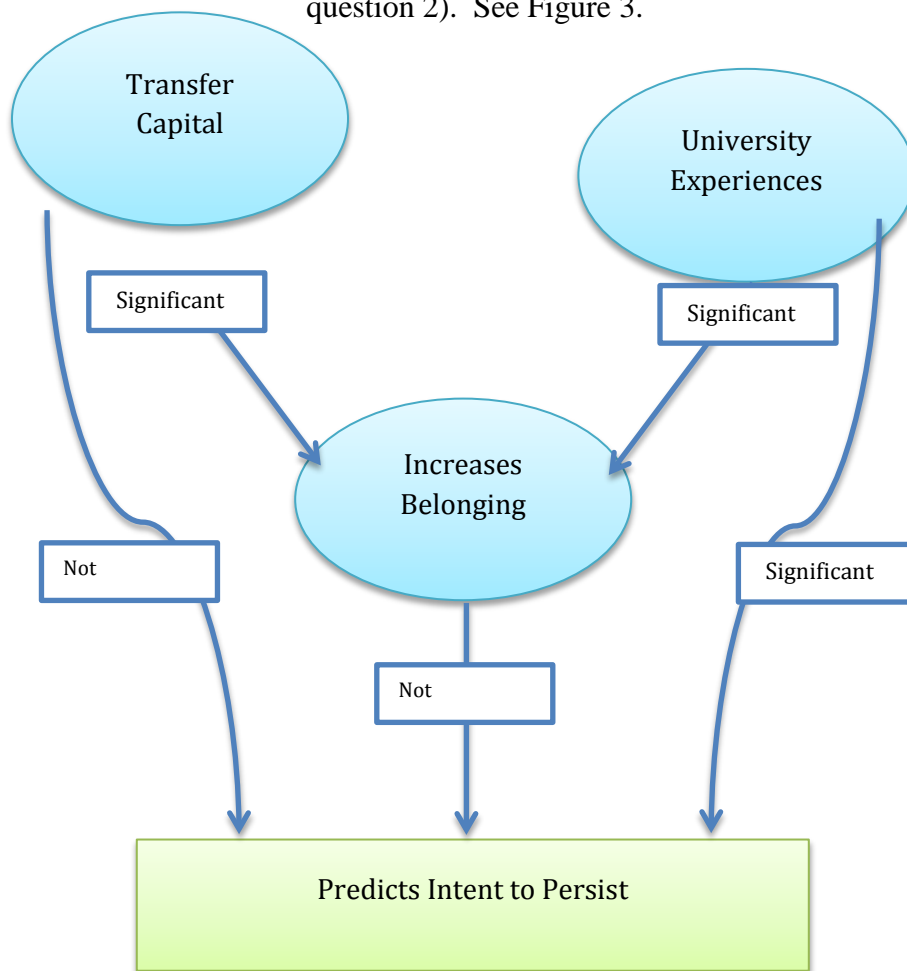


Figure 3: Study results summary

Interpretation of Findings

This study examined psychosocial adjustment and intentions to persist for transfer students in a psychology major at a large four-year southeastern urban research institution. The findings on the contribution of transfer capital and positive university experiences for sense of belonging, and further, that positive university experiences are linked to higher odds of intentions to persist, illustrate the importance of having students prepare prior to and after transfer, and also the need for administrators, faculty and staff to provide opportunities for transfer students to have positive experiences at the new campus in their first semester. The combination of having positive transfer capital with positive university experiences did increase a sense of belonging, and according some of the literature on transfer adjustment, belonging or “fit” (Tinto, 1993) is a key factor in persistence.

Transfer capital reflects tasks include seeking access to advisors from the previous and new institution and experiencing consistency within that advising, understanding what is involved in the transfer process and being aware of what is required of the student prior to the transfer. Being prepared, in this case, may have attributed to a sense of belonging because once they reached the new campus, they had done their homework and had a good idea of what to expect. These preparations can reduce the divide they may have felt with the student body and campus if they had not done the legwork because being in a new territory without any plan or preparation can create feelings of alienation.

University Experiences reflect tasks of navigating a new campus, reaching out for help and connecting with staff and faculty, and being prepared for and participating in

classes. All of these tasks played a large part in providing a sense of belonging. Similar to the benefits of being prepared when entering a new situation, these students were able to feel comfortable navigating the new campus. It cannot be known whether they felt comfortable because they were already familiar with the campus prior to transfer, if they came to campus before classes started to see where their classes were located, or if they had the confidence and self-efficacy to learn the lay of the new land with little stress. Similarly, while participants reported that they felt comfortable reaching out to faculty and staff, it is not possible to know whether this is due to student confidence and motivation, the behaviors of faculty and staff and/or programming, or a combination of the two. It is notable that, regardless of previous institution type, positive transfer capital and university experiences both contributed to increasing a sense of belonging. Belonging is important because it can help people feel safe and also validate their decision to enroll in the new institution.

In the logistic regression analysis, transfer capital and sense of belonging did not significantly improve odds of intentions to complete degree, but having positive experiences at the university did. Did these factors add to students' sense of self and thus feeling comfortable at the new institution? Positive experiences, as defined on the survey, were feeling connected to staff, faculty and being prepared for classes. Perhaps the simple, yet powerful effect of connectedness is more meaningful than how much advising they received before transfer, or whether they felt as if they belonged. Both of those attributes require input from an external source, those being "advising, preparation" and feeling like they belong at the institution. However, university experiences depend more on the individuals' intrinsic motivation. How does this connect with sense of self?

One could surmise from the literature on student development and psychosocial development that the process is largely internal with an emphasis on working towards a goal and working successfully through transitional tasks. If so, the connection to psychosocial development could be reflected in this transition.

Explanation of Unanticipated Findings

There was an assumption at the core of this study that if students experienced positive experiences in transfer capital, university experiences, and a sense of belonging that they would be likely to want to stay at the new institution to complete a bachelor's degree. It was surprising to discover that transfer capital and a sense of belonging did not significantly improve odds of students' intentions to remain at and graduate from the institution. One of the possible reasons for this could be due to what is stated in the literature regarding goals and motivation; having academic goals increased persistence for some transfer students regardless of their connection to the institution (Townshend & Wilson, 2008).

Relationship of Current Study to Prior Research

As reviewed in Chapter Two, some of the literature on transfer students emphasizes the importance of being socially and academically connected to the university in order to have a successful transition. While it is apparent that transfer students experience various aspects of adjustment, or lack thereof when they enter a new institution, there are some contradictions regarding their adjustment needs. Contrasting theories exist about the needs of transfer students. One claim is that transfer students need to feel connected to their institution both academically and socially to facilitate and ensure time to degree (Tinto, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005). There is also an

argument that transfer students do not need social connections to persist, but must have a goal in mind that drives their behavior to remain at the new institution and complete their degree (Townsend & Wilson, 2008). These conflicting views about what transfer students need and whether internal and external forces promote persistence provides an unclear conclusion. Perhaps it is the presence and combination of both internal and external forces that simultaneously drive a goal and foster a sense of belonging that increases the odds that they will persist. Future research could explore the concepts of both internal and external factors enhancing psychosocial adjustment and increasing persistence.

In more recent work on academic and social integration for community college students transferring to a four-year institution, Deil-Amen (2011) explored academic and social integration and viewed them as a single concept. She found that academic integration was more significant than social integration. Social integration was characterized by academic utility, and the integration of both academic and social aspects appeared indistinguishable. Therefore, she coined the phrase “socio-academic integrative moments” to reflect that social integration occurs as the result of academic integration, thus students will experience social aspects through their academics. She also found that agents of the institution such as staff, faculty, and other students fostered these moments. Socio-academic integrative moments, if fostered by agents within an institution, could prove to be important and highlighted so the students can transition well, feel connected, and allow them to persist towards completion.

Implications for Practice

In conjunction with the findings of this study, specifically the impact of university experiences on likelihood of intention to persist, the researcher considered her own experiences as an instructor and advisor for transfer students. In papers and consultations, students reported that they were displeased with the admission process as many of them were notified and only had a matter of days to prepare paperwork and schedule attendance at an orientation. They further described the orientation as confusing; they felt treated like first-year incoming students, and described the entire process as lacking clarity. Students mentioned several times that they were very disappointed with a lack of class availability in their major, not understanding how their credits transferred, and feeling extremely lost in the system.

In order to facilitate adjustment for transfer students, several practices could be implemented. Orientations could be tailored to address the specific needs of transfer students, educating the “agents” that deal directly with transfer students about their needs could be implemented, transfer learning communities could be refined and offer a block class schedule, and finally, providing peer mentors could greatly aid in the transition.

First-year and transfer students are required to attend an orientation prior to registration at most institutions of higher education. The goals of the orientation are to familiarize the incoming students with the university, specific policies, and to advise them prior to their registration process. There has been an increased emphasis on advising transfer students because they are growing in numbers on campuses across the nation and they are a population with different needs from first-year students.

Presently models exist for first-year orientations. Many universities are trying to create models to meet transfer orientation needs, yet there is not a comprehensive model that is aligned with the literature on transfer students and grounded in theory of psychosocial adjustment. This population is very different from first-year students and may benefit from a very different orientation. Aside from the standard tasks that orientation provides, it would be valuable to have an orientation that includes an overview of the transfer process based on transfer student research. In addition to the advising and registration portion of orientation, the advisor could directly address what is known about the challenges and obstacles for transfer students and thus provide concrete resources and avenues to help them overcome potential obstacles.

Education about the unique needs of transfer students could heighten the awareness of administrators, faculty and staff when working with this population. In most cases, the first people the transfer student contacts are in the admissions office and advising. The first impressions and experiences have a strong impact on the overall impression of the transfer experience, so educating people who come into frequent contact with this population is warranted to change practices that are currently in place.

In addition to educating people in departments who have frequent contact with transfers, it would be well worth creating learning communities of transfer students within each major. Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinizie, and Gonyea (2008) suggest “that to effectively provide early interventions and attention to transitioning first-year students, institutions must understand who its students are, what they are prepared to do academically and what they expect of the institution and themselves” (p. 555). The authors suggest that interventions should be of high quality and customized to meet the

needs of the students for which they are intended. A Learning Community for transfer students would be customized to address the needs of the students. The curriculum could be based on issues associated with transition and psychosocial adjustment as well as address the concepts of transfer shock, satisfaction, expectations, and rejection.

Transfer students are often unaware of the difference between other transfer students and native students when they enter the new institution. Providing a learning community in their major department may increase their level comfort by identifying with peers, connecting with staff, faculty and advisors. Having someone to share the similar status of transfer can be validating, improve navigation at the new institution, and serve as an anchor at the beginning of the transition. This could provide support, increase comfort level, and be deemed a positive university experience.

Finally, advisors and transfer students may benefit by offering a mentor program. This option could be offered to the student when they register for orientation by providing them the opportunity to request a mentor. The mentors would be transfer students who had already completed two to three semesters at the new institution. The student would be matched to a mentor and have a “go to” person to answer questions in addition to the advisor. It would be beneficial to advisors as well because the transfer advisee would have a peer resource that could provide candid information that often the advisor cannot provide.

These initiatives may increase the adjustment process for incoming transfer students, foster a sense of belonging, and increase the probability that they will persist. Assessment of these initiatives would allow practitioners to evaluate what does and does not work, and also add to the literature on transfer student psychosocial adjustment.

Recommendations for Future Research

The lack of knowledge about university experiences in connection with psychosocial adjustment highlights the need for further study on the psychosocial adjustment for transfer students. This knowledge would be beneficial in regard to their perception of their university experiences and consequently, the completion of the bachelor's degree. It would be valuable to conduct more studies with larger sample sizes that specifically examine university experiences grounded in psychosocial adjustment theories.

A study that uses an expanded construct for university experiences from Laanan's (2004, 2007) L-TSQ© would be used. The expansion of university experiences would include a more extensive exploration of perceptions related to the campus, department of the major, classrooms, teaching, advising, and connection to other students and /or campus activities. The study should include a qualitative portion to allow researchers to interview transfer students and provide a format for students to expand on their personal and educational experiences. The interview questions would be guided by the quantitative data from the study as well as the literature on this subject. To borrow from Owens (2010) study, e-journaling would be added so the students could reflect and respond to questions on their own time. Using the questions from her study on transfer students is suggested. The following questions would be included in the qualitative portion of the study:

Descriptive: What occurred that is significant to you in your transfer adjustment process?

Metacognitive: What were your perceptions and feelings?

Analytic: What do you understand as the reasoning surrounding this issue?

Evaluative: What were the implications for you?

Reconstructive: What changes would you recommend?

Together, both quantitative and qualitative data would present a fuller picture of how the students experienced their adjustment with university experiences. This information would encourage administrators to incorporate more practices that prove beneficial to the students' adjustment.

The researcher is currently piloting practices specific to the transfer population in the department of psychology. Psychology was chosen due to the researcher's background as a clinician and several years of advising experience. Psychology is a popular and large major resulting in a student body largely made up of transfer students. The pilot consists of offering two block classes in the major that have been set aside for transfer students only. This allows students to get into classes that are usually full, and hopefully reduces the stress at registration. The block classes serve as a community of new transfer students. The curriculum in these classes incorporates aspects of transfer student transition issues to provide them with common aspects of their transition and resources to help them navigate. The outcome of this pilot will inform future practice and continued research for this population.

Summary

This study examined factors related to the psychosocial adjustment of transfer students in the Psychology major at a large, urban research institution in the southeast in their first year at the receiving institution. First, two constructs, transfer capital (preparation prior to entering the new institution) and university experiences (experiences

at the institution), and were used to examine a sense of belonging (comfort at the institution). Next, the extent to which transfer capital, university experiences, and sense of belonging were related to the likelihood of strong intentions to persist and graduate with a degree from the institution was examined. The findings indicated that transfer capital and university experiences contribute significantly to a sense of belonging, however, only university experiences was significant in increasing the odds of intentions to persist to graduation.

Implications of the results were discussed highlighting the need for reconstructed orientations for transfer students unlike the first-year orientation models, education of key agents in the university to the needs of transfer students, establishing learning communities within transfer students' majors, and providing a peer mentor program.

To add to the body of literature on transfer student adjustment, a mixed methods study is proposed using a survey that focuses on university experiences and interview questions geared towards the students' experiences and perceptions. Results from this study would be useful to staff, faculty and administrators who work with transfer students and are invested in their adjustment and persistence.

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APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL FOR PILOT SURVEY



Research and Economic Development
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Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Research with Human Subjects
Approval of Exemption

Protocol # 13-04-31
Title: Transfer Adjustment Survey Pilot
Date: 4/25/2013

Responsible Faculty	Dr. Corey Lock	Educational Leadership
Investigator	Ms. Elaine O'Reilly	Educational Leadership

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) certifies that the protocol listed above is exempt under category 2 (45 CFR 46.101).

Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:

- a) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and
- b) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

This approval will expire one year from the date of this letter. In order to continue conducting research under this protocol after one year, the "Annual Protocol Renewal Form" must be submitted to the IRB. Please note that it is the investigator's responsibility to promptly inform the committee of any changes in the proposed research, as well as any unanticipated problems that may arise involving risks to subjects. Amendment and Event Reporting forms are available on our web site: <http://research.uncc.edu/compliance-ethics/human-subjects/amending-your-protocol> or <http://research.uncc.edu/compliance-ethics/human-subjects/reporting-adverse-events>

 _____ 5-6-13
Dr. M. Lyn Exum, IRB Chair Date



APPENDIX B: INVITATION FOR PILOT STUDY PARTICIPATION



UNC CHARLOTTE

The University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Elaine O'Reilly, MA, Lecturer/Advisor

Department of Psychology

9201 University City Boulevard, 4031 Colvard, Charlotte, NC 28223-0001

Tel: (704) 687-1326 Fax: (704) 687-1344 Email: eoreill2@uncc.edu

Website: <http://www.psych.uncc.edu/>

Dear Student,

You are invited to participate in an online pilot survey that will explore the social, emotional, and academic adjustment for transfer students after their first semester. You are being asked to participate because this is your second semester as a transfer student in the Institution.

This pilot survey aims to determine the following:

How long did it take you to complete?

Were there any questions that need clarification?

Are there any additional questions you feel should be asked based on your experiences as a transfer student?

Any additional input that you think will be useful.

If you accept this invitation to participate, you may go to (will insert link once survey is live).

Thank you,

Elaine O'Reilly

eoreill2@uncc.edu

APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM

Transfer Adjustment Pilot Survey

Welcome to “Transfer Adjustment Survey” which will examine how transfer students adjust socially, emotionally, and academically in the Institution. . Before taking part in this study, please read the consent form below and click on the "I Agree" button at the bottom of the page if you understand the statements and freely consent to participate in the study.

Consent Form

This study involves a web-based survey designed to understand how transfer students adjust after their first semester in the Psychology Department at INSTITUTION. Participation in this pilot survey is completely confidential.

All responses are treated as confidential and your responses will not be linked to your identity. You are being asked to provide your email address. This email addresses is not linked to your responses and is only used to avoid duplicate surveys. Be aware that confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible. There is always the risk of compromising privacy, confidentiality and/or anonymity when using email and the internet. However, the risk to your physical, emotion, social, professional or financial well-being is considered to be less than minimal.

While there may be no direct benefits to you as a result of participating in this pilot survey, you may derive some satisfaction from being able respond to questions that elicit your personal experiences which can be validating. The research may result in better understanding of how transfer students’ adjust and inform future practices for orientation and assistance for transfer students in the Institution. . There will be no monetary or credit compensation for completing this pilot survey.

Participation is voluntary, refusal to take part in the study involves no penalty or loss of benefits to which participants are otherwise entitled, and participants may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which they are otherwise entitled.

If you have further questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this study, contact the Compliance Office at (704) 687-1871. If you have questions concerning the study, contact the principal investigator, Elaine O’Reilly at (704) 687-1344 or by email at eoreill2@uncc.edu

You may print a copy of this form. If you are 18 years of age or older, understand the statements above, and freely consent to participate in the study, click on the "I Agree" button to begin the experiment.

- b. 3.0-3.4
 - c. 2.5-3.9
 - d. 2.0 -2.4
 - e. Below 2.0
25. I plan to return to THIS INSTITUTION next semester. **Yes/No**
26. Gender: Male Female
27. My age is: 18-25 26-34 35-45 45 +
28. My ethnicity is
- Caucasian
 - African American
 - Asian
 - Native American
 - Other
29. Do you receive financial aid? **Yes/No**
30. Are you a single parent? **Yes/No**
31. If you work outside of attending THIS INSTITUTION, approximately how many hours do you work?
- 1-5
 - 6-10
 - 11-15
 - 16-20
 - 20-25
 - 26-30
 - 31-35
 - 35 +
32. How many colleges have you attended prior to THIS INSTITUTION?
- 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5or more
33. How many semesters of college have you attended prior to THIS INSTITUTION? _____
34. Prior to transferring to THIS INSTITUTION, I attended
- a. Community College(s)
 - b. Four-year College/University(s)
 - c. Both Community and Four-year College/University

APPENDIX E: IRB APPROVAL FOR TRANSFER STUDENT PSYCHOSOCIAL

ADJUSTMENT SURVEY



UNC CHARLOTTE

Research and Economic Development
Office of Research Compliance

9201 University City Blvd, Charlotte, NC 28223-0001
t/ 704.687.1876 f/ 704.687.0980 <http://research.uncc.edu/compliance-ethics>

Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Research with Human Subjects

Continuing Approval of Exemption

-- for Year 3 of Study --

Protocol #	13-04-31	
Protocol Type:	Exempt 2	
Title:	Transfer Student Psychosocial Adjustment	
Date:	4/24/15	
Investigator:	Ms. Elaine O'Reilly	Education Leadership
Responsible Faculty:	Dr. Corey Lock	Education Leadership

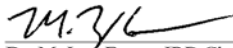
The Institutional Review Board (IRB) certifies that the protocol listed above is exempt under category 2 (CFR 46.101.b.2).

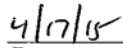
Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:

- (i) Information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and
- (ii) Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

PLEASE NOTE: The continuing approval of this protocol will expire one year from the date of this letter. In order to continue conducting research under this protocol after one year, a new protocol must be submitted to the IRB. The protocol application form can be obtained from the Office of Research Compliance web page (<http://research.uncc.edu/compliance-ethics/human-subjects>).

Please note that it is the investigator's responsibility to promptly inform the committee of any changes in the proposed research prior to implementing the changes, and of any adverse events or unanticipated risks to subjects or others. Amendment and Event Reporting forms are available on our web page.


Dr. M. Lynn Exum, IRB Chair


Date



APPENDIX F: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN TRANSFER STUDENT
PSYCHOSOCIAL ADJUSTMENT SURVEY



The University of North Carolina at Charlotte
Elaine O'Reilly, MA, Lecturer/Advisor
Department of Psychology
9201 University City Boulevard, 4031 Colvard, Charlotte, NC 28223-0001
Tel: (704) 687-1326 Fax: (704) 687-1344 Email: eoreill2@uncc.edu
Website: <http://www.psych.uncc.edu/>

Dear Student,

You are invited to participate in an online survey that will explore the social, emotional, and academic adjustment for transfer students based on their first semester. You are being asked to participate because this is your second semester as a transfer student in the Psychology Department at INSTITUTION.

This survey is part of my dissertation work for my Doctorate in Educational Leadership and will assist me greatly! It is brief and should take about 5-10 minutes. Your help with this topic is very important to me so if you decide to participate I want to thank you in advance.

If you accept this invitation to participate, you may go to
https://qtrial2014.az1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_0IKbGtvB022LbcF to begin the survey.

Thank you,

Elaine O'Reilly

eoreill2@uncc.edu

APPENDIX G: CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN TRANSFER STUDENT

PSYCHOSOCIAL ADJUSTMENT SURVEY

Transfer Adjustment Survey

Welcome to "Transfer Adjustment Survey" which will examine how transfer students adjust socially, emotionally, and academically in the Department of Psychology at INSTITUTION. Before taking part in this study, please read the consent form below and click on the "I Agree" button at the bottom of the page if you understand the statements and freely consent to participate in the study.

Consent Form

This study involves a web-based survey designed to understand how transfer students adjust after their first semester in the Psychology Department at INSTITUTION. Participation in this survey is completely confidential.

All responses are treated as confidential and your responses will not be linked to your identity. You are being asked to provide your email address. This email addresses is not linked to your responses and is only used to avoid duplicate surveys. Be aware that confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible. There is always the risk of compromising privacy, confidentiality and/or anonymity when using email and the internet. However, the risk to your physical, emotion, social, professional or financial well-being is considered to be less than minimal.

While there may be no direct benefits to you as a result of participating in this survey, you may derive some satisfaction from being able respond to questions that elicit your personal experiences which can be validating. The research may result in better understanding of how transfer students' adjust and inform future practices for orientation and assistance for transfer students in the Department of Psychology. There will be no monetary or credit compensation for completing this survey.

Participation is voluntary, refusal to take part in the study involves no penalty or loss of benefits to which participants are otherwise entitled, and participants may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which they are otherwise entitled.

If you have further questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this study, contact the Compliance Office at (704) 687-1871. If you have questions concerning the study, contact the principal investigator, Elaine O'Reilly at (704) 687-1344 or by email at eoreill2@uncc.edu

You may print a copy of this form. If you are 18 years of age or older, understand the statements above, and freely consent to participate in the study, click on the "I Agree" button to begin the experiment.

APPENDIX H: TRANSFER STUDENT PSYCHOSOCIAL ADJUSTMENT SURVEY

Qualtrics Survey Software

Page 1 of 4

Consent

Consent Letter

Please read the document above, then select if you agree or disagree.

- I agree
- I disagree

Transfer Capital

The following statements relate to the preparation you took as a future transfer student at **UNLV**. Please respond to the statements as accurately as possible.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I sought access to academic advisors at UNLV prior to transfer to assist me in planning for transfer to UNLV	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I made sure I understood the advice provided by my academic advisors regarding the transfer process	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The information that I received from the academic advisors at UNLV was consistent with the information that was provided at my previous institution	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I made sure that I was aware of what was required of me prior to transferring to UNLV	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

University Experiences

The following statements relate to your experience as a transfer student at **UNLV**. Please respond to the statements as accurately as possible.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
It is easy for me to reach out to faculty and staff in the Psychology Department at UNLV	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It has been easy to find my way	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

around campus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am prepared for my classes prior to the class meeting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I participate often in my classes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My level of stress increased when I started at UNCC	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is difficult to make friends at UNCC	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Upon transferring, I felt alienated at UNCC	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I often feel overwhelmed by the size of the student body at UNCC	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Belonging

The following statements relate to your sense of belonging as a transfer student at UNCC. Please respond to the statements as accurately as possible.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I have a lot in common with other students in my classes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel a sense of belonging with the university	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a close friend or classmate whom I can turn to if I need support (ie: someone I can talk to, study with, socialize with, and/or call if I need information)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel a sense of belonging when I am in my classes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel a sense of belonging when I share my transfer status with my peers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel a sense of belonging when I go to the Psychology Department	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Outcome

What was your first semester GPA at UNCC?

- 0-1.5
- 1.6-2.0
- 2.1-2.5
- 2.6-3.0
- 3.1-3.5
- 3.6-4.0

How likely are you to complete your degree at UNCC?

- Very Unlikely Unlikely Undecided Likely Very Likely
-

Demographics

Prior to transferring into UNCC I attended

- a four year institution
- a two year institution

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Transgender

What is your age?

How many hours do you work per week?

What ethnicity do you most strongly identify with? (You may choose more than one)

- African American or Black
- Asian American or Pacific Islander
- Hispanic or Latino/a
- Native American or Alaskan Native