RUNNING HEAD: TRANSFER STUDENT SOCIALIZATION

The Socialization of Transfer Students: A Phenomenological Inquiry

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Abstract

This thesis explores the socialization experiences of 16 transfer students after transferring into a medium-sized university in the Midwest. Through a thematic analysis of qualitative data, results show transfer socialization experiences are most influenced by the relationships transfer students maintain and develop on campus. Conclusions drawn from this study suggest transfer orientation programs are not the most reliable tactic to use when attempting to socialize transfer students. Conclusions from this study also suggest universities can best support transfer student socialization by providing transfer students with opportunities to meet and develop relationships with other students on campus.

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Thesis Introduction

Community colleges (referred to here as two-year universities) are more involved in

university matriculation and bachelor degree attainment than ever before, enrolling over half

of all first-year college students (Cohen & Brawer, 1996) and enrolling 6.2 million (35 per cent)

of the post secondary population in the United States (Provasnik & Planty, 2008). As more two-

year universities are enrolling higher numbers of freshmen students, a concern is growing to

help students who desire a bachelor's degree successfully reach degree attainment through the

transfer process.

Transfer student research currently focuses on performance outcomes, academic and

social behavior influences, comparisons between native and transfer students, transfer

program graduation rates, and transfer student experiences. Previous studies do not focus on

communicative aspects of the transfer process. Studies such as Townsend (2005) lack an

understanding of how communication influences the transfer experience.

Socialization provides a means to examine interactions between transfer students and

the university, exploring how interaction, coupled with previous student experience, creates

satisfying relationships. This study focuses on transfer student socialization, arguing that

communicative acts between the university and the student influence the socialization

experience. This thesis first describes the transfer student demographic, then discusses Jablin's

(1987, 2001) model of socialization as a new perspective to understand the transfer

phenomenon and understand socialization's application to nonstandard work arrangements.

Associated literature then demonstrates current trends focusing on academic and social

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outcomes. The literature review concludes by offering three research questions aimed at further understanding the transfer experience.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

Transfer student research is as diverse as the student population it focuses on. Previous research attempts to understand various aspects of the transfer student phenomenon focusing on trends in grade point average (GPA) fluctuation, specifically the drop in GPA transfer students typically experience after transferring into a university. This drop is commonly called "transfer shock." Other research attempts to distinguish the transfer student population from native freshmen through comparative studies of the two demographics. From the organizational perspective, research focuses on institutional influence of faculty and staff on transfer students. Individual transfer student research focuses on the lived experiences of students, providing insight into what students experience during the transfer. Before moving on to the literature review, a brief description of the transfer student demographic provides clarification of the topic under inquiry.

Transfer Students

Transfer students are a subset of the overall student body who begin their higher education at one institution, then transfer to another to complete their degree. More specifically, in this study a transfer student is considered someone who physically attends both institutions. Many two-year universities now collaborate with nearby four-year universities creating more course offerings at two-year universities. In this situation students begin their careers at two-year universities, and finish their degree at four-year universities, but do not necessarily need to physically attend courses at the conferring institution. Students

participating in collaborative programs like these do not encounter the same transfer process as transfer students who physically change institutions.

Transfer students typically begin their higher education careers at universities close to their hometowns, which is often more affordable. In many cases these universities are two-year universities, commonly referred to as community colleges. As part of the role they play, two-year universities design their curriculum relating to the surrounding four-year universities promoting student transfer.

Students are offered courses at two-year universities that are applicable to bachelor's degrees at four-year universities. Many of the credits fulfill general education requirements, allowing students to work towards degree completion while enrolled at two-year campuses. Further assisting the transition, two-year universities use transfer programs to help students stay on track and earn needed credits in a reasonable time.

Transfer programs may require students to earn about 60 credits, completing the requirements for an associate's degree. These programs support diverse student populations ranging from 18-year-old first-time freshman to nontraditional (nontraditional usually means someone older than 24 years of age) students working full-time jobs. Students completing the program usually transfer to four-year universities and continue on to complete a bachelor's degree. Making a description of transfer students less clear, the above scenario is not true for all transfer students. It is also plausible that those students who are transfer students are older nontraditional students who are returning to school after working for a number of years, and are using the transfer option as a way to go to school while maintaining employment.

As students transfer into four-year universities from two-year universities, they undergo a number of changes both academically and socially. During this process of transition students are most likely to encounter challenges they must overcome to graduate. Transfer students compound these challenges by usually maintaining some level of autonomy. Transfer students, because of their previous experiences are expected to understand university life. Many issues freshmen students face over four years are typically faced by transfer students in a different time frame. This forces transfer students to deal with challenges they face while being treated as an experienced upper level student.

Transfer students are a diverse demographic of students from all walks of life facing unique challenges to overcome and graduate. Unlike the incoming freshman classes which generally consist of the same demographics year after year, incoming transfer students are a unique subset of the overall student body. The transfer student population at a university may include a single 40-year-old mother, or a 25-year-old single male, who in some respects may feel like they are freshmen at the university, but in other respects feel like they are juniors and seniors. Transfer students are a unique subset of the overall student body, diverse in many ways. The concept of socialization offers a new perspective from which to understand this demographic of students.

Socialization

Socialization explains how people come to understand normal contextual communicative practices. What follows is first an explanation of Jablin's (1987, 2001) theory of socialization and then a review of the socialization research that has been conducted in the transfer student contexts. Jablin (1987) developed a model of socialization consisting of

organizational entry, assimilation, and exit/disengagement, that as Bullis (1993) suggest

provides a perspective for understanding the interaction between individuals and organizations.

Jablin's (1987, 2001) model is divided into four stages representing the development of

employees within organizations. Individuals first experience vocational socialization

communicating with others, building job skills, and general expectations of universal

organizational normality. The organizational encounter stage allows individuals to become

"newcomers" to organizations. Newcomers begin participating in sensemaking activities,

formally and informally learning about the organization. In the metamorphosis stage,

newcomers change by renegotiating their roles, adjusting their attitudes about the organization,

managing conflicts, and individualizing their position in the organization. The communication

outcomes stage, describes a communication satisfaction outcome.

Jablin's model encompasses four major themes. Jablin (1987, 2001) first describes the

organizational process in terms of entry, assimilation, and exit/disengagement indicating

organizational boundaries outsiders pass through becoming insiders (employees of the

organization) then pass through as they leave the organization. Second, the organization and

the individual have an interactive influence on each other. As information is exchanged

between individual and organization each influences the other through communication. Third,

the model features linear development. Employees follow through the process obtaining entry

into the organization, engaging in communicative interaction creating outcomes, and exiting

the organization. Last, full-time employment does not include nonstandard work arrangements

such as short-term or contingent work. The following is a detailed discussion of socialization

and Jablin's four themes.

Crossing organizational boundaries. Jablin describes organizational entry, assimilation, and exit as a "life-span," a developmental process continuing from childhood through ones' chosen career (Jablin, 2001). Vocational socialization begins during childhood education and follows through vocational development. Transfer students experience vocational socialization through prior education, training, and interaction with others. After completing some higher education, students may seek to transfer from two-year universities to four-year universities to complete bachelor's degrees. Concomitantly, universities seek prospective students. Upon admission, prospective students become students, and "newcomers". Following Jablin's (1987, 2001) process, new students are socialized into university life, become "insiders," eventually disengaging or exiting the university. Much like employees in Jablin's model do, transfer students begin as incoming students and transition through each boundary to graduate. Failure to pass through the next boundary area contextualizes possible failures of the socialization process.

Newcomers can progress through the socialization process at varied rates. Research suggests employees more involved in the organization while transitioning through experience higher satisfaction levels (Martin & Hafer, 1995). Students then who are more involved with the university while progressing through the entry, assimilation, and exit phases experience higher satisfaction levels and are more likely to graduate.

The interactive influence of both individuals and organizations. During the organizational entry stage, two inter-related processes occur. Organizations attempt socializing employees through intentional and unintentional efforts. First, organizational members such as mentors, peers, and supervisors act as organizational socialization agents creating specific types

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of desired metamorphosis within employees. Second, employees attempt individualizing their job roles by altering their role and work environments to meet their needs, fit their attitudes, and comply with their values. Previous studies found socialization tactics produce particular outcomes (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Jones, 1986; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). For example Van Maanen (1978) proposes six useful dimensions of, "people processing." including: formal vs. informal, individual vs. collective, sequential vs. nonsequential, fixed vs. variable, serial vs. disjunctive, and investiture vs. divestiture are useful for organizations to utilize to create desired socialization outcomes. Through various methods of training and structure, or without structure, organizations elicit desired communication outcomes. Universities are similar organizations; universities agendas include educating students at high levels and graduating them. Universities use tactics to ensure students reach these goals. Tactics may or may not be more evident for transfer students compared to freshmen students due to the constraints of time spent at the university. Enrolled for less time, transfer students depend more on individualized, proactive efforts.

Socialization theory shifted from the organizational perspective to the individual employee perspective (Taormina & Bauer, 2000). This shift focuses socialization on information-seeking activities of employees rather than socialization tactics of the organization. From the employee perspective, individuals shape their role within the organizational climate (Baum, 1990; Bullis & Bach, 1989). Researchers such as Reichers (1987) and Staton (1990) ground their individual approaches in symbolic interactionism citing individuals as active participants interacting with institutional agents, negotiating their roles, and interpreting their own meanings. Transfer students engage in information-seeking activity. For example, student

graduation requirements vary depending on the major. The gross variety of necessary

information forces students to be information-seekers.

The linear assimilation process. Jablin's (2001) revised model of socialization follows an

assimilation process examining: 1) the functions of communication in the vocational and

organizational entry process; 2) the socialization of people into organizational cultures while

attempting to individualize their environments; and 3) how people use communication

processes and behaviors to disengage from work environments. Jablin's linear process is

rooted in the ideology that employee socialization develops through a process, moving from

one stage to the next. Encompassing this process is what Jablin (1987, 2001) calls an employee

life-span. Transfer students move through a life-span similar to employees. Before entering a

university, transfer students engage in vocational learning, receiving high school and post

secondary education from two-year universities providing them skills needed to succeed at

four-year universities. After admission into four-year universities, students assimilate into the

university through organizational communicative processes and information-seeking behaviors.

Concomitantly, students attempt individualizing roles within the university by developing their

own academic and social images. Students chose to leave the university, whether to graduate,

transfer, or withdraw. Transfer students are unique because this happens in a shorter

timeframe than it does for native students.

Transfer students experience condensed versions of Jablin's socialization model. Unlike

native freshmen who enter the university and are coached through their first two years,

transfer students enter universities more independent. Transfer orientations may group

transfer students together for mass information dissemination, however, transfer students are

next stratified into majors and left to pass through the socialization stages in a short time period.

The exclusion of nonstandard work arrangements. A unique aspect of this study is its similar nonstandard work arrangement. Jablin (2001) focuses on full-time employees even after acknowledging the growing part-time and contingent American workforces. This study focuses on transfer students, a population similar to a contingent workforce. Transfer students often arrive at universities with credits applicable to their degree. This means the transfer student population is typically enrolled in the universities for a shorter time period compared to native students. Examining transfer student transition through socialization advances research by examining the process within a dynamic context consisting of characteristics relatable to part-time or temporary work. In essence, transfer students are short-term employees, with near-future goals likely determining the disengagement point from which socialization ends and the relationship is terminated or drastically altered.

Socialization research aimed at understanding the experiences of transfer students is minimal. Previous socialization research studying elementary through high school students focuses on the effect changing schools has on academic achievement of transfer students (Bollenbacher, 1963). Staton (1990) offers findings from a single study that begins to add understanding to transfer student research using a socialization framework. Studying 15 high school students, Staton's (1990) findings identify efforts by the high school to socialize students, efforts by the students to actively socialize themselves, and the roles of others in the socialization process. In short, her findings suggest the more involved students are on campus, the more likely they are to feel socialized.

Staton's (1990) findings demonstrate the usefulness of socialization theory to better understand the transfer student phenomenon. This study parallels Staton's (1990) use of socialization theory, but does so with a different demographic of participants. Although Stanton's (1990) findings demonstrate the usefulness of socialization, the participants in this study are adult university students which constitute a demographic much different than Staton's (1990) high school participants.

The remainder of this literature review focuses on four transfer student themes of research including transfer shock, transfer students comparisons to native students, faculty and staff interaction with transfer students, and transfer student experiences. Socialization is discussed throughout the rest of this review demonstrating its application to student transfer experiences. Socialization research also provides a discussion of the communicative actions involved in the student transfer process.

Transfer Shock

Much transfer student research deals with "transfer shock." Transfer shock is a drop in students' GPA after the first semester at the four-year university (Hills, 1965). A compilation of transfer studies by Hills (1965) which, includes studies of transfer students from 1928 through 1964, suggests students should expect a GPA decline of at least .30 to .50 points during the first semester. This definition of transfer shock provides a context manifesting further research of students' academic careers creating predictors of academic and social success, and students' levels of persistence towards graduation.

Scholars research other influences on transfer shock such as transfer students' perceptions of themselves and the university. Laanan (2007) studied students' perceptions of

four-year universities and found students who have negative perceptions of four-year

universities are more likely to have difficulty adjusting to academic standards at four-year

universities. This finding suggests students who think negatively about the university complete

a self-fulfilling prophecy by performing poorly. Before transferring, the students' level of

satisfaction can be negatively influenced, thus prompting students to struggle academically and

fulfill a negative self-fulfilling prophecy. At the same time, Laanan (2007) warns that students

who spend a lot of time with academic counselors may also have difficulty adjusting. Those

students who constantly seek out academic counselors for support at four-year universities find

the transfer process more difficult because of larger student populations, larger classes, and a

physically larger campus. Larger student population sizes can make finding support services

more difficult for incoming transfer students.

Students utilizing academic support programs are more likely to experience academic

difficulties; however, through support programs students engage in pro-active information-

seeking activities overcoming these difficulties (Laanan, 2007). Engaging in information-seeking

activities can help students master academic skills and change their attitudes, achieving a

successful transition.

Students with negative self-concepts of their intellectual abilities manifest negative

perceptions about themselves that affects their approach to course learning. During the

transfer process, individuals who perceive themselves as lacking needed academic and social

skills may also expect to not perform well. Negative attitudes then affect student behaviors,

influencing how students engage in and master course material. Students with positive self-

concepts may still struggle academically due to the quality of effort put forth. Findings from

Laanan (2007) shows students exhibiting quality studying habits over hours spent studying are more likely to achieve academic success at the four-year university level.

Perceptions of university environment and faculty interaction also associate with transfer shock. Students focusing more on individual learning instead of classmate competition more likely experience a positive transition (Laanan, 2007). Focusing on individual learning improves academic skills, instead of comparing levels of success.

Laanan's research supports Jablin's (1987, 2001) communication based socialization model that focuses on developing satisfying relationships between individuals and the organization. Individuals and organizations interact together while progressing through Jablin's model. The trends observed by Laanan (2007) provide insight about how either the university or individual may act during the transfer process. Ensuring those students who perceive themselves as lacking a needed skill receive assistance fostering that skill benefits the student and the university. Students benefit by learning and mastering a skill, thus boosting their self confidence. Universities benefit successfully graduating students. Levels of satisfaction impacts students' commitment towards graduation.

Ishitani (2008) examines the impact GPA has on student commitment towards graduation by longitudinally investigating transfer student departure trends. Findings suggest class rank attainment prior to transferring predicts higher GPA scores which positively influences commitment towards graduation. These findings provide support for the need to understand students' experiences before transferring into a different university. Jablin's (1987, 2001) model of socialization suggest that previous experiences influence current socialization experiences. From Ishitani's (2008) findings and Jablin's (1987, 2001) conception of

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socialization, understanding the previous experiences of transfer students is important to fully understand their current socialization experiences.

The number of credits attained prior to transferring to a university shows differences in the likelihood students will continue towards graduation. In relation to Ishitani's (2008) findings, students transferring to the four-year university as sophomores and juniors are more likely to continue on compared to native freshmen who have achieved a lesser number of credits. Freshmen transfer students are less likely to graduate compared to their native freshmen counterparts. This difference is attributed to the length of time until degree completion and obstacles students face. Completion of a two-year degree is a stepping stone accomplishment that can create positive higher education experiences thus, contributing to a higher degree of satisfaction experienced before transferring.

Ishitani (2008) suggest GPAs are a positive predictor of transfer student success after the first semester at four-year universities. First semester transfer students with a GPA of 3.00 or higher are 85% less likely to depart from the university than students with a GPA 2.00 or below (Ishitani, 2008). Students who do well academically will graduate, however, considering findings from Diaz (1992) suggest transfer students recover from transfer shock within one year. Students then with lower first semester GPAs need to improve and maintain their academic performance to graduate. Maintaining a steady rate of improvement allows students with lower first semester GPAs to recover from transfer shock, and continue on towards graduation.

The ability to make generalizations about the transfer student population is difficult due to its diverse demographics. Wide age ranges make the population incomparable to typically consistent freshmen class populations. Ishitani (2008) shows demographic differences as

predictors of commitment towards graduation. Minority transfer students are 68% more likely

to depart from the university early, compared to their Caucasian counterparts. Students ages

21 to 25 are 1.9 and 2.6 times more likely than traditional aged transfer students to depart the

university in the first and third semesters respectively. Students 26 years old or older

encounter even higher risks of departure. Older minorities are most likely to leave the

university early. These trends suggest transfer students are an at-risk population more likely of

dropping out.

Summarizing Ishitani's (2008) findings, computer generated profiles suggest transfer

students are more apt to depart from the university during their third and fifth semesters. By

the third semester, if transfer students have not experienced academic success-meaning an

improvement in GPA-then students are less likely satisfied and withdraw. Students who require

more than four semesters at the university are at risk of dropping out of the university if they

have not completed their degree by the end of the fifth semester. Jablin's (1987, 2001)

socialization model in this context suggest students who leave the university prior to degree

completion may have struggled to identify themselves as an individual member of the

university. Early transfer students departure is associated with an assimilation failure.

Transfer Students Compared to Native Students

Comparisons of transfer students to native students are a way to distinguish the two

demographics. In theory, comparing the demographics should yield differences because the

native students began their higher education at four-year universities. Some transfer students

do begin their educational careers at four-year universities whereas some do not. Incoming

freshmen classes are easier to generalize than incoming transfer student classes due to their

narrow and consistent demographics. Student involvement levels and GPAs are two variables researchers use to compare the two demographics.

Transfer students maintain GPAs comparable to their native counterparts during their lower level course work (Carlan & Byxbe, 2000). After transferring and possibly entering upper level coursework, transfer students experience a decline in GPA suggesting transfer students who maintain high GPA scores while at the two-year institutions are better prepared for the academic rigor after transferring. Rigorous academic experience at the university level influences GPA scores differently across majors (Carlan & Byxbe, 2000). Transfer students majoring in business or hard sciences earned substantially lower GPA scores than their native counterparts. Although Carlan and Byxbe (2000) conclude significant findings, other studies such as Johnson (2005) have brought these findings into question.

A comparative analysis of native and transfer students by Johnson (2005) yielded indistinguishable differences. Johnson (2005) supports using both high school GPA and student age as a means to positively predict transfer students' university level GPA. However, comparing actual GPAs of transfer and native students, Johnson (2005) found indistinguishable results. Three explanations exploring this lack of difference are offered. First, class sizes at the senior institution may influence transfer students' sense of social security. Larger institutions maintain larger class sizes, possibly more intimidating to a transfer student. Secondly, the major involved in this study may not have held large enough class sizes. Other programs at larger universities may maintain larger class seizes influencing GPAs. Thirdly, the majors included in this study are derived from natural science programs usually requiring extended-hour labs and field trips. These circumstances possibly allowed students to become better

acquainted with one another, especially during hands-on training as opposed to traditional lecture style courses. Student involvement outside the classroom has also been examined.

Comparing native and transfer student involvement levels while living in on-campus residence halls, Woosley and Johnson (2006) found transfer students are not as involved on campus as their native counterparts. On-campus residence reasonably assumes both demographics have the same involvement opportunities in on-campus activities. Transfer students are more concerned with academic skill building than on campus activities. Although high levels of student involvement likely indicate higher student satisfaction levels, transfer students seek satisfaction from skill mastery not activity involvement.

These findings are important to transfer student socialization for two reasons. First, universities have an inherent interest in utilizing the most efficient tactics to assimilate students. Understanding transfer student needs enables the university to develop socialization tactics promoting progressive skill building. Secondly, these findings suggest transfer students engage in information-seeking tactics. Universities providing needed information create positive experiences for transfer students, reinforcing their information-seeking habits. Transfer students who engage in information-seeking activities more likely experience a positive and successful transition.

Faculty and Staff Interaction with Transfer Students

Universities influence the transfer process through faculty and staff member involvement. Current faculty and student interaction research examines interaction frequency, information exchange, and the influence those interactions on the transition process.

Faculty and staff interaction with transfer students is described as minimal both pre and post transfer (Cejda & Kaylor, 2001; Tatum, Hayward, & Monzon, 2006). Interaction about the transfer process is typically initiated after the student enrolls in two-to-three courses taught by the instructor (Cejda & Kaylor, 2001). Faculty members on average interact with five students about three times each per semester spending only ten minutes with each student (Tatum et al., 2006). The limited meetings, for short time periods, allow faculty little opportunity to engage in detailed conversations with students. During those interactions faculty often rely on personal transfer experiences giving future transfer students a pep talk. Faculty are unfamiliar with the transfer process, referring students to a campus transfer center or the library to research transfer student information. Faculty members engage in interactions with students about transferring because they feel a personal obligation. Generally, faculty members are more apt to write recommendation letters and not conversing with students (Tatum et al., 2006).

Interactions among students, faculty, and staff are important to the socialization process. During the encounter and assimilation stages newcomer interactions with organizational insiders play key roles effectively or ineffectively socializing transfer students. Zwerling (1976) coined the term *heating up* as a way to describe students entering a two-year university with no intentions of transferring, but become interested and transfer to a four-year university. This concept illustrates the opposite of *cooling out*, a term introduced by Clark (1960) referring to the phenomenon college students at two-year campuses experience when their aspirations to continue their education are lowered due to poor academic performance. Maintaining the metaphor of heat, both scholars illustrate the importance of *keeping students hot*. Two-year campuses face challenges maintaining student educational interest while

enrolled at two-year universities. Research in this area (Clark, 1960; Zwerling, 1976) has

identified faculty and staff members such as transfer counselors as key influences, either

cooling off or heating up transfer students.

Transfer Student Experiences

Davies and Dickmann (1998) point out that studies focusing on transfer students

primarily focus on statistics rather than students' experiences. Previous research has typically

used surveys to collect data about students' satisfaction with the transition.   Limited research

focuses on transfer student experiences (Berger & Malaney, 2003; Cameron, 2005; Davies &

Dickmann, 1998; Townsend & Wilson, 2006). Socialization is a useful framework when

analyzing students' interactions with universities including their members. This section

discusses student transfer research focusing on student satisfaction, transfer barriers, transfer

programs, and transfer students' perceptions.

Transfer students are like other students in that they are working towards bachelor's

degree attainment; however, what transfer students find satisfying is experienced differently

due to the shorter time period they spend at the university. Beginning their careers at two-year

campuses, transfer student experience changes in the cultural structures of each institution.

Berger and Malaney (2003) found that students at two-year universities spend more time off-

campus, focusing on work and family related activities. However, when those students

transferred to four-year universities, they focused more on socializing with peers and studying.

This finding exemplifies a cultural shift affecting transfer students' satisfaction with the transfer

process. Other cultural research has examined this shift further describing some of its limiting

effects on transfer students' satisfaction

Transfer students' entry into higher education occurs at two-year universities typically located in or near their hometowns. Alexander, Garcia, Gonzalez, Grimes, and O'Brien (2007) found transfer students prefer two-year universities because they are an extension of their local community. This community extension into higher education comforts transfer students and is later described by the authors as a barrier students must overcome. Research by Cameron (2005) finds transfer programs created to facilitate the transfer process cannot necessarily mitigate stress caused by changing geographical locations. Transfer programs attempt to make the transition seamless, but are unable to mitigate the homesickness some students feel.

The community closeness provides students with a glimpse of university education in a safe and familiar surrounding and an opportunity to gain needed skills. Many students entering two-year universities do because they lack needed skills to succeed at the four-year universities (Alexander et al., 2007). Alexander and colleagues found that many Hispanic transfer students enter two-year universities lacking college preparation.   Lacking college preparation, students enrolled in sub-100 level courses which did not fulfill degree requirements. The authors discovered eight barriers Hispanic college students in Texas face when attempting to transfer from two-year universities to four-year universities. The more prominent barriers included lacking previous family experience in higher education and financial support. Many students opted to enroll in vocational training courses instead of associate or bachelor degree required courses. Earning money is an immediate benefit students' chose instead of long term benefits associated with bachelor degree attainment (Alexander et al., 2007). The cultural customs were restraining, making it difficult for Hispanic students to attain a bachelor's degree.

Students notice differences in organizational culture between two-year and four-year universities. Townsend and Wilson (2006) reported students' perceptions of assistance differed between institutions. Students felt they had received more assistance at four-year universities rather than two-year universities, citing two-year universities were either unable to provide information they requested or the university was deceiving about information. At the four-year universities, students felt they received more assistance from transfer counselors or academic advisers. Assistance was initiated during meetings with transfer counselors at orientation programs.

Transfer programs are away for universities to ensure students successfully complete the necessary processes and procedures to smoothly transition into the university. Step-by-step process allows universities to control information dissemination. Cameron (2005) however, shows transfer programs are not able to create a seamless transfer. Students still experience difficulties that must be overcome. Townsend and Wilson (2006) found transfer students locate needed information on the university website. Overall Cameron (2005) shows student frustrations associated with the transfer process left students feeling out of the mainstream culture at the four-year university.

Summary of Transfer Student Experiences

Transfer student research is considerably diverse and covers a wide range of variables related to the phenomenon. Early research by Hills (1965) develops an understanding of transfer shock. Research continuing Hills work evolved the transfer shock concept from a GPA representation, to an understanding of academic and social behaviors. Scholars such as Laanan (2007) have developed scales measuring transfer shock effects and how those effects are

mitigated by student behavior. Other researchers such as Ishitani (2008) furthers transfer

shock research developing computer generated profiles predicting which transfer students are

more likely to successfully graduate. From its inception, transfer shock research has used the

GPA as a predictive means of transfer student success.

Comparative research of transfer students and native students attempts to draw

differentiating conclusions about the two demographics, making little advancement in

consistently defining transfer students. Research focusing on GPA distinctions suggest a mix of

empirical results, (e.g. Carlan & Byxbe, 2000; Johnson, 2005) supporting the notion that

transfer students need to overcome any type of transfer shock they experience immediately

after transferring in order to succeed academically. Comparisons of transfer students and

native students suggest an overall difference in priorities. Transfer students are more likely to

focus on activities related to academic success rather than social activities. This echoes

previous community college involvement research suggesting pre-transfer, students are a

diverse population with other responsibilities besides academic preparation and success

(Berger & Malaney, 2003).

Transfer experience research suggests transfer students often feel frustrated by a lack of

assistance from either institution (Townsend & Wilson, 2006). Faculty interaction with transfer

students is limited, and faculty are only able to provide limited amounts of information and

support. Transfer programs designed to counteract these problems have not been completely

successful and need refining to ensure students feel as if they are part of the university

(Cameron, 2005). Transfer experience research such as Townsend and Wilson (2006) suggests

transfer students feel as if they need someone to hold their hand a little bit, to help them a little more.

Transfer student research lacks insight about how transfer students come to understand universities cultural and communicative normality. Jablin's (1987, 2001) socialization model applied to the transfer process attempts to understand of how transfer students come to feel as if they are a part of the university. This focus differs from previous research because the communicative acts between the university and transfer students are the central focus. These interactions influence the experience transfer students have, thus affecting their likelihood of graduating from the university.

Intending to enhance socialization and transfer student research, this thesis proposes research questions attempting to understand the socialization experience of transfer students. The following research questions are asked.

1. Does the university actively socialize transfer students?

2. Do transfer students actively participate in their own socialization?

3. At what point during the transfer process did socialized transfer students begin to feel socialized?

Chapter 2: Method

Current transfer student literature focuses mainly on performance outcomes of the transfer process and lacks an understanding of the socialization process students experience when entering a new university. Attempting to understand transfer student socialization experiences further, this thesis relies on the qualitative methods of interviews and interpretive data analysis instead of quantitative methods commonly used in previous transfer student research. This study broadens transfer student research providing a description of the socialization experienced by transfer students, in a context that is comparatively similar to nonstandard work arrangement. This chapter first justifies the study of socialization through a qualitative approach, then describes in detail the data collection methods, and finally justifies the interpretive approach used to describe the results.

Qualitative Approach

A qualitative approach to the study of transfer student socialization is useful because it enables research to explore different aspects of the transfer student experience as they relate to Jablin's (1987) theory of socialization. Discussed first are the developmental qualities of socialization demonstrating the continuously emerging socialization effects. Discussed second is the ability to use Jablin's (1987) socialization theory to further understand the transfer student experience.

The progressive influence of socialization creates change over time beginning during childhood. According to Bullis (1993) socialization begins at an early age through our own interactions with society. Maintaining this study's focus, it is important to include the previous experiences transfer students have had during their higher education careers. These diverse

experiences affect the socialization experiences at the receiving institution. A qualitative

approach towards data collection allows each student to describe their individual experiences

prior to entering the receiving institution. These described experiences are descriptions of

socialization transfer students previously experience, providing rich data about the point each

student is at in the socialization process. Each student may be at different points of the

socialization process before transferring into the same receiving institution, which may be a

product of their previous socialization experiences. Including these student experiences allows

data describing the longitudinal effects of socialization to be collected, providing a larger snap

shot of the phenomenon.

A qualitative inquiry also allows themes to emerge about the specific receiving

institution involved in this study. Personal one-on-one interviews are a useful to discover

points of interest about students' experiences at the specific institution. To fully grasp an

understanding of these experiences, more detail may need to be solicited beyond the offered

response. As data is collected, particular instances reoccurring in the narratives of participants

may need to be clarified or developed further to better describe the experience. The openness

of the interview process allows issues of concern to be fleshed out providing more insight into

the phenomenon.

The context in which socialization is experienced can be examined on two levels. First,

the overall experience is put into a context of transition. Participants are more able to

determine when they do and do not feel as if they are a part of the university. This is important

to better understand the socialization experience of transfer students as it allows the details to

determine when students feel separated from the university and when they feel they are part

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of the university. Understanding the details specific to the instances when students feel as if

they have become a member of the university is important to further understand the

communicative impacts associated with those instances. Quantitative methods are less likely

to achieve a detailed understanding because of the tendency to utilize questions with

standardized answers, unable to fully examine the impact of the communication.

Secondly the details from qualitative data provide away to understand transfer student

issues in the context they are encountered. Extant research on transfer students focuses on

academic or social behaviors of transfer students, and does not provide an understanding of

why transfer students face particular issues. Through qualitative details, transfer student

experience exemplars emerge possibly demonstrating where any communication breakdowns

may have occurred. The details provided in these exemplars paint a picture of the issues useful

for generating future solutions.

The use of qualitative methodology in this study provides flexibility needed to capture

the essence of the transfer student experience. Through the rich details ascertained during the

interview process, the developmental and contextual aspects of the communicative acts driving

the socialization process can be better understood. What follows is an explanation of the

author's personal experiences with the transfer student phenomenon. This is done as a means

to bracket out, or make notice of any possible bias the author may hold from these previous

experiences.

Personal Experience

The author's personal experiences with the phenomenon under investigation are

described attempting to bracket out as much personal bias as possible (Creswell, 2007).

Moustakas (1994) recommends providing a description of personal experiences with the phenomenon under study near the end of the study, however Marshall and Rossman (2006) suggest it may be more beneficial to explain these experiences briefly early on. This author has chosen to follow Marshall and Rossman's suggestions and describe related personal experiences early on instead of during the latter discussion. Primarily this is done to underscore an impetus for the inquiry into the transfer student experience. The research question, "How are transfer students socialized into four-year universities?" was derived from the author's personal experiences. What follows is a brief description of those experiences.

In the fall of 2001 the author began his higher educational career at a two-year university style institution. Due to military service the author did not complete his Associate's of Arts and Science degree from the initial institution until the fall of 2005. In the spring of 2006 while participating in the Guaranteed Transfer Program the author transferred from the initial two-year institution to a four-year university approximately 50 miles north of the two-year institution. While attending the four-year institution, the author lived in on-campus apartment style housing and was enrolled mainly in major specific courses while maintaining full-time student status and working approximately 25-30 hours per week at a local retail clothing store.

On campus, the author hosted a late-night, top-40 radio show, and occasionally made appearances on university television shows. Other activities included a semester long, 15 hours per week internship for a non-profit organization in the local downtown area as well as attending university men's basketball games and semi-pro hockey games.

Majoring with an emphasis in the social sciences, the author did experience transfer ecstasy as discussed in Cejda (1997) and graduated from the university in the spring of 2007

with an improved GPA. As previously stated, the description of these personal experiences is meant to bracket out the author's experiences with the phenomenon in an attempt to view the phenomenon as fresh for the first time. Moving on, the remainder of the methodology is discussed.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into three sections. The first section details the participants and selection criteria used to determine the participants. After discussing the participant criteria, the second section discusses the procedure used to gather and record the data. The third section discusses how the data will be analyzed following Moustakas (1994) approach to data analysis.

Participants

The participants for this study were drawn from the university under inquiry. This study involves 16 participants who range in ages from 20 years old to 42 years old. The average age is 24 years old. Six of the participants are female and ten are male. On average the participants earned 38 credits before transferring, and after transferring had earned 40 credits by the time of the interview. The amount of credits earned before transferring ranged from 12 to 90 credits. After transferring the number of credits earned ranged from 15 to 89 credits earned. Prior to transferring, six of the participants attended an in-state two-year university, five others attended an in-state four-year university, one attended an in-state private institution, another attended an in-state technical college, one attended an out-of-state technical college and two participants attended out-of-state four-year universities. Two limitations define these participants, the amount of time spent at the initial institution and the amount of time spent at the university in this study.

At minimum participants in this study had to have earned at least 12 credits at the initial institution. This requirement ensures that participants spent a long enough period of time at the previous institution to participate in typical student activities such as registering for courses and attending class for a complete semester. Requiring participants to meet these criteria ensures they have had previous higher education experiences. Another limitation is used to ensure participants spent enough time at the receiving institution in order to experience typical student activities as well.

Time spent at the receiving university is the last limitation ensuring all participants have reasonable amounts of time to gain experience at the receiving university. Qualified participants earned a minimum of 12 credits within one semester before the interview. Achieving 12 credits in one semester ensures students have at a minimum been active in university academics participating in course registration, course planning for future registration, and academic rigor. Other studies such as Townsend and Wilson, (2006) have made similar distinctions to ensure students have enough exposure and university life experience.

Participants for the study were obtained from a list of transfer students attending a previous transfer student orientation program. Access to this information was gained through university student services. From this list an initial e-mail was sent to all transfer students inviting them to participate in an opportunity to help provide more understanding of the transfer student experience. Furthermore, the e-mail explains to students the researcher, described by name, is interested in sitting down and talking with them about their experience. Those interested were asked to respond to the e-mail notifying the researcher of their willingness to participate. A follow up e-mail was used to begin arranging a place and time

convenient for the participant to meet with the researcher. Allowing the participant input

about the interview place and time attempted to foster higher participant comfort levels during

the interview.

Procedure

Following the work of Townsend and Wilson (2006) and Cameron (2005) this study

utilized one-on-one semi-structured interviews to collect rich qualitative details about the

transfer student experience. Demographic data was collected while arranging a time and place

for the interview. This is done through e-mail communication to expedite the process. Possible

participants were asked to answer such questions such as, "Which college or university did you

transfer from?" Other demographic questions included, "How many credits have you obtained

since you have transferred, and How many semesters have you been at this university?

Questions such as these provided knowledge needed to determine if participants met the

participation criteria. After prescreening those willing to participate, the remainder of

participants were selected on a first-come basis.   Accepted participants received a participant

number once a meeting time and place was arranged.

Before beginning the interview the study was explained to participants again informing

them of the phenomenon under investigation, their rights as participants including anonymity

(participant number coding system), interview length, how data (interview) was to be recorded

and used, and where the data would be stored. After the interviewee signed the written

consent form acknowledging they understood their participant rights, the interview began.

During the interview open-ended questions were used to obtain narrative responses

about the students' transfer experience. Probing questions were used as follow-on questions

to ascertain rich details about the individual's experiences, allowing the researcher to gain better insight into areas less understood. Interviews lasted anywhere from 30-60 minutes per individual, and were completed within one month. This ensured that all interviews were collected during the same academic year time period.

The interviews were digitally recorded with the interviewees' full knowledge and consent. The researcher took field notes before, during and after the interview to aid the analysis. Interview recordings were first uploaded to the researcher's work station computer at the university in a password protected folder on the researcher's H: drive established on the university information technology maintained server. Field notes were identified by the assigned participant number and stored in a folder locked in the researcher's work station desk. Interview transcription occurred by the end of the next day after the interview to preserve all contextual information observed by the researcher. Transcriptions were done by the researcher on his work station computer and saved in a password protected folder on his H: drive.

Data Analysis

After all interviews were transcribed the data was analyzed for emergent themes. Following a format suggested by Moustakas (1994) the data was first analyzed for significant themes by looking for sentences and quotes providing an understanding of the participants' experiences. The data was then read through a second time to create "clusters". Common or similar data were collapsed together from the significant themes. The data was read a third time highlighting specific examples supporting the earlier themes. Similar themes or experiences were grouped into categories and sub-categories. The specific examples found

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within the data supported the categories and sub-categories. Supported overall themes were then listed, collapsing similar themes together leaving distinct overall themes. The multiple readings of the data allowed themes to emerge supported by specific details.

Summary of Method

This thesis attempts to better understand transfer student socialization experiences using qualitative methods of data collection and interpretive analysis. Qualitative methods allow open-ended questions well suited for exploring the communicative influences on the socialization process. Transfer students spend a limited time period at the university after transferring much like contingent or temporary workers are only employed for short periods of time.   Jablin's (1987, 2001) socialization model lacks previous application to nonstandard work arrangements, and requires further exploration of its usefulness when applied to this type of context. The transfer student process provides a useful context to apply socialization principles and theory to better understand the communicative influences thus, furthering socialization research.

Chapter 3: Results

Transfer students are a dynamic demographic of students on university campuses across America. The process of efficiently accepting, registering, and graduating transfer students has become even more important as larger numbers of students leave one school to finish at another. The majority of current research focuses on the performance of transfer students without an understanding of what it is like to be a transfer student. Understanding what it is like to be a transfer student begins to explore the phenomena providing support for further research. The results described in this chapter focus on the experiences of transfer students as they first become acquainted with the university and progress towards graduation.

This chapter is divided into two major themes which help to categorize the sub-patterns and aid in understanding the influence these patterns have on students' transition experiences. The first major theme focuses on the amount of initiative required of transfer students to develop relationships with others on campus, and furthermore focuses on how those relationships influence the transfer experience. The results in this section describe relationships transfer students have or develop with friends, student organizations and groups on campus, and with faculty. The second major theme focuses on the academic experiences of transfer students' and the influence those experiences have on their transition. The results of this theme describe experiences associated with the transfer student orientation program, experiences with academic advisers, and experiences associated with a need to stay on academic pace with peers in their major.

Transfer Student Initiative to Develop Relationships

The demographics of transfer students are diverse; however, many of the participants describe developing relationships with others on campus as an important aspect of their transition into the university. In this study participants describe three different types of relationships that influenced their transition. First, participants describe existing friendships as positively influencing their transition into the university. For many students, existing friendships allow them to develop more relationships with other students. The second type of relationship requires becoming involved in student organizations or groups. Joining student organizations or groups allows transfer students to develop relationships with other students, and become more involved on campus. The third influential relationship style develops with faculty members. These relationships are influential because of the supportive benefits transfer students reap from those relationships. All three styles of relationships are described in this result section are an important aspect of transfer student transition.   The following provides examples supporting each of the connection patterns.

Developing relationships with friends. Twelve of the 16 participants describe developing or maintaining relationships with friends as important to their transition into the new university. Results of this study pertaining to relationships with friends are categorized into three different contexts. Transfer students maintained existing friendships, developed new friendships through campus activities, or developed new friendships from inside the classroom. Distinguishing between these three different contexts of relationship development is important because the amount of initiative required of transfer students to create a relationship within the three contexts varies. Responses from these participants suggest that whether or not transfer

students attempt to develop relationships in one of the three differing contexts is influenced by the amount of initiative that is required.

Eleven of sixteen participants in this study describe friends who are already attending the university as a comforting relationship creating a positive connection to the campus. One 21-year-old male who transferred from a nearby two-year campus stated it this way, "I knew a bunch of people who went here already so at least I had some ties so I wasn't going in blind anywhere." This participant was felt as if he was not going to be alone at the university because he already knew other students attending the university.

Similarly another 22-year-old male transfer student describes his relationship with a friend already attending the university as benefiting him, because the friend was knowledgeable about a particular program he was interested in. This student describes how his friendship with another student creates a comfort for him this way, "I actually had a friend that went here and had already graduated and they were in the bio program here."

Another 23-year-old male student who transferred into the university from a nearby four-year campus describes the support of acquaintances from his unit in the Army National Guard. He describes how it was useful to ask his fellow soldiers questions, "A lot of the guys from my unit went here so I was able to ask them a lot of questions." The ability to ask his fellow soldiers a lot of questions allowed this transfer student to gain clarification about things he did not understand.

In one instance a 20-year-old male transfer student from a large in-state four-year university describes the support he receives from a friend he knew prior to attending the university as,

When I actually got here for orientation one of my friends who I stayed with, she is in one of the sororities and they had just done a social with the frat I'm in. She's like they're amazing I found something perfect for you, they're a group of guys and they just love to sing. Also one of my roommates that I had at camp here is one of the brothers and so I said hey what is this and he was like it's this!

In this example, the friend of the transfer student is a known friend prior to coming to the university. The friendship enables the transfer student to become involved with a student organization on campus, thus further developing relationships with other students.

These examples demonstrate how transfer students utilize already existing relationships with friends as links to the receiving university. Whether these relationships are with close personal friends or derived from a more formal work setting, developing a relationship with a current student at the university can, as in these examples, be rather comforting for transfer students.

Preexisting friendships are helpful when creating new friendships and acquaintances, thus increasing a transfer student's number of relationships with other students and extending their friend network. From these new friendships transfer students begin to build their social network, becoming involved in activities with the new acquaintances. As a way to describe the campus environment, one transfer student compares her old campus to the current one this way, "I rarely saw people taking canoes and going out on the lake. There were people throwing frisbees and footballs, but not like here." In this student's particular case she is referring to the amount of student activity she noticed upon transferring to the university. To her, the more active campus the more opportunities she has to develop relationships with other students.

Another student, a 21-year-old male, describes what on-campus friendships meant to him through a comparison of his former two-year university and the current four-year university

> socially it was just a lot different because you go to the community college it's all of a couple hundred people, and you go here and it's all of a couple hundred people on your floor. The first couple of weeks I was just overwhelmed, all these people here. There are a couple of guys who always went and played basketball and I started hanging out with them because they like to do intramurals and stuff and I got to be on their basketball team. That kind of just opened up a lot of stuff. I just met a bunch of people through sports and then started hanging out with those guys. That is basically what my group of friends turned into.

This student develops friendships with other students in his residence hall, which began by focusing on intramural sports. Over time the student develops the friendships further and the focus of the friendships shifts from a specific sport to a mutual friendship of more detailed understanding.

A non-traditional female student describes a similar occurrence on a more personal level with her fiancé.

> I had been with my fiancé for about a year at that point and like I said he was a very big help introducing me to things, he spends a lot of time on campus. He prefers to be in the Brewhaus [a recreational area for students] and he works with a lot of fellow students. Being around him makes me be around campus more…It is meeting other

students and doing things outside of the classroom that really helps you understand the

university as a whole.

The transfer student's relationship with her fiancé played a role in developing relationships with

other people on campus. In this instance, this student met her fiancé after transferring to the

university and then broadened her network of friends through him.

For each of these students, someone they know or met plays assist them in developing

their network of friends. In these examples the networks increase student connectedness and

involvement with other friends; however, it is the initiative that transfer students must take in

order to begin the process of developing a network of relationships.

Eight of the sixteen participants in this study describe meeting classmates as creating

more relationships on campus. One student describes getting to know classmates as a

progressive experience. She describes her experience this way, "As time went on I got to know

the people in my classes because, as a major, we all stay in most of the same classes so that

was really nice." This female transfer student got to know other students in her major because

she frequently attends the same classes with them.

More specifically, nine of the sixteen participants disclosed that they lived off campus.

Of those nine participants, four of them suggest that getting to know classmates is a usefully

way to develop relationships, thus creating a connection to the university. One transfer

student living off campus references the exclusivity of upper level classes this way

I was an upper classmen originally living with upper classmen at our apt building. After

the first semester I felt amongst everyone. I mean taking the upper level classes these

last two years, you're basically with the same people usually.

This student references the exclusivity of being in upper level classes and living off campus surrounded mainly by upper classmen. In her experience, the status of "upper classmen" defines a point at which the number of different students she interacts with each day is narrowed. Students who typically live off campus fit this demographic.

The previous comment poses the definition of being an upper classmen as a transition from introduction courses to upper level major related courses. Another 23-year-old male transfer student also describes this transition

> it's still going to take a year to acclimate, get used to your surroundings, and then to
> make friends. You know you can sit in a lecture especially with 300 kids, how personal
> can you get? You start to break down into the upper level classes and you start to get to
> know people…

This student's comment reflects the difference between a mass lecture style class and a smaller discussion style class. This student found it easier to develop relationships with other students in the smaller, major specific courses versus the larger general degree required courses.

In more specific or rare cases, non-traditional students who have been removed from the university experience for a prolonged period of time may utilize unique methods for developing relationships with other students. This non-traditional transfer student comments how she looks for people closer to her age in classes

> I think I was able to get to know people very well. There are usually people in any one
> of my classes, somebody that seemed closer, as close as possible I could get to my age
> and willing to talk or help. I have met a couple of friends, new friends that I have now.

At 29 years of age, this transfer student preferred to look for other students who might be closer to her age and thus, possibly more relatable to her. Unlike the other transfer students, this person also includes age as a criterion for possible acquaintances and friends. In her comment she attributes how easy it was for her to make friends in her upper level courses. Out of the total 16 participants, only three were older in age and had been removed from higher education for an extended period of time. In their own ways, each participant uses their age to estimate the likelihood of developing relationships with other students in the class.

From these responses students describe developing relationships with classmates as an important aspect of their connection to the university. Students usually develop these relationships first from preexisting friendships which then evolve into a greater network of friends. Other transfer students found that developing a friendship with one person on campus can lead to meeting other friends and getting involved with activities on campus as well. Finally, upper level courses are another place where transfer students meet other students developing relationships with those students due to the exclusivity of those courses. Unlike large mass lecture courses, transfer students interact with the same students more frequently in the smaller upper level courses and are more apt to develop relationships.

Developing relationships through student organizations and groups. Student organizations and groups are another way for transfer students to build connections on campus. These organizations and groups offer transfer students an opportunity to meet other students, take leadership roles, and become involved on campus. Many transfer students find student organizations and groups to be enjoyable, while others struggle to get involved. Out of the 16

participants, 11 found student organizations and groups to be an influential aspect of their

transition.

One 20-year-old male student describes how friends he knew attending the university

invited him to join an organization. He describes his experience this way

I would say being involved was the big key of my enjoyment. At [other university] I

didn't do anything and in high school I did everything. I got here and I got active in a

frat and then the next semester I was part of the Greek council and I still am the

treasurer for that now. Being involved is one of the big keys of fitting in, trying to find a

spot. You can't just wait for the spot, you can't just fall in.

This transfer student describes his positive experience with one fraternity on campus as a

spring board to develop other relationships and make more connections on campus such as

Greek council.

One 23-year-old male transfer student who transferred from another four-year campus

found his experience with intramural soccer to be enjoyable.

It helped, the intramural soccer. A little free agent program, say you want to play and

show up at the coach's meeting to see if a team will let you walk on. That got to

happen right away for me, something I really enjoyed.

This student found that participating in intramural soccer, a sport he liked to play, helped him

develop relationships with other students in class.

These students found more immediate benefits from their involvement in student

organizations and groups on campus, however, other students found these benefits were often

delayed due to other challenges that needed to be overcome first. For some students it takes them awhile to become involved on campus.

One 23-year-old male transfer student describes how it took him awhile to become involved in a student organization explaining

Oh probably took me about a year and a half after I transferred so about last year is when I really started clawing into it and getting involved. When you're first coming in as a transfer you don't really know anybody and you kind of have to find your own niche. It's like being an incoming freshman.

In this student's experience even though he transferred into the university as an upper classman, in some contexts he still felt as if he was a freshman student coming into the university.

The knowledge of where to find needed information can either help or hinder transfer students as they become involved on campus. Not knowing where to look for needed information can lengthen the amount of time it takes for transfer students to become involved on campus. One male student comments

I wouldn't have known about those intramurals if those guys wouldn't have said anything. Just because they always post those in the HEC [university recreation center] and if you don't walk through there you'll never see them. In our orientation they talked about the message of the day thing, you get that every day and I never even really look at it. It's just double delete and never look at it again. They just fill up the inbox.

This student attributes the lapse in time it took him to get involved with intramural sports to the delivery method and the lack of effective information dissemination.

Another student attributes his timing of entry into the university as something he needed to overcome to get involved on campus. He states, "It was hard to get involved in the society [Forestry Society] because it was in the middle of the academic year. It's like they didn't see there was people coming in and they didn't know what the heck was going on." In this situation, the transfer student began attending the university during the spring semester and found little welcoming from the students already involved in the society.

A 22-year-old female transfer student echoes this feeling in a slightly different way. Her comments center on how welcome she felt as a student living off campus and struggling to find her niche as a student on campus.

I think for me personally I just didn't feel very welcome being that I was an off campus freshman. I didn't feel like I knew where I fit in and the things I could partake in and the thinks I couldn't. Like they even had some kind of huge carnival out behind all of the things that one year and I had some friends who lived in the dorms and I went with them but I still felt very stand-offish. Like, should I be here? Should I be eating the food even since I don't even live in the dorms? Am I allowed to do this? I never really knew how fully I could fit in.

This student experienced uncertainty or confusion pertaining to what she could and could not take part in. Another 25-year-old male student summarizes his experiences living off campus this way

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Talking to one or two people there are people going to the dorms and stuff, and there

are always flyers in the dorms. If you're not living on campus and you're a transfer

student no one really approaches you or reaches out for you…

This comment summarizes well the feelings transfer students tend to experience when

transferring into a new university. In this student's case living off campus and not knowing

many students on campus makes it difficult to get involved. Furthermore, this student feels

that students who are already involved in student organizations or groups did not reach out to

him, and invite him into the organization or group. For this participant and the others quoted

here, the amount of initiative required in order to become involved in a student organization or

group is often greater than they are willing to take.

According to 11 of 16 participants, transfer student involvement in student

organizations and groups on campus was an influential aspect of their transition. Those

students involved in organizations and groups tended to reap the benefits of meeting others

and developing their own niche at the university. Many students, however, found it difficult to

become involved with these organizations and groups. The longer it took participants to

become part of an organization or group, the longer they may have felt isolation or uncertainty

about their transfer. The logistical challenges faced by transfer students living off-campus

made it more difficult to find needed information and make the desired connection the

organization or group. In summary of this theme, the participants in this study expressed a

need or want for inclusion, but found it difficult at times. Those students who were able to

develop relationships sooner benefited from the positive outcomes of meeting people, making

connections, and developing their own niche. The amount of initiative that is required by

transfer students in order to become members of student organizations or groups may be more than these participants were willing to take.

Developing relationships with faculty members. In this study 6 out of the total 16 participants described their relationships with faculty members as influential aspects of their transition. The overall pattern regarding university faculty focused on the positive support faculty provide to transfer students. As these examples demonstrate, faculty are a positive influence on transfer students helping them feel comfortable with the university, becoming knowledgeable about their major, or adding to already received support. For example, one 20-year-old male who transferred from a large in-state university describes the influence of faculty at the receiving university like this, "I knew I wanted to be a music major and I was like I can go to [university], I already knew the professors." In this particular case, this student felt a connection with the faculty in the music department because he had already developed relationships with them through summer music camps as a high school student.

A 42-year-old female student describes her experiences with two faculty members in the School of Education in the same positive manner stating, "I met with [professor] right away and she has helped me a lot as well. Now I have Dr. [professor] and she is awesome. All my interactions with the School of Education were very positive." The initial positive experiences of this student lead to follow-on positive experiences with other faculty in the same department. The collective experience of the participant fostered a positive relationship with the entire School of Education.

On a more personal level, a 21-year-old male transfer student was influenced to choose a political science major because of the connection he had with one of his professors. The student states,

> Political Science was one of my majors because of one of my professors. He was really nice and this is something I could see myself doing. Dr. [professor] was the professor. He was really nice to me. The department as a whole was alright, something I can associate with, you feel welcome.

In this case, it was the formal student-professor relationship with one professor that helped a transfer student make a connection to a major of interest, thus feeling more welcomed in an academic department on campus.

Relationships with faculty in a desired major can also help students adjust to the major and the university. One 22-year-old female transfer student who previously attended an out-of-state community college and an in-state technical college found the one-on-one relationships at the university to be beneficial, helping her adjust to the work load. She states, "I've gotten really great relationships with my professors, just one-on-one time. Just being able to talk to them I feel I can handle the work load now and I kind of have a support system down." For this student, her relationships to faculty members offer her support while adjusting to an intensified work load. In this situation, the transfer student is benefiting from the individual attention she is able to receive from professors at the university.

The students in these examples viewed their relationships with faculty members on campus as positive experiences. In some cases those positive experiences fostered further relationships with other faculty members. As a result of these positive experiences, the

students found their relationships with faculty to be supportive. What is important to note, is that each of the participants in these examples needed to take the initiative in order to further the relationship with the faculty member and reap the supportive benefits. The fewer number of students engaging in these relationships suggest that a higher level of initiative may be required of the student in order to achieve the relationship. Furthermore, as the examples suggest, these participants are more likely to seek out support from those faculty members they have previously interacted with. It is less likely that these participants would seek supportive from faculty members whom they have never interacted with before, or do not have some form of relationship with.

Summary of Transfer Student Initiative to Develop Relationships

From the experiences of the students involved in this study relationships with friends, student organizations and groups, and faculty were influential on their transfer experience. Students benefited from developing relationships with friends because of the ability to create a friend network, and a personal niche on campus. Through friends transfer students are able to better understand university and major related information, as-well-as develop a social network. Student organizations and groups were viewed as useful for these students to become involved on campus. For some students, becoming involved in these groups was difficult and their involvement delayed until they were invited by or became friends with an active member. Relationships with faculty members on campus were described as a positive experience these students. Transfer students described faculty to be supportive which often influenced their future decisions. Some students described personal one-on-one interactions with faculty while other students chose to emulate faculty members they developed

relationships with. The rest of the results discussed in this section focus on the second

patterned observed, the academic experiences of transfer students.

Academic Experiences

The second primary pattern evident in these results reflects upon experiences

associated with degree related information describing students' academic experiences focusing

on three different points of interest related to transferring. The first point of interest focuses

on the experiences of transfer students related to the transfer student orientation program.

The second point of interest describes students' academic advising experiences, and the third

point of interest describes the importance transfer students feel about staying on the same

academic pace as their native counterparts. These three points of interest reflect the methods

the university uses to socialize incoming transfer students. The results in this section suggest

university socialization tactics such as the transfer student orientation program may not be the

best suited tactics for socializing transfer students.

The *transfer student orientation program.* Participants in this study provided a mix of

descriptions about the transfer orientation program they attended. Nine of sixteen participants

in this study describe transfer student orientation program experiences as influencing their

transition. Some transfer students feel the orientation program matched their expectations,

while other students' descriptions suggest the transfer orientation program did not meet their

expectations. A 21-year-old male transfer student describes the transfer orientation program

this way,

The orientation was typical, a here are the rules kind of thing. I picked up a lot of other

stuff from people I knew. I guess in my mind it was the general house keeping things so

to speak. It really didn't I guess emphasize anything in particular.

For this student, the transfer student orientation provided him with many of the rules, policies,

and procedures which he expected to hear at the orientation.

A 38-year-old female transfer student felt much the same way about the transfer

student orientation she had attended as well.

I thought it was very helpful. It wasn't a ton of information, but it was enough info that

you at least went in going ok now at least I understand a little about what I'm looking at,

what the expectation is when you get to college, that kind of stuff. I did find it helpful.

In this case, the woman was expecting to receive the information that was given to her at the

orientation program, thus she was satisfied with the program.

Although some of the students were satisfied with their orientation program, many

describe the transfer orientation program as being less than what they expected. A 21-year-old

male transfer student describes his experience at the transfer orientation program this way

It was pretty tedious because they just gave us the course catalog and print off of the

seats that were still open so it took awhile to page through and find a schedule that

works. Once you have a schedule made up then you're at the whim of whether the

seats are still open or not. I was a little disappointed in that method…The registration

thing was kind of a daunting task because you don't know how the system works. I

mean looking back maybe it would have been easier knowing what I know now. Such as

how to make the class schedule work, I mean I really had no idea how things worked

around here. They basically sat you down at the table and said here is the information

now go.

This student's response encompasses two aspects of the orientation program that he views as

problematic. First the student thought that using paper copies of open course listings was

rather tedious, and that it probably could have been done much quicker using the online course

catalogue. Second, the student expresses frustration over his lack of knowledge about the

registration system. The registration system at this particular university was developed by the

university and may not be the same as registration systems at other universities in the system.

Another student, a 29-year-old female, expresses the same disappointment with the

registration system. This student's description provides unique insight into the transition from

registering at the transfer student orientation and registering the next semester for the first

time on her own. She describes her experiences like this,

That first time you register they register with you sitting down at the computer at the

register office. Then the next semester you register on your own, but nobody teaches

you how to do that…It was just all new to me. That was something I had trouble with,

registering on my own.

During the transfer student orientation, transfer students register for classes with the aid of

another student employed by the registration office. The transfer student sits to the side, while

the aide uses the computer to take the transfer student through the steps of registering online.

This particular student is expressing her frustration with this method because she feels that she

was unable to register on her own the next semester, and that a different way to register

incoming transfer students the first time might better enable transfer students register on their own in the future.

During the orientation various staff members present information relevant to their office. During this time all transfer students are typically in a large room together listening to each person speak. Some of the frustrations transfer students experience during the orientation occurred during these presentations. One female student describes her frustration with the size of the orientation, "I think because there were so many people there that it was kind of hard. I was too nervous to ask questions that I might have had. It was kind of overwhelming, you know, all at once." In this student's experiences she finds the large number of people in the room too intimidating to ask questions. As a solution she alludes to a smaller size orientation program as a possible option.

Another male transfer student adds to the feeling of being overwhelmed describing his orientation experiences as follows

At that orientation it was a room full of kids, it was an auditorium over at the fine arts building and they just went down the list. Anyone who wants to do this go here. They just told us the room and let us go. Looking at a list I didn't really know where to go so I just showed up at the education room and just kind of got the well what do you want to teach? I responded I really don't know yet, maybe history. They told me well go to the history department. Just shuffled me through without much thought. The history department was not for me, but that's what they gave me. It should have been more personalized. It was kind of made easy, just made quickly, get it all done in one day. Go find an adviser, not the right adviser.

This student's description of his experience at the transfer student orientation depicts two aspects of the orientation program that he feels are problematic. First this student describes an orientation process focusing on getting the orientation finished and second this student describes a lacking attention to finding a suitable adviser instead of any adviser.

One final contention some transfer students hold about the orientation program focuses on unneeded information being disseminated to them. One 25-year-old male transfer student describes the unneeded information this way,

A lot of what they were talking about had to do with adjusting to university life and living in the dorms. Just looking around the room half of the room was going to be living in the dorms. It looked like a young crowd. I had enough credits for the university to allow me to live off campus that is where I felt comfortable so I did. I wished there was either in the orientation some part of the day where we are introduced to student organizations things like that.

In this particular case this student experiences a large amount of disinformation, or unneeded information. As an alternative to the unneeded information he suggests providing an opportunity to meet student organizations instead.

The students' descriptions of the transfer student orientation program provide a mix of responses. A small number of students feel the transfer orientation meets their expectations and they are pleased with the program. The majority of students experienced the program differently, feeling either overwhelmed by the amount of information presented or that the information presented did not apply to them. As an overall experience many transfer students feel they had been shoved through the program. These findings are insightful suggesting that

the current structure of the orientation program may not be the best structure for socializing

transfer students. As an organizational socialization tactic, the orientation program may not be

the best tactic to use for socialization.

Transfer student academic advising experiences. Developing a relationship with an

adviser on campus was described as a helpful connection by nine of the 16 participants. Two

patterns are associated with academic advising. First, the participants describe their advising

experience as supportive, and second, participants describe an appreciation for advisers who

help students create a course-by-course educational plan. One 21-year-old female transfer

student majoring in communication disorders describes her experience this way, "My adviser,

she is the adviser for communication disorder majors, she helped me with my transition

figuring out what classes I needed to take in order to get back on track with the major." This

student appreciates her adviser laying out the educational path she needs to take in order to

graduate.

A 21-year-old male majoring in natural resources expresses the same appreciation this

way, "I had [adviser] for example she actually sat down with us and told us where we should be

headed and told us what classes we should take and that was helpful." In this person's

experience, his adviser was very direct about what classes to take allowing the student to

confidently register for classes and begin his coursework.

Another transfer student describes her academic adviser experience similar to the

previous student's description, but describes an element of thoroughness. This 42-year-old

elementary education major states

It was a really positive experience because the person I met with in the beginning

wanted to check to see how many of my credits would transfer and see where exactly I

was at in the elementary education program. She was very detailed and you know just

wonderfully organized and really had a good grasp of what I needed to know to plan my

future here. That was an adviser from Student Services in Academic Advising.

This student describes the qualities of thoroughness and organization exuded by the adviser

she is working with. Just as in previous examples, this participant also appreciates her adviser's

ability to plan out her future educational path.

One final example describes a transfer student's positive experience with their academic

adviser, but one that is slightly different than the previous examples. In this example, the

transfer student appreciates the flexibility his adviser demonstrates while helping him to select

courses. As an undeclared major this 21-year-old male is describes his experiences with an

adviser from Student Services

She told me whatever classes to take and I took all those and they were boring classes. I

registered late compared to everyone else. She [the adviser] was really helpful in

finding me a major, telling me to do this, and go check out these websites. Coming in

undecided her main job was to find you a major, so she was pretty good…She

encouraged me to try a whole bunch of classes to see what they were about. She had

me try some computer science class, and some chemistry. She figured if I didn't want to

do that, I might be more science minded. She made me take the basic chemistry and

animal bio just to keep those options open in case I wanted to go into that…My adviser

was like don't declare unless you're sure you want to do it. There is no point cause then

you're going to go to them, get advised, and take a whole slew of courses you don't

know if you're interested in or not. Since you're a freshman just explore…

This participant describes his experience with an adviser from the Student Services office. In his

description he describes the adviser as very open about his educational path, which he finds

supportive.

Positive experiences with an adviser are beneficial for transfer students when

developing a relationship with an adviser. In these examples, transfer students experience

what they describe as supportive academic advising. For some students supportive advisers are

someone who is able to assist students in planning their educational plan, while other transfer

students describe supportive advisers as being open to helping them discover their interest. In

both instances the adviser plays the role of a supportive figure, knowledgeable about how to

assist transfer students in reaching their goals. While participants in this study describe their

interactions with advisers as supportive, the findings in this section suggest even though the

university can control academic advising experiences (choose how advising is administered)

influences from these interactions seem to have little effect on transfer student socialization.

Transfer students staying on pace with their peers. When describing their transition into

the University, six of the sixteen participants in this study describe a need to catch up and get

on the same academic pace as other students in their major. For some students this means

completing the core 100 level courses before they feel as if they are on pace with others in their

major. This need to stay on pace with other students in the major is a symptom of the

orientation process to the university and academic requirements. Associated with these results

are the requirements for graduation set forth by the university. The pressure transfer students

feel to complete the necessary requirements to graduate fosters a mindset of staying on pace

with others in the major. This mindset stems from the structure of the degree requirements.

Many of the participants in this study express frustration associated with these degree

requirements. A 21-year-old female dietetics major described her frustration this way

> Trying to get into the 100 level classes, I couldn't get into them because freshmen were
>
> already in them. In order for me to stay on track for the major…I just needed to get into
>
> the beginning dietetics major classes that were filled up. I squeezed them in eventually.

For this student getting through the 100 level courses in her major is important in order for her

to stay one pace to graduate with those students she perceives as her peers.

Completing the 100 level courses in a major is not the only way transfer students

measure their progress against the progress of other students. In one unique situation a

transfer student majoring in natural resources described the importance of completing the core

100 level courses needed to attend a summer program call Tree Haven that all students in that

major are required to attend. He describes his situation and when he felt on pace with his

peers this way, "After the first semester, because I had to get four introduction credits which

are required for all College of Natural Resource majors in order to go to Tree Haven." For this

transfer student, attending Tree Haven in the summertime is an important accomplishment

that keeps him on pace with others in his major.

Transfer students in this study also judge whether or not they are on pace with others in

their major by the number of upper level courses they complete. A transfer student majoring in

communication disorders describes that type of experience this way

Right now I'm at a junior standing technically so next year I'll be working with clients as

a senior. That was really nice because I was confused because I was like am I so far

behind that I'm going to have to be here five and a half years? How was I going to do

that?

Reaching junior standing is a mile stone for this student because as seniors, students in the

communication disorder begin their practicum. It is important to this student that she begins

her practicum the following year the same as her colleagues.

Staying on pace with peers is important to transfer students because it helps them

relate to their colleagues in the major. The results discussed in this section suggest transfer

students asses their pacing in two ways. First, completing the core 100 level courses is

important to transfer students because it ensures they are then solely focusing on upper level

courses just as their native colleagues. Second, transfer students compare their progress in

upper level courses to that of their native counter parts to ensure they are going to complete

their degree in a timely manner, on pace with their colleagues.

Summary of Academic Experiences

The academic experiences of transfer students are diverse and produce a mix of results

as described in this chapter. Descriptions about transfer students' experiences associated with

the transfer student orientation program provide the largest disparity of results. A majority of

the participants who comment about the orientation program suggest the orientation program

did not meet their expectations. For many of these students the program was tedious,

overwhelming with information, or provided unnecessary information. These results suggest

the orientation program may not be best suited for socializing transfer students and that less

emphasis should be put on the orientation program. The University may want to attempt other ways of making the orientation program more interactive, and more specifically, foster more interaction between current students and incoming transfer students.

The participants' responses about their academic advising experiences solicited positive descriptions about those experiences. Many of the students describe their advising experience as supportive, and beneficial to their academic career. Included in these descriptions of supportiveness was an appreciation for advisers who are willing to spend time with students, helping them devise a plan of study in a face-to-face setting. Although these experience are positive ones, their influence had little to do with the socialization of incoming transfer students.

Finally, transfer students in this study describe keeping pace with their colleagues as an indicator of transition success. Many of the students feel completing all 100 level major requirements is important to ensure their focus was solely on upper level courses which are needed to graduate. Moving beyond 100 level courses, participants in this study describe the importance of being on pace with other students in upper level coursework too. Reaching upper level mile stones, such as working on a senior level practicum ensures that the transfer students are not only on pace with their colleagues, but will graduate with them in reasonable amount of time. The need transfer students feel to stay on pace with other students stems from the structure of degree requirements. Although the University controls these degree requirements, this does not influence the socialization of transfer students.

Summary of Results

The results in this chapter focus on two primary patterns described by the transfer students participating in this study. The first theme focused on developing relationships describing how transfer students utilized various relationships to associate themselves with the university and the campus. One of the strongest and most common relationships is made with friends. Relationships with friends often lead to relationships with more friends and activities on campus. Student organizations and groups on campus also entail relationships that are described by many participants as influential relationships to make. A lesser number of participants describe developing relationships with faculty as influential to the transfer process. These relationships with faculty provide transfer students with support, positively influencing their socialization.

The second primary pattern described in these results focuses on information related to the degree progress of the transfer student. One of the initial opportunities for transfer students to gain insight into the numerous majors on campus, the transfer student orientation program, is generally described as not meeting student expectations. Although a few students feel the program meets their expectations and was beneficial, many of the transfer students feel either overwhelmed by the amount of information or the information did not pertain to them. As an overall theme, many of the students describe the program as frustrating. These findings suggest the transfer orientation program is not well suited for socializing transfer students and that attempts to make the orientation program more interactive may be well met.

Transfer students generally describe their experiences related to academic advising as supportive, and beneficial to their academic careers. The students were also appreciative of

advisers who are able to assist in planning what courses to take. Although participant academic

advising experiences were positive, these results suggest academic advising has little influence

on transfer student socialization.

Finally, transfer students describe the importance of keeping on pace academically with

their native counterparts. Keeping on pace helps transfer students ensure they are completing

the required courses and graduating in a reasonable amount of time. Transfer students keep

track of their academic progress in two ways. First, completing the major required 100 level

courses is a mile stone accomplishment, ensuring the transfer students of their status as

upperclassmen. Second, transfer students keep track of which upper level courses they have

completed compared to their native counterparts. This is done to make sure they are on pace

to graduate with their peers, and not be delayed beyond when they expect to graduate.

Although the University does have control over degree requirements, these findings suggest

the structure of degree progress has little to no influence on transfer student socialization.

As an overall summary, the strongest influence of transfer student socialization comes

from transfer student interaction with other students at the university. University controlled

socialization tactics such as the orientation program and academic advising sessions have little

to no influence on transfer student socialization in this study. These tactics are attractive

tactics for universities to use because they are the easiest tactics for universities to control. It

may be better if the university places less emphasis on the orientation program, and attempts

to create more interaction among incoming transfer students and students currently attending

the university. Fostering more student to student interaction provides transfer students with

more opportunities to build relationships which are vital to transfers student socialization.

Chapter 4: Analysis

Transfer students have become a recognized demographic in universities across America. As the idea of transferring from one university to another becomes more commonplace, institutions are learning the most efficient ways to bring these students into universities and graduate them. Current transfer student research lacks an understanding of transfer experiences and application of socialization theory at the university level. Previous studies focus on performance outcomes of transfer student success. This chapter provides an assessment of qualitative data collected from one-on-one interviews aimed at further understanding the socialization experiences of transfer students.

This chapter begins by assessing interview data from the perspective of the organization. As universities compete for perspective students, they utilize specific tactics to help successfully socialize incoming students. The aim of the first research question is to further understand those tactics as they relate to the socialization experiences of transfer students.

Following the assessment from the perspective of the university, a more contemporary socialization perspective is used to assess the socialization experiences of transfer students from their own perspective. The student perspective provides useful insight into students' interactions with friends, student organizations and groups, and members of the faculty.

The culmination of this assessment reveals an understanding of when transfer students begin to feel they have been socialized into the university. The assessment of the final research question brings together the influence of the previous two research questions and provides a different perspective from which to think about the socialization of transfer students.

University Socialization Tactics

Jablin's (1987, 2001) model of socialization suggest newcomers to the organization interact with organizational insiders and other organizational socialization agents creating a back and forth exchange of information influencing each other's communicative practices. The first research question in this study asks: Does the university actively socialize transfer students? According to Jablin, newcomers to an organization are influenced by the organization through various ways of planned and unplanned socialization tactics. The results of this study show that the university attempts to influence incoming transfer students using two tactics. The first tactic used by the university is the transfer student orientation program. The second tactic is the academic advising of students by faculty or staff advisers. Each of these tactics did have an influence on the students, however, that influence is not attributed by the participants of this study as positively influencing their socialization.

Reflecting on the transfer student orientation program, the participants in this study comments relate to three different areas. The comments reflect a feeling of frustration associated with the registration process, the applicability of the information disseminated during the orientation program to the individual transfer student, and the impersonal interactions with university staff and faculty advisers.

The frustration students felt about the registration methods used during the orientation program elicit comments describing the process as tedious. Comments reflecting descriptions of tediousness are associated to the large number students within each transfer student orientation program. To accommodate the large number of students and parents in each session, the persons facilitating the sessions present large amounts of information in varying

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formats. In one example, a student comments about the course catalog he was given to use while selecting possible courses for the upcoming semester. Sifting through a paper catalogue page-by-page was, as this student describes, "a tedious and disappointing way to register for classes."

In another example of frustrations associated with the registration process, one female student comments about the lapse of time from her initial registration at the orientation program until she has to register for the next semester on her own. In her description she describes watching someone else who was "helping" her register courses for her. During the registration process at the transfer student orientation, the person helping this student register went through the necessary steps to register the student, but did not teach the student how to register on her own. The transfer student in this example, although able to get needed courses, is disappointed with the way the registration process was facilitated. In this student's opinion, the help she received did not prepare her for future registration requirements.

Other frustrations are associated with the applicability of the information disseminated during the orientation program to the attending transfer students. The diverse nature of transfer students makes choosing which information to disseminate during the orientation program difficult. In one instance a 25-year-old male transfer student is frustrated with the amount of information that did not apply to him. As he notes in his comment, "half of the students in the room appeared to be living on campus, while the other half appeared to be old enough to be living off campus." For this student in particular, information about living on campus is irrelevant.

During the transfer student orientation program, the large number of students and their parents attending the program make it difficult for university faculty and staff to connect on a more personal level with the students. The participants describe this lack of connection as a frustration they associate with the transfer student orientation program. In one student's words, "it was go find an adviser, not the right adviser." This lack of connectedness left these participants feeling as if they were going through the motions of the orientation program as a simple formality.

The aforementioned examples of frustrations these participants associate with the transfer student orientation program exemplify two points of interest concerning the socialization of these participants. First, the transfer student orientation program does not influence transfer student socialization. Second, the transfer student orientation program is intended to be a means of information delivery, which in this case is marred by a number of factors.

From the perspective of the university, the transfer orientation program is intended to provide students with an opportunity to obtain information that is needed for their success at the university. As Jablin (1987, 2001) suggests, the organization utilizes tactics to influence the socialization of the individual. The intention of the organization is to fit the individual into the needs of the organization. The need of the university in this case is to help transfer students become well informed, and, thus prepared to succeed at the university. From the responses of these participants the transfer student orientation fails to accomplish this.

Instead of assisting students in becoming well informed and prepared, these participants perceive the orientation program as a formality or hurdle they must overcome in

order to accomplish their goals at the university. For most of the participants, their main

objective associated with the transfer student orientation program is to get through the

program so they can register in courses and begin the semester.

One reason for this perception of the transfer student orientation program may well be

from the flow of information. During the orientation program much of the information flows

from the organization towards the student without little verification of understanding of that

information. In a sense, the information is presented for mass consumption by the students

without feedback verifying the understanding of this information. This unidirectional flow of

information does not foster dialogue between the students and the faculty, and staff, thus

creating the type of interaction Jablin (1987, 2001) suggests occurs during the socialization of

incoming persons to an organization.

The lack of interaction between the university and the students is inherent to students'

frustrations with the impersonal interaction and the applicability of information. In the context

of the program, the students' comments describe an experience of being "herded" around the

campus from first the opening program, then from office-to-office. The time constraints

associated with a transfer program like this one leaves little time for students to meet one-on-

one with faculty and staff members. In this particular case, the persons in charge of facilitating

the orientation program focus on the efficiency of the program. While this focus on efficiency

is in the interest of the students, according to these participants the balance between efficiency

and quality is difficult to achieve.

While it is difficult to achieve a perfect balance, the idea of tailoring the transfer student

orientation program seems more problematic than the current arrangement. The diversity of

the transfer students who attend the orientation program does not allow program facilitators the ability to precisely address all possible student needs and concerns. What seems to still be pertinent in this situation is a hypodermic needle or shot gun approach towards mass dissemination of information. It may be of use, however, to create more interaction earlier in the transfer orientation program between students and university faculty and staff. As Martin and Hafer (1995) suggest, the more involved newcomers are during the transition, the more likely they are to experience higher levels of satisfaction. In this situation, the more students interact with university faculty and staff during the orientation, the more likely they are to be satisfied with the orientation program. Through interactions with faculty and staff members, students may then be more likely to retain the information disseminated by the university, thus accomplishing the university's goal of helping students become well informed and prepared for success at the university. Assisting students in becoming well informed and prepared students is not an attempt at socializing the students, but is still an important moment in transfer student experience.

The current transfer orientation program is administered in a rather formal fashion. This is to say that transfer students and their parents take part in a structured program, covering a predetermined agenda of topics, in predetermined amount of time. The structured nature of the orientation in itself is a limiting factor by not allowing the needed interaction between the students and the university. A less formal orientation program, broken into smaller sections, might be more conducive to creating dialogue between the students and the university.

The second socialization tactic used by the university is the academic advising of

transfer students by faculty and staff advisers. The students in this study describe their

academic advising experiences as supportive and appreciate their adviser's ability to assist

them in planning their course load. Although the students enjoy the supportive interactions

with their advisers, these interactions do not contribute to their socialization into the university.

The academic advising experiences of these participants do not influence their

socialization into the university because advising assistance is perceived as something that

students must go through before they can begin their coursework at the university. Even

though academic advising is perceived as a formality, the participants still describe their

experiences with some level of importance. The academic advising transfer students receive is

important because it is at that first advising session when students are able to lay out their

coursework in chronological order and begin to construct a plan of study. After constructing

this plan, participants in this study describe constructing their first plan as giving them direction,

a place to start in order to reach their goal. The outcome of these advising sessions set a

beginning point for students, but the actual interaction between advisers and students seems

to be irrelevant to the socialization of transfer students. The outcomes of these advising

sessions do allow transfer students to begin comparing themselves with other students in their

major in accordance with their academic plan.

As a way of measuring progress, participants in this study compare themselves to other

students within their major to ensure they are on pace with them towards graduation. Many of

the participants use comparisons to make sure they have completed the necessary courses

such as basic intro courses in the major in a reasonable time period. Participants also compare

their progress to other students in terms of milestone accomplishments. In one example, a 21-year-old forestry major describes how getting through a required summer internship program is important so he would then be on pace with others in his major. These comparisons assist transfer students in staying on track to graduate, but do not influence their socialization experience. It maybe that the orientation program and academic advising sessions are not as important as may be perceived. It may be the case however, that the university utilizes these tactics because these tactics are within the ability of the university to control.

The use of a transfer orientation program and academic advising sessions are an attractive option for the university to use because these are aspects of the socialization process that the university can control. Unfortunately, being able to control the orientation program and the academic advising process is not enough to positively influence the socialization experiences of transfer students. The control over these two tactics the university does have fosters a unidirectional flow of information. The intent of the university is to disseminate information to students and parents who attend the program. Counter to what Jablin (1987, 2001) describes in his model of socialization, the control the university has over these two tactics does not inherently foster interactive communication in that a reciprocal sharing and understanding of information is not achieved through the orientation and advising process. Following this thought process, the control the university exercises in these two capacities may not be the best directed efforts in regards to the socialization of transfer students.

Summary of University Socialization Tactics

Aimed at understanding the socialization of transfer students from the organizational perspective the first research question in this study asks "Does the university actively socialize

transfer students?" The answer to this question can be summarized in two parts. The first part

of the answer is yes, the university does actively attempt to socialize transfer students. This is

evident through the tactics it uses such as the orientation program and academic advising

sessions. These techniques are used in the interest of preparing students for their academic

futures at the university. The intent of the university is to inform the students of the necessary

information they need to be successful. Through these tactics, the university does provide the

needed information; however, beyond this the university actually fails to effectively utilize

these tactics to socialize transfer students.

Part two of this answer focuses on the actual influence of the orientation program, and

the academic advising session. For all of the students, the orientation program and their first

academic advising session occur on the same day. Students first go through the orientation

program, and then see their respective adviser for advising. It is because of this combination of

orientation and advising that negative perceptions are associated with both. Each of these

experiences is perceived as formalities incoming students must endure before becoming a

student at the university. The combined experience of the transfer orientation program and

academic advising are best described as an experience that happens before the actual

university experience begins. In relation to a stage model example, much like Jablin's model,

the orientation and first academic advising experience are a beginning stage that is almost

separate from the actual socialization experiences of transfer students. When put into the

perspective of the responses from these participants, the orientation and academic advising are

a small piece of the overall experience. As a small portion of the overall transfer experience, it

may be that the University relies too much on the orientation program and initial academic

advising experiences.

Taking the Initiative

According to Jablin's (1987) model of socialization, newcomers to the organization

engage in activities that allow them to individualize their role within the organization. Jablin

calls this activity individualization. At the same time, the organization attempts to mold

individuals to meet its needs. Jablin (1987) calls this socialization. It is the compilation of

individualization and socialization that comprises what Jablin (1987) describes as assimilation.

Assimilation is the mutual exchange of information between the newcomer and incumbents of

the organization that helps to shape roles within the organization (Jablin, 1987). The second

research question in this study focuses on the individualization that occurs as transfer students

assimilate into the university by asking, "Do transfer students actively participate in their own

socialization?" The results discussed in the previous chapter suggest transfer student

socialization is influenced through the relationships transfer students develop on campus with

other students, student organizations or groups, and faculty. This section discusses the

influence of those relationships that allows transfer students to engage in individualization.

Jablin's (1987) concept of assimilation distinguishes between role-taking and role-

making. Role-taking refers to newcomers learning the existing expectations of a position (Katz

& Kahn, 1978), whereas role-making refers to the efforts of the newcomer to fit the role to

their needs (Graen, 1976). It is in the process of role-making where the relationships transfer

students make on campus become an influential aspect of their socialization. In this study,

participants describe three different types of relationships consisting of relationships with

friends, student organizations and groups, and with faculty on campus. Each of these relationships in relation to role-making provides insight into the initiative required of transfer students in order to participate in their own socialization.

Taking the initiative with friends. Maintaining relationships with friends already attending the university and then building a network of friends from those relationships provides students with opportunities to experience anticipatory socialization. In anticipatory socialization, individuals develop impressions of the organization through formal interactions such as interviews, and through interactions with insiders who represent the organization (Jablin, 1987). Through interactions with friends already attending the university, transfer students in this study experience anticipatory socialization.

The participants in this study utilize their relationships with friends who were already attending the university to influence their selection of which campus they may want to attend. These friends are insiders to the university and are able to provide insight about their experiences at the university, thus allowing transfer students to construct impressions of the university. From the results of this study, friends are the strongest influence due to the intimate nature of friendship. Within the context of a friendship, transfer students in this study develop what is described as a more reliable understanding of the university because of the perceived credibility of their friends.

Communicating with friends who are already attending the university provides a source of information that these participants describe as highly credible. As an example, a 20-year-old male transfer student transferring from a large in-state four-year campus describes how a close friend of his is able to tell him what it was like at the university. This friend was credible

enough to this student that when she told him she knew what student groups he should join on campus; he joined those groups after arriving on campus without much hesitation. In this example, the friend already on campus is a trusted source of information that provided reliable insight, thus allowing the transfer student to feel he was making an informed decision to attend the university. What makes this type of interaction so important to the beginning socialization of transfer students is the minimal amount of risk involved.

Regardless of which person in this context first communicates the idea of attending the university, the risk to either person is much less than it may be in other more formal contexts of communication. In the previous example, the transfer student took some initiative to ask questions of interest and obtain the desired information. Initiative in this case does not refer directly to who spoke first, but rather to the transfer student's pro active information seeking behavior. The intimate nature of an already existing friendship allows the transfer student to seek information without a great fear of negative consequences.

The lessened fear of negative consequences is demonstrated by the participants in this study from the descriptions they gave about the communication with their friends who were already attending the university. A majority of these descriptions employ statements such as, "I just had to ask my friend," or "I just came to visit my friend." Responses such as these imply that asking a friend is a comfortable experience. The comfort associated with these types of interactions is important in order for transfer students to begin the best socialization experience possible. The high comfort levels and low risk to these types of interactions suggest that anticipatory socialization experiences such as these provide an opportunity for transfer students to develop well informed impressions of the university. All transfer students

experience some form of anticipatory socialization. In this particular study, interactions with friends already attending the university provide a strong and consistent influence on the socialization of the participants. It is important to note that the vocational socialization experiences of these participants are not a part of this study, but vocational socialization experiences could influence their socialization as well.

The vocational socialization experiences of these participants are not included in this study because they are outside the scope of inquiry. According to Jablin (1987, 2001) vocational socialization refers to the lived experiences and education people receive up until they engage in anticipatory socialization. The thematic analysis of the data does not reveal any patterns among these students that influenced their socialization into the university. The lacking understanding of the participants' vocational socialization experiences is further discussed in the final chapter of this thesis. However, the influence of developing relationships with new friends on campus will be discussed.

Upon arrival on campus, transfer students begin what Jablin (1987) calls the encounter stage. During the encounter stage newcomers begin to learn the daily routines of the organization and expectations. It is at the encounter stage transfer students become more familiar with the university, because at this stage they physically set foot onto campus and begin learning more detail about the university. Stemming from the pattern of relationships with friends already attending the university, making new friends was an influence on the socialization of these students as well. Typically participants make new friends from the relationships they had already established on campus. Two distinguishing demographics are associated with the participants' ability to make new friends.

The responses from the participants in this study suggest living on or off campus, and class standing, upper or lower classmen, influence transfer students' abilities to make new friendships on campus. Personal experiences living off campus vary from person to person, however, responses from these participants suggest that those transfer students living in off-campus housing need to a take greater initiative to make friends on campus than they otherwise would need to if living on campus. Transfer students living off campus describe making friends on campus as difficult, because unlike students living on campus their daily routines require them to go to campus and then leave campus. The participants describe feeling unwelcome on campus and struggle to create their own niche.

Feeling unwelcome or "out-of-the-loop" is an expression for inclusion. In some cases transfer students transfer into the university during the winter break and begin attending classes in the spring. This time period of entry into the university makes it difficult for transfer students to feel as if they fit in. In one participant's case, he transferred into the university and began coursework during the spring semester. In his description about what it is like transferring into the university he describes other students as having their own "clicks." Other transfer students experience much the same, unsure of what they can and cannot be a part of. These responses suggest in order for transfer students to begin experiencing the benefits of making friends on campus quickly, they need to be invited, or included into social networks or groups. Those transfer students who did have friends on campus were able to make friendships through that initial friend and struggled much less. Transfer students may not want to feel isolated, but living off campus is a hurdle they must overcome in order to make friends

easier. Participants also describe being an upper classmen as beneficial to their ability to make

friends on campus.

Participants in this study describe being an upper classmen as an important distinction

in their ability to make friends with other students on campus. Unlike freshmen, transfer

students do not go through an orientation with other students they will be living within a dorm.

The distinction of being an upper classmen is important because upper level courses allow

transfer students to begin to see familiar faces on regular basis.

From the results of this study, transfer students find it difficult to meet others because it

is rare to see the same person more than once in a large lecture class, however, when these

same transfer students begin their upper level coursework, they are able to meet fellow

students and make friends. Upper level coursework is usually conducted in classes no larger

than 30 students as opposed to the mass lectures which can be in the hundreds. Furthermore,

the participants in this study describe group assignments typically given in upper level

coursework as opportunities to interact with other students outside of the classroom. It is

easier for these participants to create their own niche within their majors during upper level

coursework as opposed to during the required introduction courses that are much larger. Being

an upper classmen has social advantages off campus as well.

Living off campus as an upper classmen is beneficial if the transfer student lives in an

area where other upper classmen live. Typically, upper classmen are old enough to participate

in activities that require proof of age. In one 21-year-old student's example, he finds it easy to

make friends with his neighbors in his apartment building because they like doing some of the

same activities outside of class. Since some of these activities require participants to be at least

21-years-of-age, it is more plausible that this particular student will meet other upper classmen. This participant's description of his social activities alludes to a unifying characteristic about upper classmen that helps to create a connection among upper classmen. The lifestyles and activities of those living off-campus allow transfer students to share commonalities with others around them, thus providing them an opportunity to meet fellow students outside the classroom environment. These shared commonalities enable transfer students to meet other students in a comfortable fashion requiring less initiative than in class.

Taking the initiative to make and maintain friendships is an important aspect of transfer student socialization. Friends of transfer students already attending the university are an important link to incoming students as they form their first impressions of the university. This early relationship with friends creates much of the anticipatory socialization that the students experience. Furthering these early experiences is influenced by the ability of transfer students to overcome such obstacles as living off campus and meeting new friends at the university. Overcoming obstacles and making new acquaintances allows transfer students to begin making their own niche at the university.

Taking the Initiative to get involved with student organizations and groups. A unique way students become active in the university is through student organizations and groups. According to Jablin's (1987, 2001) model of socialization newcomers move through a life-span which includes a metamorphosis stage. In the metamorphosis stage, newcomers change by renegotiating their roles and adjusting their attitudes about the organization. One way transfers students in this study engage in the metamorphosis stage is by joining and creating their own niche in a student organization or group. Unfortunately, the results of this study

suggest that becoming involved in student organizations or groups is a rather difficult task for transfer students to accomplish; however, once transfer students become members of an organization or group, they reap benefits from their membership. The most difficult hurdle transfer students must overcome to reap these benefits is taking the initiative to become a member.

Responses from the participants involved this study suggest becoming involved in student organizations or groups is difficult because transfer students often feel they are on the outside looking in. The feeling of being on the outside looking in is attributed to two different aspects of the transition process. First, the participants describe many of the other students on campus as already having formed "cliques" or circles of friends which make becoming involved in these groups difficult. Second, transfer students have a difficult time either locating needed information, or feel the information is not directed towards them. Overcoming both of these hurdles allows transfer students to become involved in student organizations or groups.

The perception of a clique or tight-knit group can be deterring to incoming transfer students. It is because of this perception that in order for transfer students to become members of student organizations or groups, being invited by a current member or friend to join the group is often the easiest way for these participants to become a member. In one example a 21-year-old male transfer student is invited to join a music fraternity on campus because his friend recommended it to him. He joined this fraternity with relative ease because his friend was the connection to the group. Knowing someone associated with a group is comforting to this transfer student which required him to take less risk when joining the group.

The lowered amount of perceived risk also means a lower amount of initiative is required by

the transfer student. In this case, the relationship to his friend is an open invitation.

In other cases a more direct invitation assisted an incoming transfer student to join a

music fraternity on campus. This 21 year-old music major attributes his opportunity to join a

fraternity to the amount of time he spent in a specific building during his transfer student

orientation program. His particular transfer student orientation program was facilitated in the

same building that the music department was housed on campus. Since he had to be in the

building for the afternoon, the transfer student was able to meet the members of this fraternity

and then be invited to join the fraternity. This and the previous example are specific cases in

which the transfer students were fortunate to be introduced to a student organization or group.

Other students do not experience the same smooth change during the metamorphosis

stage. Participants often describe a lengthy amount of time before they feel comfortable

enough join an organization or group. This long period of time it takes students to become

active in an organization or group can be due to a number of reasons. In a majority of cases,

participants are unsure if information pertaining to these organizations and groups is directed

at them. As one 22-year-old transfer student describes in her example of the carnival event,

she just did not know if she was supposed to be attending the event or not. Even after

receiving prodding from her friends to enjoy the event she still felt like an outsider. In this case

the transfer student is told by her friends that this event was for her, and that she can attend,

but actually feeling as if she belongs at the event still does not occur. This example highlights

an interesting aspect of the transfer experience.

Transfer students need to first feel welcomed into a group, and second need to take initiative to join the group. This situation that many transfer students encounter is a key moment because it highlights the importance of the metamorphosis stage, and the individualization that occurs during that stage. The urging to enjoy the carnival the female transfer student receives from her friends represents the socializing influence of the organization. The decision she makes, to participate or not in the carnival, is an example of her engagement in role-making activities. By choosing whether or not to participate she begins to define the role she is playing as a student on campus.

The example in the previous paragraph illustrates how important it is assist transfer students during the transfer process and encourages them to take the initiative to interact with other students and develop relationships. According to Jablin (1987, 2001) the socialization process is an interactive process between the newcomer and the organization. Martin and Hafer (1995) suggest the more involved the newcomer is the more satisfied the newcomer is with the transition. This study supports the findings of the previously mentioned studies in that, it is important to create an interactive transition fostering transfer student involvement. The findings from this study suggest that the university could best support its interest by providing opportunities for transfer students to meet group and organizational members face-to-face. Furthermore, it is in the interest of transfer students to attempt to make these meeting opportunities feel welcoming to transfer students. Beyond these welcoming opportunities transfer students will need to take initiative to participate in student organizations or groups. Providing the best opportunity to do this may increase the likelihood transfer students will take the necessary initiative to become active group members. The results of this study suggest that

becoming an active group member in a student organization or group allows transfer students to reap benefits from their involvement.

Unfortunately, universities have little control or influence the willingness of transfer students to take the needed amount of initiative. The university can only provide transfer students with the opportunities to meet other students and build relationships. This limited ability to influence students' networking abilities is what often drives universities to focus more on the orientation programs and academic advising sessions, despite the benefits transfer students gain from interacting with other students.

Participants in this study describe their student organization or group involvement as beneficial to their transition into the university. Belonging to an organization or group provides transfer students with two major benefits. First, participants describe how belonging to a group helps them feel more like they fit-in at the university, and second belonging to an organization or group allows transfer students an opportunity to make connections or friendships with other students on campus. Each of these benefits positively influences the participants and their experience at the university.

Developing a sense of belonging is part of creating an individual niche at the university. Much the same as Jablin (1987) who suggests employees develop their own niche within a company; transfer students develop their own niche within a university. One way these participants are able to develop their own niche or identity is by becoming a member of a student organization or group. Associating themselves with a group means that they are now associated with the group and its members. Associating with a group not only began to help

transfer students develop their own niche but, it allows them to build relationships with others as well.

One way for transfer students to meet other students on campus is to become involved with student organizations or groups on campus. Becoming involved with an organization or group on campus is beneficial to these participants because unless they have existing friendships on campus, or they recognize another transfer student from the orientation program, these participants describe not knowing many people on campus as a hurdle that needs to be overcome. Once they are members of an organization or group, however, the participants describe meeting the members of that group, and other students outside of that group. This trend is evident from the continuation of group involvement, which in a number of instances leads to involvement in other groups. In one particular case, a 21-year-old transfer student who originally joined a music fraternity later became more involved in activities such as Greek Week. The benefit of on campus involvement in student organizations and groups goes beyond the initial connection made with the group, and allows transfer students the opportunity to further their connections elsewhere on campus.

Taking the initiative to get involved with student organizations and groups on campus is an important aspect of the socialization of these particular transfer students. The results from this study suggest these participants are more likely to join a student organization or group if they either know someone who is associated with the group, or are invited by members of the group to join. Those participants who did join an organization or group describe benefiting from meeting other students in the group which then lead to meeting other students outside the group. Participants in this study also describe creating their own niche in the university

through their association with the group. Taking the initiative to become a group member, or

being invited to become a group member is an important step to reaping these benefits. This

conclusion is supported by previous socialization research by Martin and Hafer (1995) who

propose that high levels of involvement creates a more satisfying socialization experience.

According to findings from this study, membership in student organizations or groups on

campus provides transfer students with an opportunity to become involved in their

socialization process.

Taking the initiative with faculty. Transfer student interactions with faculty members

often provide supportive socialization experiences for the participants in this study. Results

from this study suggest participants' experiences with faculty help students become more

comfortable with the university, their major, and added continued support in general. Initiating

these experiences, however, is a hurdle that is difficult for students to overcome. One of two

situations occurred before a student made a connection with a faulty member that influenced

their socialization experience. Students either meet faculty members before attending the

university or take a course from the faculty member. Both contexts of interaction are

important moments in the socialization experience.

Those students who meet faculty members before deciding to attend the university

typically meet these faculty members at educational functions such as summer camp programs.

For example, two of the participants met faculty members in the music department on campus

during summer music programs they attended as high school students. For these students the

choice to attend this university was prompted by their familiarity with faculty members on

campus. These relationships are important because they foster a level of comfort that allows

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students to feel comfortable interacting with faculty. The interactions between students and faculty that took place at a previous time inadvertently carried over to the transfer student-professor context allowing students to feel more comfortable interacting with the faculty in what may be perceived as a more formal setting. More often however, students are more willing to interact with faculty after taking a class or two from them.

Many times students seek out faculty whom they have already taken courses from and are familiar with. These types of interactions can be very powerful as in many cases they can influence whether or not a student chooses to major in that professor's field. As one 21-year old male describes, he decided to become a political science major partially because of his interactions with a particular professor in that major. The insight and comfort level the student gained about the major from his interactions with this particular professor influenced his decision to major in political science. In another example, a 42-year-old female transfer student describes how her interactions with two different professors greatly influenced her impressions of the education department. As in both of these examples, interaction with faculty greatly influences the students' perceptions of a particular academic department. These are powerful interactions, that when negative experiences occur can greatly deter a transfer student.

The deterrence power of these interactions is highlighted in a description by a 23-year-old male transfer student who transferred to the university under study after attending two other in-state universities. In this student's description of his interactions with faculty members in the education department, he feels put-off by the faculty members he talked to because he does not know exactly what discipline he wants to teach. In his description when

he tries to ask questions to further understand the education field, the professor suggests he talk to faculty members in the history department if he is interested in teaching history. In this example an opportunity arises for a faculty member to make a positive impression on a student, however, due to the response of the faculty member, the student is left with a negative impression. Currently the student is still interested in teaching, but is unsure in what discipline. This student attributes his preference to seek advising support from the academic advising office on campus instead of a professor in the education field to these initial interactions which left him with negative perceptions of the education department. Although negative interactions between faculty and these participants are rare, this example shows how influential interactions with faculty are on students' impressions of a major and the university.

Faculty-student interaction in this study is usually preempted by one of two events. Students either have previously interacted with the faculty member in another context such as summer camp, or students have taken a course from the faculty member before they sought the person out. These differing contexts influence students' willingness to approach faculty and seek out their support. From the examples described by these participants, it is uncommon to expect students to approach faculty members whom they have never interacted with before. Students who take the initiative to seek out faculty members do so because previous interactions have produced higher levels of comfort associated with these interactions. Interactions among faculty and transfer students that created negative impressions of a major or the university are rare, but it is important to understand the power of these negative impressions on the academic careers of students.

Unlike the students' ability or willingness to take initiative to interact, how faculty and staff members at the university interact with students is something the university can control. University faculty and staff can choose how they wish to interact with students. Their choices directly influence students and their socialization experiences. This is one area where universities can coach their faculty and staff members on how appropriately interact with students to achieve the best outcomes for all parties involved.

Summary of Taking Initiative

The second research question in this study asks, "Do transfer students actively participate in their own socialization?" Findings of this study suggest yes, transfer students do actively participate in their own socialization. This finding is consistent with Jablin's (1987, 2001) model of socialization that suggests newcomers to organizations influence their own socialization experience through their interactions with the organization. In this particular study the findings suggest students' levels of participation in their own socialization are varied among three different contexts. The three contexts include taking initiative with friends, taking initiative to join student organizations or groups on campus, and taking the initiative to interact with faculty members.

Taking the initiative to interact with friends on campus is an integral aspect of socialization experience. This context is important because it requires transfer students to take the least amount of initiative compared to the other two contexts. Furthermore, the friend context is more personable and offers more intimate communication. Those participants in this study who had friends already attending the university reaped the most benefits from this context of socialization. Those transfer students already knowing other students on campus

are able to gain insight they perceive as credible which helps them to make informed decisions and feel more comfortable with their decisions.   From these friendships transfer students are able to expand their network of friends and meet other students rather easily. The ease of creating a network of friends from and already existing acquaintance helps transfer students begin to engage in individualization sooner, and thus be able to make sense of their transfer. Those transfer students who do not have already existing friendships face unique hurdles they need to overcome.

Those transfer students who do not have friends already attending the university need to overcome such hurdles as developing relationships with people, and living off campus thus not being surrounded by the campus environment. Participants in this study find it difficult to develop relationships with students at the university because they often feel like an outsider looking in. Students already attending the university are already involved with their groups of friends, and attempting to fit into those groups is difficult. What makes this easier are the upper level courses that typically only had about 30 students in them. In these classes, participants in this study are able to begin to see familiar faces and get to know their classmates. Getting to know their classmates is also enhanced by the amount of coursework that was done outside of the classroom. The out-of-class interaction allows transfer students the opportunity to interact with classmates in a context other than the classroom.

Those transfer students who lived off campus found that meeting other students is possible if they live in an area of the city that housed other students. If living off campus in a student populated area, participants in this study describe being able to meet those students randomly. Not all of the participants feel the same way about living off campus. Others feel

more restricted to their daily routine because it requires them to go to campus, and then leave campus. This style of daily routine leaves participants little time to interact with students outside of the classroom often leaving these participants feeling left out.

Taking the initiative to become involved with student organizations or groups on campus is even more difficult for transfer students than taking the initiative to make friends on campus. Those participants who are invited to join student organizations or groups on campus are more likely to do so because the organization or group reached out to them. Again, in this situation participants who struggle to join an organization or group do so because they feel they are on the outside looking in. It is common that these students express a desire for inclusion, but are unsure about how to join, or fitting into the group. Those participants who do become members of an organization or group often continue their participation and become more involved on campus. Becoming a member of an organization or group is a difficult hurdle for these participants to overcome if not invited, but the benefits they reap from inclusion into an organization or group provide transfer students with an opportunity to meet other students, and begin engaging in individualization efforts.

Taking the initiative to interact with faculty outside of course requirements is not necessarily the most difficult initiative for transfer students to take. Instead it may be better thought of as a more rarely taken initiative. Unless transfer students have either had faculty members as a professor in a course, or interacted with them prior to attending the university, it is unlikely transfer students will seek out members of the faculty. When the participants in this study do seek out faculty members, the influence of those interactions is rather powerful. Positive faculty-student interactions foster positive impressions in students of the associated

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major and the university. It is important to note, that the same powerful influence may be true

for negative experiences as well. Those transfer students who have negative experiences with

faculty may develop negative impressions of faculty, a major, and the university. These

impressions can be harmful to students' socialization experience, but the university is able to

take preemptive measures to avoid creating negative experiences.

Transfer students do participate in their own socialization. A prominent amount of

interaction and influence is derived from their interactions with friends. Interactions with

friends is also associated with their interactions with student organizations and groups as those

students who are invited to join an organization or group are more likely to do so than those

who are not invited. Finally, interaction between students and faculty outside of the course

requirements is rare, but this type of interaction influences the socialization experiences of

students when it does occur.

The Point of Socialization

The third research question in this study examines at which point during the transfer

process transfer students feel socialized. To accomplish this understanding the third questions

asks, "At what point during the transfer process did socialized transfer students begin to feel

socialized?" The results of this study suggest the point at which transfer students feel socialized

is not best measured in an amount of time, but rather with a description of student

involvement. Relating involvement to Jablin's (1987) model of socialization refers to students'

engagement in role-making activities, thus individualizing their role in the university. The

findings of this study suggest those students who become active during their transition are

more likely to feel socialized.

Out of the 16 participants in this study, 13 describe themselves as feeling socialized. From these 13 responses students typically describe the point at which they felt socialized by referring to their involvement in particular activities. Examples of these activities include fun times with roommates, enrolling in courses, meeting other students who live off campus, the amount of involvement in student organizations and groups, and numerous other activities. It is important to note the range of activities students use to describe their moments of feeling socialized are diverse. A number of different activities describe the point of feeling socialized. Findings cannot be generalized to one or a few activities.

The diverse activities students use to describe when they first feel they are on the inside and not on the outside looking in provide insight into the understanding of socialization. Models such as Jablin's (1987) model utilize stages to demonstrate the process of socialization newcomers progress through. While speculation from these findings may suggest that the metamorphosis stage is the point at which these students feel socialized, the lack of standard units of measurement in these responses does not preclude these findings to suggest a specific period of time in which students are expected to feel socialized. Rather, it is the descriptions of the activities they engage in that focuses the socialization of these participants on what they do, not when they feel socialized.

The array of activities these participants describe suggests the focus of their socialization is more on their levels of involvement with the university. The wide range of activities also suggests that it may not be one particular activity itself that prompts students to feel socialized, rather it maybe that those students who are more involved in almost any university related activity are more likely to feel socialized into the university. This conclusion is

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supported by previous socialization research by Martin and Hafer (1995) who found that those employees who are more involved during the socialization process are more likely to be satisfied with their socialization experience. Adding more support to this conclusion of involvement are the descriptions of the three participants who did not begin to feel socialized.

Three of the 16 participants stated they did not feel as if they were part of the university. Responses from two of the three participants who felt this way reflect not being involved with the university, instead simply coming to campus to attend class and then leaving. In one case a 22-year-old female describes how she is still learning to explore the campus on her own, just now unafraid to go and explore to see where everything is. The woman in this situation until recently came to campus to attend her classes and then left campus immediately afterwards. In another example a 25-year-old male describes how the death of his father and another close relative required him to take time off from school, and thus be less involved on campus. In the student's response he describes carefully selecting one course to take after his father died. He wanted to maintain his student status at the university, but did not want to overload himself with too much coursework. The third participant who did not feel socialized admittedly suffers from mental health issues such as depression and is struggling to not only fit into the university, but to manage himself as well. In the case of the first participant described in this paragraph, her explorations are leading her to become more involved on campus. This participant acknowledges beginning to spend more time on campus with her fiancée and is excited at the prospect of becoming involved more. The final two participants were drawn away from their involvement on campus due to personal reasons. Their responses both show enthusiasm to first manage their personal issues, and then become more active on campus.

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Summary of the Point of Socialization

The point of feeling socialized for these participants is not measured in a standard increment such as time spent at the university. Instead the responses of these students describe levels of involvement that determine their feelings of being socialized or not. Those participants who are involved on campus describe themselves as feeling socialized, whereas those three participants who do not feel socialized attribute these feelings to either a lack of experience on campus or personal issues that are not associated to the university. In both instances, feeling socialized or not, participants discuss their socialization in terms referencing their involvement on campus or lack thereof. Although the focus of Jablin's (1987) model is on the progression of newcomers from one stage to the next, in the context of transfer students these findings suggest it is more important to understand the activities within the stages to best understand their socialization.

Summary of Analysis

As more students opt to utilize the transfer option, the need in the future to efficiently socialize these students into universities across America will grow. The findings of this study attempt to further understand the transfer experience. Divided by three research questions, this study aims to first understand university socialization tactics. Second, this study attempts to understand how transfer students actively participate in their own socialization experience, and third this study attempts to discover at what point during their transition do socialized transfer students begin to feel socialized. The conclusions drawn from these research questions provide insight into the experiences of transfer students, and provide an impetus for examining socialization experiences differently.

Conclusions from the first research question focus on the university and its socialization tactics. According to Jablin's (1987, 2001) model of socialization, organizations use such tactics as orientation programs to begin socializing its employees. Conclusions from this study suggest university orientation programs may not be the most effective tactic to socialize transfer students. The findings of this study suggest the university in this study relies too much on the transfer orientation program to socialize incoming transfer students. Instead transfer students may be influenced more positively by university attempts to assists students in creating networks on friends on campus. Results from this study suggest friends of transfer students are the strongest influence on their socialization experience. Academic advising experiences on the other hand do not influence transfer student socialization.

The findings of this study suggest transfer students perceive their academic advising experiences as supportive. However, these experiences do not influence transfer students' socialization experiences. The supportive nature of advising experiences described in this study does suggest transfer students do appreciate the advising assistance they receive. The advising assistance is helpful, but does not influence if students feel socialized. The second research question shifts from the organizational perspective to the transfer students' perspective.

Conclusions from the second research question suggest transfer students do actively participate in their own socialization. Transfer students actively participate in their own socialization by developing friendships on campus, becoming involved in student organizations and groups, and developing relationships with faculty.

Maintaining and developing relationships with friends on campus is the strongest influence on transfer students' socialization experiences. Friends of transfer students already

attending the university provide transfer students with reliable insight into what it is like to be a

student at the university. Furthermore, those friends of transfer students connect transfer

students with other friends on campus, possibly even recommending what student groups to

join. Transfer students who have friends at the university are able to develop other

relationships in a shorter amount of time as compared to those who do not. This is beneficial

because the faster transfer students are able to develop their own network of friends, the

sooner they develop their own niche in the university and feel socialized. The influence of

friends is important because it requires the least amount of initiative, but offers the most

socialization influence.

As a way to form other social circles, transfer students also develop relationships on

campus by taking initiative to join student organizations or groups. Joining a student

organization or group requires more initiative than maintaining or developing relationships

with a friends, but those students who already have friends attending the university are able to

use their connections with those friends to become members in student organizations or

groups. Participants in this study who joined a student organization or group usually

maintained involvement in that organization or group, or became more involved on campus by

joining other student organizations or groups. Getting transfer students to join a student

organization or group is strongly influenced by the friends transfer students have at the

university. Those students who do not have a developed network of friends tend to struggle

when attempting to join a student organization or group. As a way to meet other students and

influence their socialization experience, joining student organizations or groups requires more

initiative than developing or maintaining friendships, but provides transfer students with

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opportunities to build their network on campus. Transfer students also build their network on campus by developing relationships with faculty.

A final way transfer students take initiative to influence their own transfer experience is by developing relationships with faculty. In this study developing relationships with faculty requires students to take the most initiative. Participants in this study are most likely to develop relationships with faculty only after previously meeting them in some other capacity (i.e. at a summer camp) or taking a class from the faculty member. Those participants who do develop relationships with faculty find the interactions to be supportive and helpful. The support faculty usually provide focuses on major related support, offering insight into a major and possible courses transfers students might take. Because the amount of initiative transfer students must take to develop relationships with faculty is rather high, faculty and university staff should not expect transfer students to feel comfortable initiating communication with a faculty member unless transfer students have previously interacted with the faculty member. As a summarizing conclusion, the final research question focuses on the point at which socialized participants felt they were socialized.

The findings of the third research question suggest that the point at which socialized transfer students felt they had been socialized is not able to be determined by a specific moment in time using a standard unit of measure. Rather, those participants who describe themselves as socialized refer to activities and their involvement in the university. Descriptions of involvement include such activities as playing intramural sports, spending time with friends, receiving academic awards, and becoming members of student organizations or groups. Conclusions from these findings suggest those students who are more active in the university

are more likely to feel socialized. Furthermore, those students who are active in the university develop their own network of friends and niche in the university. Findings from the second research question are related to the findings of the third research question, in that, both questions support the need to assist transfer students in taking the initiative to become involved in the university and develop friendships with other students. To best serve transfer students, the university should rely less on the transfer orientation program and focus more on creating opportunities for transfer students to meet other students and become involved with student organizations or groups on campus. Taking this approach enables transfer students to develop their own niche in the university sooner, and thus feel socialized.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

As a transfer student during my undergraduate years I came into my Master's work wondering how to make sense of my experience, and if others shared my experience. My early interest in socialization research provided a useful framework for the questions I wanted to answer. Being a transfer student in a state education system like the one in this study provides a number of options for transfer students to reach their desired goals. Transfer students can begin their higher education careers by attending a state technical college, a state two-year university, a state four-year university, a number of private schools, or any out of state institution. From either of these origins the students are able to transfer to other institutions at their own leisure and continue their education.

It is this ability to transfer from one institution to another that creates an educational system offering flexibility and options to its students. Inherent to this flexibility are difficulties transfer students face when leaving one institution and joining another. This study explored the transfer experiences of 16 participants who transferred from a variety of educational institutions, both in state and out of state. From those experiences, the findings of this study have lead to insightful pragmatic suggestions for improving the transfer process at this particular institution as well as implications for future research concerning both socialization and transfer student theory.

This chapter concludes the thesis by first discussing the pragmatic insight gained from these findings. Second is a discussion of limitations and implications for future research, and third this chapter closes with a brief summary of the thesis.

Pragmatic Suggestions

The orientation program and academic advising sessions are ways the university can attempt to inform transfer students, attempting to provide transfer students with knowledge and the ability to graduate from the university. It is the case, however, because the university can more easily control the transfer orientation program and advising sessions does not particularly mean these are the best methods to use when attempting to socialize transfer students. The findings of this study suggest although disseminating needed information is important, it is more valuable to assists transfer students in networking with other students and student organizations on campus instead.

The university can still utilize the transfer orientation program as a means to disseminate needed information, but it may be more beneficial to create opportunities for incoming transfer students to interact with other students currently attending the university. In the past staff members from the university involved in this study have been present at the orientation program representing student organizations, however, responses from these participants suggest transfer students struggle meeting new students, let alone members of staff and faculty. Student ambassadors may be one way to help create interaction between incoming transfer students and current students.

The use of ambassadors also addresses another issue related to the transfer orientation program. Jablin's (1987, 2001) theory of socialization suggest that interaction between the organization and the individual creates socialization. Responses from these participants attributed the size of the orientation program to the lack of interaction with others at the program. Student ambassadors are a way to break the orientation into smaller groups allowing

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transfer students to interact with ambassadors asking questions they may not otherwise ask in a larger group setting.

Students can benefit from student ambassadors because transfer students are able to hear what it is like to be a student at the university. More specifically, students are able to hear what it is like to be a student in their intended major. Transfer students already have an idea of what the college experience is, however, the participants of this study were eager to find out what their particular major of interest would be like. The ability to ask another student questions about the major during a small group session is beneficial to those students who are or have declared that particular major as well as those students who are interested in that major and have not declared yet. Listening to the experiences of current students is important because it is a part of the role-taking process. In the role-taking process newcomers are learning about the expectations and how things work inside the organization (Katz & Kahn, 1978). The same can be said for the participants in this study who found it important to learn how things work in the university. Providing more student-to-student contact can enhance this process.

As described previously in this section, the university in this study has made staff members available at the orientation program to talk to transfer students about the various student organizations and groups on campus. This person has typically been a staff member from the Student Involvement and Employment Office (SIEO). SIEO is a university office that assists students in getting involved on campus and finding employment. Instead of using a staff member to attend the transfer orientation it maybe more beneficial to hire a student employee to attend the transfer orientation and talk with the incoming transfers about joining a student

organization or group. Ultimately, the transfer students may be best served by the opportunity

to meet a representative from each student organization during the orientation program.

Other universities in the state have created this opportunity by providing a day when each

organization will maintain a table and one representative in a room, and students will be able

to come meet these representatives and learn about the various organizations. To better serve

transfer students this could be done during the orientation program, or during the beginning of

each semester to better serve all students. Providing such opportunities during the orientation

program is meant to introduce students to these groups, and not to force students to join an

organization or group.

The information dissemination and academic advising aspects of the transfer orientation

program are still important; however, responses from the participants in this study suggest the

transfer orientation program may not need to be relied on as much, and that a stronger

emphasis should be placed on helping transfer students to engage in networking activities. As a

means to an end, the transfer orientation program is a good opportunity for the university to

provide transfer students with the opportunity to build their networks. At the same time,

creating opportunities at the transfer orientation program does in no way guarantee that

incoming transfer students will develop a network of acquaintances and friends on campus.

Universities are still limited and can only show students the path, not take them down the path.

Limitations and Future Implications

The limitations of this study are discussed in conjunction with implications for future

research because the limitations provide part of the rationale for future research. The

limitations discussed in this section range from researcher bias to theoretical and

methodological limitations. The first limitation, researcher bias, is one limitation that is actually beneficial to the researcher's ability to make sense of the findings.

The personal experiences of the researcher may be considered by some as a limitation to this study, however, the personal experiences of the researcher provides the potential for a more complete understanding of the participants' descriptions. Even though personal experiences may allow the researcher a more complete understanding of the participants' descriptions, this does point out a limitation to the study relevant to the methods used to collect and analyze the data.

The current study uses interviews to collect qualitative data about transfer student experiences as well as an interpretive means to analyze this data. To better understand the influence of various relationships on transfer student socialization, future research should strive to conduct empirical research to help support the consistency of these findings. For example, understanding the communication satisfaction and competency associated with transfer students' relationships begins to determine which relationships may be the most important types for transfer students to create and maintain. Understanding more about the most influential relationships allows transfer student research to then focus on the communication that takes place in these influential relationships.

None of the participants in this study were categorized by their willingness to communicate. The solicitation of participants for this study was conducted in a way that was most likely to attract students who would be considered more outgoing. It may be interesting for future research to prescreen possible participants selecting only those candidates who consider themselves to be more introverted rather than extroverted. This distinction is of

interest because the experience of those students who are shy may be quite different that

those students who are more extroverted and open. Shy transfer students may require more

assistance, or different contexts for opportunities to make connections with other students on

campus. Understanding these differences enables universities to be better prepared to assists

those transfer students who may struggle the most.

Findings from this study suggest this particular transfer orientation program may not be

the most suitable context for creating or influencing transfer student socialization.

Furthermore, this study focused mainly on the face-to-face communication that occurred

among incoming transfer students, faculty and staff, and other students on campus. The

technology of today may influence socialization experiences depending on the mediums used.

Future research may be able to better understand the influence of such alternative mediums as

Facebook, Myspace, Twitter, and online chat programs such as AOL Instant Messenger (AIM).

As the Millennial generation makes its way through their college years, the mediums they

choose to communicate with may greatly influence their socialization experiences. More

universities are creating pages on such sites as Facebook. The use of pages like these may have

an influence on how and when incoming transfer students are able to begin making

connections and experiencing the metamorphosis stage of socialization. As universities

become more ingrained with technology, their methods of influencing socialization may change

as well, thus altering the experiences of transfer students.

This study was limited to only one university in a system of multiple universities.

Regional and national level understanding of transfer student socialization is not achieved. To

counter this, future research may expand the geographical area of inquiry. Interviewing

students from a number of like universities in the same system may be able to provide insight

that is more applicable to a wide range of universities in one specific region. Furthermore,

involving more than one university may possibly show differing experiences of socialization.

Research such as this would allow for better understanding of transfer student transition at the

system level and develop an overall description of transfer experiences in one educational

system. An understanding of regional transfer student patterns can also be achieved that

includes participants from a wide range of universities in one region. Studying a region of

universities lends itself to understanding other more community oriented agents of

socialization.

This study was also limited by the theory of socialization that was used to frame the

study. Jablin's (1987, 2001) model of socialization suggest socialization is a "life-span" process

by which newcomers move through stages until exiting the organization. Although this model

is useful for demonstrating newcomer progression through socialization, this model does not

fully account for the influence of the interactions between the newcomer and the organization

that occur during the socialization process. Recent research by Kramer (2009) proposes a new

model of socialization that attempts to account for the various connections or relationships

newcomers maintain with organization members. The various relationships newcomers have

with members associated with the organization influences socialization experiences differently.

Furthermore, those same relationships may influence the socialization of other newcomers

differently.

Kramer's (2009) model of socialization provides a different way to understand the

influence of these relationships, and the metamorphosis stage of Jablin's model. This study

only revealed a slight understanding of the metamorphosis stage. Further research should

investigate further the changes transfer students undergo during their socialization.

Furthermore, the importance of making connections and building relationships should be

studied in greater detail to further understand how these relationships impact the length of

time it takes for transfer students to feel socialized, and to understand in more detail which

relationships have the greatest influence on transfer student socialization.

This study is also limited in its scope of socialization activity that was analyzed. Jablin's

(1987, 2001) model of socialization encompasses experiences that were not a part of this

inquiry. Specifically, Jablin's model accounts for the experiences of employees before they

enter the employment ranks. Jablin's concept of vocational socialization accounts for personal

education and experiences newcomers encounter while growing up in society. This study while

requiring participants to have prior higher education experience did not account for the

influences of that education and other personal experiences that may have occurred before

attending the university under study. Future research could focus on the influence of previous

personal and educational experiences that may years after their initial occurrence may

influence the socialization of a transfer student.

The limitations of this study are numerous, although recognizing these limitations is

important to the progression of research. From these limitations future research is able to

further develop understanding of the transfer student experience pragmatically and

theoretically. Furthering both areas of understanding is important for both the university and

the success of students. As student transfer in higher education becomes a better received

option, the efforts of creating a successful transition for students will be well aided by continued research and understanding.

Summary of Conclusion

This thesis has helped me make sense of my own experiences, providing a more detailed understanding of transfer student socialization. Using a widely accepted model of socialization, findings from this study offer a small impetus for the continued sifting and winnowing that are needed to further understand socialization theory, and the transfer student experience. The results of this study are a call to further understand the importance of relationships transfer students make and the influence relationships have on the socialization of transfer students.

This study has only begun to describe the influence various relationships have on the socialization of transfer students. What is demonstrated herein is a new perspective gained through socialization theory. Socialization theory lends itself to be useful in understanding more than a progression of change. Jablin's theory when applied to the transfer student experience offers a new perspective from which university staff may consider and hopefully find insightful. It is to this end that I am pleased to conduct research with such useful practical application, poised to make a difference and provided solutions for real-world situations.

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Appendix A

Interview Guide

What was it like transferring into UWSP?

University Socialization Tactics

What did UWSP do to assist you during the transfer?

When did you receive the most assistance from UWSP?

Was this assistance helpful?

Active Participation

How did you find information about UWSP and the transfer process?

What specific information did you need to look for?

Which UWSP offices did you contact the most?

Becoming an Insider

When did you finally feel like you were a part of UWSP?

How did you feel about your transition at this point?

Overall

What did you like most about the transfer process?

What did you like the least about the transfer process?