The perceived benefits associated with attending college transition programs

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THE PERCEIVED BENEFITS ASSOCIATED WITH ATTENDING COLLEGE TRANSITION PROGRAMS

BY

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Bachelor of Arts, Stephen F. Austin State University, 2009

THESIS

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This thesis has been examined and approved.

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5/11/11

Date
DEDICATION

In loving memory Bryan Patrick Thies, who always introduced me as his "smart little sister." Thanks for believing in me B! I finally did it!


"Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, Brother, have refreshed the hearts of the saints." - Philemon 1:7

To Mom, Dad & Toons- You are my world (and it is a happy one at that!).
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"The aim of education should be to teach us rather how to think, than what to think - rather to improve our minds, so as to enable us to think for ourselves, than to load the memory with thoughts of other men.” -Bill Beattie
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THE PERCEIVED BENEFITS ASSOCIATED WITH ATTENDING COLLEGE TRANSITION PROGRAMS

by

Kathryn Thies

University of New Hampshire, May 2011

The transition to college is critical; it sets the stage for the rest of the student’s undergraduate career. Colleges and universities across the nation are building mentor-based transition programs in an attempt to supplement orientation programs and facilitate the successful transition of incoming freshmen students. By applying concepts from the field of Positive Youth Development, we can look at the time spent in college as an extension to adolescence. Furthermore, we can see that students who have successfully transitioned should be capable of maintaining social relationships, passing academic classes, and getting involved in the campus community. Analyzing participants’ perceptions of one transition program shows some components of the program to be extremely helpful and others to have little actual influence on the transition period.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Overview of Study

In Homer’s *Odyssey*, the character Mentor serves as a teacher and role model for Odysseus’s young son, Telemachus, as he struggles through a difficult time in his life. The name Homer chose has become a term that implies a process of guidance. Today, a mentor is someone who is considered to be a wise and trusted counselor or teacher who aids someone less experienced (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; O’Neil & Marsick, 2009; Sanford, Armour, & Stanton, 2010; Searby, 2009). Mentor programs have become popular across the United States to help guide new members into groups by connecting mentors to students needing guidance and support. Colleges and universities across the nation are building mentor-based, pre- and post-orientation programs in an attempt to supplement orientation programs and facilitate the successful transition of incoming freshmen students. The mentors in these programs are typically students who currently attend the institution. Additionally, some camps extend their programs to students transferring to the university from other universities. Most of these programs aim to build relationships, develop community, and provide students with tools to successfully navigate their first semester away at college (Bass, Holmes, & Williams, 2010).

While plenty of research has been conducted on the process of mentoring, little research has been done to measure the results these mentoring programs have had on students who are transitioning to college. This study will guide future action by providing information that will better the design and administration of these recreation based
transition programs by listening to attendees' opinions about the parts of transition programs that successfully meet the program goals.

**Purpose of Study**

The transition to college is critical; it sets the stage for the rest of the student’s undergraduate career. Educators can use this information to guide the mission, vision, and goals created for these sessions. Intentional planning leads to more effective outcomes like raising the retention rate, higher grade point averages, and building social capital (Pascarella, Witt, Nora, Edison, Hagedorn, & Terenzini, 1995). Having students participate in sports does little to build life skills like communication, problem solving, and leadership skills unless the leadership is intentional (Witt & Caldwell, 2005). Using the sport to teach students concepts like good sportsmanship however is more intentional and the students learn more from participating. In just the same way, inviting freshmen to attend a transition camp without planning and creating goals probably does not provide many outcomes other than fun experiences. Unplanned programs can lead to fun and informal relationships but disregard the potential to teach students about college. Planning a camp to teach freshmen leads to more outcomes such as time management skills and leadership skills (Steere & Cavaiuolo, 2002). Research must be conducted to evaluate what activities at transition programs lead to positive outcomes. Traditionally, records of attendance have been kept to measure these camps. While attendance is helpful in the planning process for coming years, it provides no insight as to how the programs helped the students attending.
Results and conclusions of the study will provide a guide to start better practices, and continue practices that are benefiting students. Program directors might encourage participation in an activity that the participants find no value in doing. Students might also find value in a specific activity at camp that program designers are unaware of. By asking participants for their perceptions of the experience, we can focus on where goals are being met in what ways. Upperclassmen involved in these mentoring programs will be able to identify their experiences and define their role as leaders, adding to the idea that these programs are developed to help students. In this manner, the programs have the potential to not only aid transitioning students, but also to help the peer mentors grow.

Definitions

Mentoring shall be defined as a learning relationship in which a person with less experience or knowledge receives positive guidance and direction from a person who has already gained experience through the process (Sanford, Armour, & Stanton, 2010). Mentoring requires (but is not limited to) face to face contact. Telephone, email, and social networking websites can aid in the relationship but should not be the sole vehicle for mentoring (Carey & Weissman, 2010). Mentors who are not physically present lack the ability to see small details or advocate on behalf of the mentee in his or her locale, among other things (Carey & Weissman, 2010). In this study, the counselors were all peer mentors and the terms will be used interchangeably. Traditionally, the mentor relationship has been perceived as a one-on-one relationship, however, constraints on time and the number of people willing to mentor have changed the traditional relationship. Mentor relationships have been expanded to one mentor working with

Community will be used to describe the campus community, consisting of university faculty, staff, and students. Community can also be used to refer to the local community that a college campus interacts with. Finally, community will also be used to describe the psychological safety and feelings of camaraderie. Each type of community is important in different ways.
Current research shows (Sharkin, 2003, Bowman, 2010, and Larose, 2005, Hicks and Heastie, 2008, Borsari & Carey, 2006) the transition from high school to college is an extremely stressful and difficult time for students. In fact, some young adults transitioning from high school to the college setting experience stress equal to that of life changing events such as divorce or a death in the family (Lopez, 2002). Students are attempting to find out whether they chose the right discipline, where they fit in, who they are, whether they can succeed in college, and a host of other day to day obstacles. Educators spend over a decade preparing students for the academic part of the college transition but forget to help those students prepare for the everyday life changes of the college transition process (Guiffrida, 2009). Living away from home and family, living with a roommate from a different background, being exposed to new cultures and ideals, sharing a community bathroom, and finding a whole new set of friends can be a very stressful process. Fortunately, many higher education institutions have created programs to aid first year students with the transition. Programs can lead to higher rates of retention and degree completion (Goodman & Pascarella, 2006).

Student life is interconnected with the academic side of the college experience and success in both areas is important (Woosley & Miller, 2009, Pascarella et al, 1995). Each aspect has the power to influence the other. For example, a student who is upset with her roommate might not perform as well on a test as she would under normal
conditions. Faculty-student interactions, residence life, and student involvement all play an important role in the college experience. Even social movements such as the women’s rights movement affect the educational experience of students by encouraging engagement in current events affecting the campus community (Astin, 2003). Assuming academic success is indicative of a successful transition to college would be to ignore part of life. Higher education institutions should also be focusing on efforts to develop students who possess qualities such as leadership, social responsibility, self understanding, citizenship, and global understanding (Astin, 2003), not all of which can be best learned in the classroom. Character traits such as hope, self control, social intelligence, perspective, and kindness can serve as a shield against the negative effects of stress (Park, 2009). When we emphasize only scholarly success, we reinforce competitive and individualistic behaviors, discouraging community, democracy and collaboration (Astin, 1999). A study by Moffitt (2010) shows a correlation between satisfaction with academics and satisfaction with campus involvement. Students come to college looking for a well rounded experience as a continuation of their childhood experiences. This experience can involve both academics and social life.

College is an extension to a person’s youth (Guiffrida, 2009). Traditional college students are not considered to be adults yet and do not have full time jobs, and thus they still need many of the supports that youth need. Youth do not develop in schools and programs, but rather, with people. Programs provide a context for development but youth need more than just a place to develop (Smith, Peck, Denault, Blzevski, & Akiva, 2010). Programs are designed with a group of people in mind, instead of focusing on each
individual. While these programs help with development, youth need more personalized guidance from adults to develop (Park, 2009).

**Positive Youth Development**

Positive Youth Development (PYD) is an approach to working with youth that encompasses several important ideas. The goal of PYD is to help youth develop into fully functioning adults who build positive relationships, contribute to their communities, and successfully enter the workforce (Witt & Caldwell, 2005). The PYD movement focuses on building resiliency, “the quality that enables many young people to thrive in the face of any adversity,” which every child possesses to some extent (Damon, 2004). The more support a child has, the higher the child’s resiliency is likely to be.

Positive Youth Development looks at youth as an asset, not a problem or risk that needs fixed (Damon, 2004). In fact, all youth are considered “at risk” in some form or fashion. All youth have problems in their lives and need adults to guide them through their lives, including the transition to college. However, all youth also have abilities and talents that can better the local community. Even youth who get into trouble have strengths and positive qualities. Youth development should not be viewed as simply a way to keep youth out of trouble either. While PYD does help encourage positive behaviors, it provides much more than minimizing deviant behaviors. According to Karen Pittman, an expert in the field of youth development, “Problem free is not fully prepared.” This means that youth who are problem free are not necessarily capable of functioning in society as young adults. Pittman also states that “Fully prepared is not fully engaged.” Thus, even if a young adult is problem free and has been prepared to be a
young adult, that does not mean they are functioning as a part of the community. Youth who are fully prepared might not understand the importance of being engaged or might not possess the motivation to be engaged. Involvement and engagement in college is a pro-social norm that has the potential to keep students from risky behaviors.

The Search Institute created 40 Developmental Assets, a tool that youth workers can use to help with positive youth development (Allen, 2006). The 40 Developmental Assets are split into Internal Assets (the concepts youth possess) and External Assets (the concepts the local community provides the youth with). The Internal Assets will follow a young adult to college but some of the external assets will change. A young adult who has internal assets such as a commitment to learning and integrity will continue to act with integrity and have a commitment to learning even after the transition to college. A youth who had strong external assets before college must develop new external assets such as feeling a sense of safety and developing new adult role models in the college community. The community, family, school, and peers of a young adult all affect the amount of assets the youth possesses (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2004). The more assets a youth possesses, the less likely the youth is to engage in high risk behaviors such as alcohol abuse, sexual promiscuity, and illicit drug use (Zullig, Ward, King, Patton, & Murray, 2008). Those working with youth can use this model to provide better services and opportunities for the youth they serve. The model encourages communities to focus on providing constructive opportunities to help young people integrate into the adult community.

Positive Youth Development theory suggests that the developmental setting is important for youth. Youth workers should strive to provide Supports, Opportunities,
Programs, and Services (SOPS) for youth (Witt & Caldwell, 2005). Supports are relationships with caring adults who can provide motivation, help, resources, and expectations for the youth. Opportunities are times to learn, chances to contribute to discussion and the programs they are involved in, and ability to earn respect. Programs and services are both activities that youth can get involved with and opportunities to aid the youth in being involved. Youth need a space of their own that is both physically safe and psychologically safe. Youth need to be able to contribute to decisions made concerning themselves (Ikin, 2010).

PYD theory describes eight elements of positive developmental settings; these elements are used to create environments that aid in youth development. These elements can be seen in some camps and some transition programs. The eight elements are:

- Physical and psychological safety
- Structure that is developmentally appropriate
- Supportive relationships
- Opportunities to belong
- Positive social norms
- Support for efficacy and mattering
- Opportunities for skill building, and
- Integration of family, schools, and community efforts (Witt & Caldwell, 2010)
These elements can easily be incorporated into transition programs to help create a place where students develop. Integration of the family, community, and school can be done through inviting family members to send their children mail at camp or having members of the faculty and staff come interact with students or asking local businesses to cater and supply materials. Counselors can model positive social norms and build supportive relationships with the students. These elements can readily be found in current programs.

After school activities are highly important to PYD. The time after school, when most parents are still at work, is the time when the most crimes are committed by youth and against youth (Coles, 1999). By engaging youth in after school programs, this time can be filled with more productive activities. These activities should be providing youth with social time which school does not provide, and a high level of challenge. Youth want programs that offer a balance between a little bit of educational help and a little bit of fun. Transition programs could provide both fun and help in the transition process.

College transition programs should aim to provide more than just a space for new students to spend time together. Traditionally, gym and swim programs were created to give children a safe space to recreate during out of school time. These programs provided a gym area and a pool for recreation but little programmed activity was provided. Instead, program leaders focused on providing equipment and space for youth to recreate. This concept was intended to keep youth off the streets which would lead to involved, productive youth (Witt & Caldwell, 2005). However, negative social norms can still spread during these times, youth can still be bored during these times, and very few adult mentors are available for these programs. Gym and swim programs took a good step in
providing safe spaces, but these programs failed to provide concrete examples of improvements in youth behavior which lead to more intentional planning of youth recreation programs. These concepts illustrate the importance of providing transitioning college students with recreational opportunities (such as a transition program) that do more than just provide space for recreation. These programs should find ways to help students with problems that emerge during the transition.

Much research has been done on the theory that youth need a positive adult role model in their life (Quinn, 1999; Search Institute, 2008; Thurber, 2007; Witt, 2005). Many of these studies looked at the impact age, race, socioeconomic status, and commitment of both the mentor and the mentee had on the success of the mentee. Studies have been done both at camps across the United States and Boys and Girls Clubs focusing on an adult/youth mentorship. The conclusion is that bonding with an adult role model is crucial to a youth’s development because it provides a stable source that youth can turn to when distressed (Catalano, 2004). In the same way, college students can benefit from having a mentor who knows the system; someone who can tell them things like which nights to eat at which cafeteria, when to try to register for classes, and which professors are good teachers.

Some youth can find positive adult role models in their parents, but others need teachers, neighbors, community members, and youth workers to be role models. Adult role models can set expectations and boundaries for youth. They can provide services and programs for youth. They can employ scaffolding, a technique in which the adult provides support for a young person so the youth can make a positive decision; scaffolding is a way of enabling youth to act without treating them like children (Witt,
Faculty and staff are often the adult role models of college students. Research shows that professors who are better prepared and make an effort to care about their students had a positive and significant influence on first year students’ academic competence (Reason, Terenzini, & Domingo, 2006).

Ideally, these concepts lead to youth who are skilled and capable of becoming young adults. Young adults who are graduating high school and transitioning to college expect many of the same things they received in younger years. They expect to have positive role models in their lives, even if they are considered young adults. These young people expect to have ways to occupy their time and get involved. Those who do not find productive uses of time often become involved in negative social norms such as binge drinking and sexual promiscuity (Child Trends Databank, 2011). These young adults still need SOPS, although in a more developmentally appropriate form. Students who are reaching the legal drinking age need to learn how to set boundaries and make healthy decisions. This can be learned through services provided by adults and mentors in the college setting. Finally, college students want to be viewed as young adults who are capable of making decisions, not wild youth incapable of behaving or making appropriate decisions. College students see themselves as independent and capable and wish others to think the same.

Positive Youth Development looks at youth as assets to their communities and uses intentional planning to support youth in the transition from childhood to adulthood (Witt, 2005). The college transition is an extension to this process, a period of emerging adulthood, and thus many PYD practices also apply to this transition (Guiffrida, 2009). "Higher learning institutions have recently been scrutinized for poor graduation rates,
higher tuition fees, low student satisfaction, and graduating students without adequate
skills to be successful in the workplace” (Moffitt, 2010). Whether you view college as an
extension of adolescence or the beginning of adulthood, higher education institutions
have a responsibility to help students transition successfully.

PYD also stresses the idea that students who are problem free are not necessarily
fully prepared for the transition (Catalano et al., 2004, Witt, 2002). Even if they are fully
prepared for the transition, students are not necessarily fully engaged in their own lives.
This lack of engagement could lead to negative behaviors when peers are engaging in
negative behaviors. Positive Youth Development is not just about the absence of deficits,
problems, and pathology, but rather also developing a collection of positive traits (Park,
2009). Transition programs focus on strengthening the positive traits to help students
cope with the transition. For example, transition programs encourage being involved in
the campus community to combat home sickness instead of focusing on the fact that the
student knows no one on campus.

The final concept from PYD that should be noted is the measures of success.
Those who work with youth conclude they have been successful if three criteria have
been met. First, the youth must be capable of building and maintaining positive
relationships. Second, the youth must be a contributing member of his or her community.
Finally, the youth must be capable of entering the work force (Witt and Caldwell, 2005).
By viewing full time course enrollment as a student’s job, these concepts can be applied
to 17-20 year olds. The years spent in college “represent a developmental transition from
adolescence to adulthood during which students develop behaviors that either enhance or
hamper their total wellness throughout their lives” (Strand, Egeberg, &Mozumdar, 2010).
Peer Mentoring

Mentoring does not require a relationship between an older person and a younger person. Instead, mentoring requires experience and rank (Carey & Weissman, 2010). A mentor is basically someone who can guide another person through an experience the mentor has already had. While age is not an important variable, motivation to participate is important. Mentoring must be voluntary for both people in the relationship. Forcing students to be involved in a mentoring relationship negates the value that could have been gained. Many students want the developmental opportunity for themselves but for those who do not, the relationship should not be forced (M. Falkenstein, personal communication, April 21, 2010). If effective, peer mentoring results in referent power for the mentor (Baxter & Braithwaite, 2008). Referent power is power gained through respect. In transition camps, peer mentors have the capability of earning respect and then influencing the participants with that referent power.

Peer mentoring has shown to have a positive effect on youth (The Search Institute, 2008). “The single most powerful source of influence on the undergraduate student’s academic and personal development is the peer group” (Astin, 1992). At this age, there is a very strong need for relationships with peers and role models (Guiffrida, 2009). Researchers found “fewer effects emerging among youth who were in relationships that terminated earlier [than a year]” as opposed to youth who remained a part of a mentor relationship for a year or longer (Grossman, 2002). Conversely, students who feel successful in peer relationships have higher problem solving skills than their peers who do not feel as successful in peer relationships (Lopez, 2002). Students who maintain “insecure attachment styles over the first-year transition may be at particular
risk for early dropout” (Lopez, 2002). Mentoring is successful when its participants develop a close relationship over a long period of time. Transition camps give incoming students the chance to establish the relationship with the hopes that it will continue throughout the school year and beyond. College communities should focus more on helping students form positive peer relationships that will help ease the transition to life as a college student.

Peers selected to mentor must be capable of serving as role models with goals, future orientation, academic success, and involvement in the community. “Older peers can be especially effective at teaching skills because they are able to use their own experiences and successes as an example and because they serve as role models for the younger students” (Danish et al., 2004). The peer group has strong affects on the leadership skills, academic development, cultural awareness, problem solving skills, and critical thinking skills of college students, which means both freshmen and upperclassmen grow from the peer mentoring experience (Astin, 1992). This pairing has the potential to have a huge impact on a campus. Peers greatly influence youth and as a result, counselors must be selected carefully. Counselors should be students who exhibit positive social norms instead of negative or risky behaviors.

An additional change most students go through during the transition to college is the availability of alcohol. Social norms at college encourage alcohol consumption while family relationships denounce the practice of binge drinking. Research shows that students who attend house parties where alcohol is being consumed are looking for friendships and approval of peers (Santovec, 2004). In fact, “if incoming freshmen make positive connections with others, particularly healthy peers, they will not feel the need to
engage in the typical freshman drinking behavior in order to make friends and fit in” (Santovec, 2004). These relationships can be formed in programs before the academic semester even begins, with other incoming freshmen and upperclassmen leaders.

Attachment theory (Larose, 2005) indicates that people who have secure attachments are more capable of engaging in and learning about their environment. Attachment theory was the basis of a 2009 study that showed a positive correlation between learning-related outcomes and graduation rates in high school and the amount of social relationships with other students and teachers (Reio, Marcus, & Reio, 2009). College graduation rate could potentially also be affected by the amount of social relationships a student has.

In pre- and post-orientation programs, incoming freshmen have the chance to build positive relationships with upperclassmen counselors that serve as peer mentors. Peer mentoring provides a more circular relationship than an adult mentoring relationship and allows for growth of both the mentor and the mentee. Many freshmen find the support received from upperclassmen helped immensely because the upperclassmen had experienced the same transition and were capable of assuring the freshmen that they were not the only ones with the experience (Thompson, 2008). Very little research has been conducted on the effect of peer mentoring in the college transition process. Research does show that students “are often the first to respond and try to help other students [who are coping with stress and other problems]” (Sharkin, 2003). Sharkin’s study focused on the way college students respond to peers who are distressed. Students were classified in three ways of responding: talking to and listening to the peer; talking to, listening to and helping the peer take action; and finally, not helping the peer at all. Of 130 students, only
nine students chose to do nothing in response to trouble a peer was having. In addition, 51% of the students chose to ask another peer for help with the situation. This study is important in that it shows the value of building relationships with peers through mentoring. "Peer relations are critical for support, confirmation of one's identity, opportunities for socialization, and other dimensions of college adjustment" (Hicks & Heastie, 2008). In college, less interaction occurs between professors and students, causing students to prefer to seek support from peers and to give more support to peers (Thompson, 2008).

People construct identity through interpersonal feedback (Baxter & Braithwaite, 2008, Guiffrida, 2009). College is a time when many students are struggling to form an identity as a young adult. Peer counselors who have been selected and trained as mentors can provide positive, honest feedback to help freshmen negotiate a positive self identity. The influence of the interpersonal relationship grows as rapport grows. Counselors are interested in the students they are working with, thus they willingly respond to questions, demonstrate interest in the students' success, and encourage students (Turman & Schrodt, 2006). These interactions build positive self identity. "Students' interpersonal interaction with peers is one of the most powerful educational resources in higher education" (Chang, Astin, & Kim, 2004). Also, informal, peer support plays a large role in retention and success rates of college students (Thompson, 2008). While the transition programs are providing a more formal peer-support, the relationships continue into the semester, becoming informal support.

"Hiring youth as program staff ... encourages them to model appropriate behaviors for their peers and enables adults to see teens performing in a positive manner"
Giving upperclassmen the opportunity to mentor provides them with leadership opportunities, communication skills, a network of other student leaders, and the chance to be a role model. Society has a very negative impression of college students, but these programs offer students the chance to challenge the myth (Damon, 2004). Despite the widespread pessimistic perception of youth, most possess positive qualities that can be developed further (Park, 2009). Research showed that students who were on the receiving end of support from their peers were more likely to reciprocate the behavior and provide another student with support (Thompson, 2008). Creating an environment in which students encourage each other might be easier than it sounds; providing a few students with peer mentors could lead to a community of students that support and encourage each other. One setting where young adults have had the opportunity to develop peer mentor relationships is camp.

**Camping**

Organized camping is “a sustained experience which provides a creative, recreational, and educational opportunity in group living in the out of doors. It utilizes trained leadership and the resources of natural surroundings to contribute to each camper’s mental, physical, social, and spiritual growth” (Eells, 1986). This definition provides several important ideas. First, camps provide a recreational experience that students enjoy. This promise of recreation is the idea that gets students to come to camp. Secondly, creativity and educational experiences come from recreating in the outdoors. Camps are ideal settings for transition programs since they offer the opportunity for students to develop in groups through recreation. The education gained at camp is practical, not like the abstract concepts learned in classrooms.
Camping provides students with challenges. Campers do not have a microwave or refrigerator or a dishwasher and must learn to do without. Overcoming challenges with the help of mentors builds students’ self images; this concept is called scaffolding (Baxter & Braithwaite, 2008). By facilitating the challenges, mentors provide students with the ability to confidently meet challenges such as living with a roommate, navigating a new campus, and adjusting to college life. Campers who have grown up in the age of technology do not get to charge their cell phones every night and text all day when at camp. Campers who are used to big comfy beds and air conditioning must learn to sleep in sleeping bags on the ground with no air conditioning. The challenge of camping is in fact one of the reasons camping is considered a recreational experience. Participants are more engaged when they believe they are being challenged and that they have the skills to cope with the challenge (Shernoff, Csikszentmihalyi, Schneider, & Shernoff, 2003). People who perceive the level of challenge and the level of their skills to be both high and equal are more engaged and have more fun with the task at hand. Camp provides these types of opportunities and therefore, the potential for higher engagement in the transition program.

Research shows that no matter what the activity, people tend to be more engaged if they are working in a group as opposed to working by themselves (Shernoff et al, 2003). The interaction is essential to this concept. While at camp, students engage in group activities like cooking over a campfire, building campfires, and kayaking races, giving them plenty of time to bond and build community.

An advantage of the camp setting is that it levels the playing field. Campers must all sleep in cabins or tents. They all eat at the same dining hall or camp fire and they all
must hike the same distances to get to activities. Everyone at camp must do a fair share and help clean the camp area. Camps level the playing field by creating a common environment and breaking down social walls. By balancing the status quo, transition programs create a space where students feel comfortable expressing fears, asking questions, and learning about the transition.

While many programs function successfully indoors, “the out-of-doors serves as a catalyst for group interaction which results in a well being seldom found elsewhere” (Eells, 1986). This social bonding is “an important component of involvement as, for many people, the relationships with others who share in the experience is one of the most salient factors in determining the depth of their involvement” (Norling, Wells, & Christensen, 2010). Outdoor camps also provide isolation from stresses of the world and a chance for solitude in nature (Clark, Hendee, & Campbell, 2009). Freshmen need a break from all the stress that accompanies the transition to college.

One problem traditionally seen with camps is that the mentor relationship ends shortly after camp (Henderson, 2007) due to geographical constraints and time constraints. Ending the mentor relationship within a year of starting can, in fact, cause more damage than benefits (Grossman, 2002). In this way, using returning upperclassmen as peer mentors increases the chance that friendships built will continue through a school year or even farther. Even in the early 20th century, camp directors recognized the importance of the mentor relationships built at camp (Eells, 1986). To this day, many camps employ young adults to serve as mentors for youth; rarely do adults work as the main people interacting with youth at camps. An important aspect of the camp setting is challenge.
**Challenge**

*Flow*

Csikszentmihalyi, a researcher in human development and a psychologist, developed the Theory of Flow, which addresses the idea of challenge (Black, 2008). Csikszentmihalyi theorized that when a person’s skill level is equal to the level of challenge an activity holds, the person is in a state of flow, in which the person loses all sense of time. Flow brings about a sense of complete satisfaction and enjoyment, until one of the levels change. When the level of skill becomes greater than the level of challenge, the person becomes bored. Conversely, when the level of challenge is greater than the level of skill, the person becomes frustrated with inability to meet the challenge. Balance of challenges and skills has a positive and independent effect on the quality of experience and helps a person learn (Moneta & Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). Flow shows that educators should be helping students set goals a little bit out of their reach (Black, 2008) that gives students the chance to work up their skills until they are equal to the challenge. Also, program directors can apply this to transition programs by creating opportunities for students to feel a challenge that they can meet. Creating this atmosphere of challenge, skill, and fun helps students to be more actively engaged in the program and thus learn more than if they were unengaged (Guiffrida, 2009).

People naturally seek experiences where the challenge and their level of skill are equal (Moneta & Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). In fact, most recreational activities are done specifically for the challenge and enjoyment of the process, not the results. Students who attend transition programs go to meet people and have fun, not to transition successfully. Challenging activities are an expected part of transition camps.
Challenge by Choice

*Challenge by Choice* is a philosophy created in 1971 and used in many camps, rope courses, and orienteering programs (Carlson & Evans, 2001). The idea behind Challenge by Choice is that being forced into an uncomfortable experience does not benefit a person whereas personally choosing to try an activity that is slightly out of one’s comfort zone can lead to self development and enjoyment (Carlson & Evans, 2001). First, participants do not develop when forced to participate. Participants are expected to set their own goals and choose their own challenges so as to pick activities that will keep the participant engaged. High engagement, both in and out of the classroom, leads to a lower dropout rate for students (Shernoff et al, 2003). Second, success must be defined by each participant, not those in charge or other participants. This gives participants the opportunity to push themselves further than what is expected or to stop participation when an activity becomes too difficult. Finally, the challenge by choice concept proposes that participants need experienced leaders who can provide information to help participants make informed choices (Carlson & Evans, 2001). Transition camp programmers can utilize the concepts of challenge by choice in their programs.

College Transition

Currently, very little research has been conducted in reference to the general students transitioning from high school to college (Goodman & Pascarella, 2006; Guiffrida, 2009). Low income students, students from minority groups, and students with disabilities have been the focus of most transition studies (McLendon, Heller, & Lee, 2009, Thompson, 2008). Also, very little policy exists in the United States to govern this time of transition. Most laws and policies focus on either Primary/Secondary education
(K-12) or higher education (colleges and universities), but not the boundary connecting the two. This absence of policy and practices between the two parts of education has hindered the academic preparedness of many students (McLendon et al., 2009). By not governing the transition, students have been allowed to make poor decisions and also have received the consequences of poor decisions. Of the few studies that look at this period of transition, most examine the academic transition only, leaving out the student life aspect of the transition.

Very little is done to relate the academic content of classes taken in the last two years of high school to classes taken in the first two years of college (McLendon et al., 2009). In fact, many high school students stop learning and caring about school during the final semester without any consequences (Dunn, 2001). This “senior slump” should be combated with learning geared toward the transition to college. Whether it is academic learning or life skills learning, the last few months of high school could be used to start a successful transition to college. Many colleges and universities offer a freshman seminar or other introduction to college class but high schools do not. This could be another option for the final semester in high school to be used in the transition.

Participation in volunteer activities drops in the transition from high school to college (Marks & Jones, 2004). This is one of the factors central to the ideas of a fully engaged young adult. Important to note is the motivation behind volunteering activity in high school and college. Students in high school volunteer out of a commitment to help others in the community whereas college students volunteer due to group social norms or the social benefits derived from participation (Marks & Jones, 2004). This shift in motivation is a step backwards in the process of developing youth into healthy, engaged
adults who are active participants in their communities. Transition programs have the opportunity to incorporate community service thereby encouraging the positive motives for volunteerism.

“Transition theory suggests that various experiential, social, and psychological factors serve as resources to individuals in navigating transitions positively and efficaciously” (Marks and Jones, 2004). Transition theory proposes that for a transition to be occurring, the person must acknowledge the transition. It is safe to say that students transitioning from high school to college are well aware of the transition taking place. Transition programs have proven to be beneficial; however, no distinction has been made between different types of programs (Goodman & Pascarella, 2006). Transition programs have given students connections with other students, faculty, and staff. The programs have also given students a chance to feel safe psychologically. For instance, many students find that the other students are also afraid of leaving home and being on their own. These programs provide the benefit of building a community.

The transition is a pivotal time in a student’s life when challenge is high. In the absence of the familiar people who used to provide support, freshmen look to peers for support. Upperclassmen can provide support by recommending study habits and helping with course selection. College students reported looking to each other first for academic support because they experienced the transition together and were encountering shared experiences that family members and old high school friends might not be experiencing (Thompson, 2008).
College students typically need the most support in the first year; by the time the second year begins, students have found a routine, friends, and how to navigate their new homes (Thompson, 2008; Woosley & Miller, 2009). The strength of social networks is a strong indicator of how many freshmen will return to the institution for their sophomore year. Transition programs create a social network through the course of the program, providing motivation for students to return to school. Students in their freshman year at college perceive the workload to be both harder and more than the workload in high school, and accordingly need a stronger support system than in high school (Thompson, 2008).

Relationships with family, personal background (meaning socioeconomic status, race, gender, etc.), early socialization (involvement in groups such as church, scouts, and community organizations), and a student’s values or attitudes during high school are all factors that affect the transition to college (Marks & Jones, 2004). “To successfully adapt, adolescents making this transition must adjust their behavioral and emotional controls to accommodate to new situations” (Hersch & Hussong, 2004). Students look to peers to provide examples of appropriate behaviors, so peer mentors are positioned perfectly to help teach students to transition.

**Student Involvement**

Involvement both in and out of the classroom during the college years has a major effect on the college experience as a whole. “Involved students devote a great deal of energy to studying, spend a lot of time on campus, participate in student organizations, and regularly interact with faculty and peers” (Sidelinger, 2010). In the classroom,
faculty and students both work together to fulfill a variety of individual and educational goals (Reason, Terenzini, & Domingo, 2006). Students aim to achieve a quality education and an excellent collegiate experience while professors aim to help students learn. While students’ goals are more complex, education is the goal of both parties. Students who are involved are much more invested in their education and will apply concepts learned in the classroom across different educational settings (Sidelinger, 2010).

Involvement in programs on campus help students feel more satisfied and more engaged (Moffitt, 2010; Reason, Terenzini, & Domingo, 2006). “Almost any form of student involvement in the college experience benefits learning and student development” (Astin, 1993). In fact, experiences outside of the classroom are more important to the development of critical thinking in college students than in class experiences (Pascarella et al, 1995; Reason, Terenzini, & Domingo, 2006). The perception of successful integration into campus community and student life increases the likelihood that a student will remain at the college until after graduation (Moffitt, 2010; Reason, Terenzini, & Domingo, 2006). It is important for institutions to focus on providing quality extracurricular options along with quality academic classes.

The Campus Recreation Participation Ladder (CRPL), created by Jill Moffit, provides a model to compare transition camp participation. The first rung of the ladder is initiate, in which the student initiates program participation. This can be done through information finding or registration for camp. Next, the student gets involved. The student actually participates in the program. As the student gets more involved, he or she becomes invested in the program and searches out ways to better the program through student leadership. Finally, the student integrates with the program, centering the self in
the program, adding a sense of belonging to the institution. The CRPL suggests that as a student progresses up the ladder, satisfaction with both the program and the sponsoring institution increase (Moffitt, 2010). Transition programs that allow students to return as peer mentors in subsequent years allow student to become more invested and satisfied with the university, thereby increasing the retention rate.

Diversity experiences during the first year of college are particularly important to development of critical thinking (Pascarella, 2001; Pascarella et al, 1995). Exposure to perspectives that challenge students’ preconceived notions dares students to learn more about the cultures and perspectives of other people. By learning more about other groups of people, students are preparing to enter the work force fully capable of dealing with people of different backgrounds. Diversity experiences prepare students to become a part of the global community (Reason, Terenzini, & Domingo, 2006). Transition programs give students an introduction to the diversity they will be exposed to as part of the campus community.

Conclusion

This literature review has illustrated several important concepts. First, young adults who are healthy are not necessarily capable of handling the stress that accompanies the transition period from high school to college. Second, young adults who have formed positive relationships are more likely to succeed at future endeavors. Finally, “gym and swim” programs are simply not enough to help students transition successfully. Instead, higher education practitioners must intentionally program to provide concrete, sustained
benefits. The literature suggests that helping students transition to college successfully can be accomplished through the use of PYD concepts, camping, and challenge.
CHAPTER III

METHOD

This study took a qualitative approach to find what benefits freshmen perceived they gained from attending a transition program. While a quantitative study would have provided numbers to compare to other programs, the qualitative design allows a more comprehensive view of the process (Henderson, 2006). Qualitative data focuses much more on adding to and further explaining prior knowledge rather than on the creation of numerical data. The study utilized a phenomenological outlook, viewing both the negative and positive life experiences that were perceived by camp participants. Phenomenological research uses memories of experiences to obtain comprehensive details about events (Riddick & Russell, 2008). In phenomenological studies, the researcher seeks to learn about the essence of the event or program and causation of the perceptions. In short, phenomenology uses details and descriptive words to define an event or experience. The study also drew on some concepts of grounded theory. In grounded theory, open ended questions are used to generate insights that can be categorized and then turned into theory (Henderson, 2006). This study did not produce any theory, but did find themes amongst the participants’ responses. Context is also an important part of grounded theory, which allows the researcher to obtain expertise and experience in the field before the study so that the researcher can better recognize important data. The context of the research (the college campus) was crucial to the study and could yield different results if changed to a different context. On campus interviews
provided participants with a reminder of the day to day activities in which they participate, which lead to more comfort with the situation.

This research utilized themes grounded in the data collected to provide ideas about the results. Grounded theory also uses both deductive and inductive reasoning to guide the researcher to conclusions. Deductively, the research begins with an idea of what might be found. In this case, the research was based off the concepts of positive development through peer mentoring. Inductively, the research is done by examining the data closely to allow understanding to emerge. In this study, some of the expected themes did not appear, and other, unexpected themes did appear. Grounded theory also employs a systematic gathering and analysis of data. In this study, data was only obtained using interviews, and each interview was conducted with similar questions.

A set of open ended questions were developed and used to conduct semi-structured, narrative interviews (See Appendix A). The interviewer used the same questions as a basis for all of the interviews but followed the direction each participant chose, focusing on the participants perceptions and probing when needed. The interviewer was careful not to ask leading questions and instead followed the direction the participant was steering the conversation. The study examined peer mentor relationships, the challenges faced at camp, and the transition from high school to college. Ultimately, the study sought to find what transition programs are doing that help students be successful at college.
Selection of Participants

All participants were current students at the University of New Hampshire and part of the freshmen class of 2014. The majority of these students came from within New England. All participants in the study also participated in UNH’s Pre-Orientation Adventures for Wildcats, “PAWs.” The program served as transition programs for incoming freshmen; however, not every member of the freshman class attended PAWs. The 2010 PAWs Camp had 71 freshmen attend out of a class of about 2,800 students. The program started in 2009 and grew the second year. The program directors hope to see it grow to encompass a much larger percentage of incoming freshmen. Students were given information about PAWs at Admitted Student days and encouraged to apply for the program. No applicants have ever been turned down for the program since its creation but there is a chance that with the growth of the program, space might become limited.

The following criteria were used to identify participants:

- Full time enrollment (12 credit hours or more)
- Undergraduate
- Freshman status (first year attending college)
- Ages 18-19
- Camp attendee
- Residence on campus

Students who attended the program are referred to as PAWsies. All PAWsies were sent an email invitation from the director of the program, to participate in the research. The email included the information that, as a reward for participation, each respondent’s name would be placed in a drawing for a gift card to a local restaurant. In this manner,
convenience sampling was used. Whoever wanted to participate was given the opportunity to share experiences which is useful in exploratory studies like this. From there, snowball sampling was used. The interviewer asked each respondent to encourage a friend from PAWs to contact the researcher for an interview. In an effort to reduce bias caused by non-response bias, several emails were sent throughout the course of the semester to give potential participants more opportunities. This meant that students who were busy during the time surrounding the first email had a chance to respond at a less busy time.

Eight students (seven females and one male) participated in interviews. Seven of the participants were 18 years old at the time of camp with the other participant being 19 at the time of camp. Eight participants provided enough data saturation to draw conclusions. If data saturation had not been reached after eight interviews, more interviews would have been conducted. However, after eight interviews, no new themes emerged. Limiting the amount of participants was useful in that too many participants would provide too much data to analyze logically. Data management issues occur in qualitative studies where too many participants are interviewed or observed (Henderson, 2006). The researcher conducted enough interviews to find reoccurring themes in the data without collecting too much data.

All participants were advised of the procedure and the purpose of the study both before agreeing to participate and immediately before the interview. Participants were given an opportunity to ask any questions they had about the process and express concerns.
PAWs

PAWs is a four day, three night adventure camp open to incoming freshmen students at a mid-sized university in New England. The Department of Campus Recreation and Student Life collaborate to plan and facilitate PAWs each year. Camp begins on campus where students meet the Leaders (upperclassmen mentors) before heading out to Mendums Pond, an outdoor recreation area. The area provides hiking trails, a lake for canoeing and kayaking, platforms for tents, meeting areas, and pits for campfires.

Any current UNH student can apply to be a leader. Leaders are selected by February through an interview process: Applicants first participate in a traditional one on one interview. Second, they participate in an experiential group interview in which the directors observe the applicants' behavior such as team work and communication, and how the participants interact with each other. The directors search for students who have school spirit and outgoing personalities. After selections are made, leaders participate in multiple trainings where they learn how to facilitate small group discussions, different types of team building games, important information about UNH and UNH resources, leadership skills, the goals of the program, how to avoid gender/racial stereotypes, risk management, conflict resolution, and how to handle any emergencies that might happen at camp. Some of the training occurs at the end of the spring semester at Mendum's Pond and some of the training occurs on campus, closer to the start of camp.

Before camp starts, leaders are given one-on-one time with the directors to discuss any worries or questions they have about camp or mentoring. Because leaders are
selected so far in advance, extra leaders are selected to allow for schedule changes and sudden events that make it impossible for leaders to attend camp. Closer to camp, the directors pair the leaders up, two for each group of freshmen. The pairs are very intentional: directors try to match leaders that will work well together and whose strengths and weaknesses balance each other out. Once the leaders are paired to groups, the extra leaders are assigned one of two tasks. Several counselors are given the job of being logistic coordinators who help the directors with behind the scene functions once at camp. A few leaders are assigned as third counselors to a group of freshmen. These leaders are intentionally placed with two other leaders to provide a trio of mentors that works well together.

During the program, participants are introduced to the concept of Challenge by Choice. PAWs provides leaders who encourage students to participate but do not coerce students into participation thereby creating an environment where students can grow. PAWs also utilized full value contracts. Full value contracts are intentional, social agreements used to facilitate group activities. Full value contracts cannot be reused, but instead must be created anew for each group. Generally, full value contracts lay out ground rules such as to respect each other or support each other. Full value contracts focus on the group activity. At PAWs, freshmen are randomly assigned to groups of about 10 other students. Each group has at least two upper classmen Leaders. The groups each create a full value contract to use during the program. Each member of the group can express opinions about what to include and not include in the contract. The aim of full value contracts is to facilitate group activities so each member receives the full value of the activity.
The goals of the PAWs Program are:

1. To facilitate the transitions from high school to UNH
2. To develop a sense of community, involvement, and tradition at UNH
3. To create friendships and develop a support network
4. To learn about UNH
5. To be safe, yet challenged
6. To have fun (Oliver, 2010)

During a session of camp, students hike, spend time in the lake, canoe, kayak, participate in challenge courses, play large group games and small group games, spend time with upperclassmen leaders, meet faculty and staff from UNH, cook meals, and tent camp. The PAWs Leaders are upperclassmen involved around campus in different organizations and studying different subjects. Upon returning to campus, students attend freshman orientation with the rest of the incoming students.

Data Collection

Interviews were conducted during the first eight months after the program and held at an on-campus location of the participant’s choosing. Students were contacted through email and signed up to participate in interviews on a voluntary basis. The interviewer met with each student in a common area on campus that the student was comfortable with to reduce pressure on the student being interviewed. The timing of the interviews was imperative. If the interviews had been done as soon as the students
returned to campus, the results might have differed due to the excitement the program generated. At the end of camp, there is the potential of social contagion; the participants think it is socially desirable to be excited about the program so many choose to express more positive opinions about the program (Bond, 2009). If the interviews had been conducted after the first year of college, the students might have trouble differentiating between what they learned from counselors and what they learned just from being on campus. For this reason, the interviews were set up for the months following camp, beginning at three weeks into the semester. At three weeks into a semester, students most likely had a chance to implement the knowledge they gained from their counselors, settle into a routine, and lose the exhilaration they experienced at camp. Woosley and Miller’s 2009 study on the college transition demonstrated results taken from questionnaires in the first month of school correctly predicted success for the rest of the student’s freshman year. This timing allowed students to take a more level headed look about what really helped and what had no impact on the transition. Although the results would be more general if they were drawn from multiple years, this study was limited by time. Students were asked to discuss their perceptions of the benefits of attending the program. A small amount of demographic data was also acquired before interviews started to make sure participants fit the requirements of the study.

Semi-structured interviews were done, based on a clear plan and with a set of potential questions, but allowed the participant to control the conversation. This let participants express themselves in their own terms, at their own pace. Deeper understanding comes from allowing participants to explain the essence of their experiences in this way as opposed to giving participants a list of potential answers to
questions (Riddick & Russell, 2008). This allowed the researcher to better understand the culture of the program being studied. The researcher asked about a topic of interest, then got out of the way and let the participant run with it. This allowed participants to focus in on what they found to be important about the experience.

Probes were frequently used to draw more information out. Mostly, the researcher made affirmative comments and asked the participant to tell more about a specific piece of information. This brought a deeper understanding of the data. As interviews were completed, field notes were taken and the new data was compared to already collected data.

The questions in the guide used vocabulary similar to what participants used so as not to intimidate respondents. Every question had a specific purpose, a unique piece of information that the researcher hoped would be shared. None of the questions asked about illegal activities or posed threats in any way, shape, or form which allowed participants to feel more comfortable answering. Questions were simple and free from any emotional tendencies. The first question asked was easy to answer, which allowed participants to gain a little bit of comfort with the process.

All interviews were audio taped. Participants were informed of the process before it began, assured that the audio tapes would be destroyed after transcription, and told that confidentiality would be kept. The researcher also took field notes about important ideas as well as non-verbal cues (such as body language) throughout the interview. After each interview, the researcher wrote down any perceptions and thoughts that occurred during the interview. Transcription was done using no real names. Instead, each participant was
assigned a number, 1-7. A master list was kept throughout the study but destroyed after the study.

**Rapport and Responsibility**

The researcher sought to create trust with the participant so the student would feel comfortable sharing information and their perceptions. Interviews were done in a public location on campus so as to ease the participant’s worry. By using a public location, it was assured that other people would be around, providing a safety net for participants if they felt uncomfortable. Care was taken to find a public place that allowed the interview to be conducted without interruption. Also, the attire for the interviews was casual. Dressing up might have made the participant uneasy. At the beginning of the interview, the researcher talked with each participant about how classes were going and what the student was enjoying on campus. Also, the researcher shared some positive and negative personal experiences from a similar transition camp. This allowed the participant to know that negative feelings about PAWs would not be considered odd or singled out. During the interview, the researcher shared similar personal experiences, which fostered more open communication and rapport. Failing to develop rapport and trust could lead to shallow answers and few observations from the participant.

By establishing rapport, the researcher acquires a responsibility towards the participant. The researcher must be open and honest with participants during the study. Participants were offered to be emailed with the results of the study after the study had been completed. No names were used in the discussion of results thereby protecting the anonymity of participants. Results were also shared with the camp directors.
Validity & Reliability

The researcher sought to make the study reliable and valid in an effort to provide results that could be generalized to a larger group. In an effort to assure validity, the study was done in real life, everyday settings instead of a lab. Also, participants were not told how other participants responded so as to keep each respondent from following what was deemed socially desirable. The data was all collected in the same way. This allowed environmental control of the research so that differences and similarities in data could not be attributed to other stimuli.

In an effort to assure reliability, PAWs was used as a landmark to judge behavior. Participants were asked about behavior and events after PAWs, a recent landmark in each participant's life. This kept the recall period down to just a few months, making it easier on participants to remember the experience.

Data Analysis

The researcher conducted interviews, took notes about the interviews, wrote reflections after the interview, and transcribed the interviews so as to become familiar with the data. Great care was taken to ensure the information gained from the interviews was actually the participants' perceptions, and not the researcher's perceptions. After the interview tapes were transcribed, open coding was used to organize the data. Reoccurring themes were highlighted, a different color for each different emerging theme, grouping the data in themed categories.

The researcher acknowledges the preconceptions and bias brought to the study. The researcher experienced both negative and positive aspects of a similar transition
program as a freshman, as a counselor, and as a program director. Those experiences provided inspiration for this specific study. Participation was based on the belief that the program provided benefits for students. Also, the researcher participates in outdoor activities and camping for the sake of challenge in a recreational setting. The researcher sought to be neutral in the interviews and analysis of data.

**Limitations**

The study was limited in the selection of participants. Participants chose to sign up by free will. It is very likely that some of the participants signed up simply because they had very strong opinions about their experiences and therefore might not be representative of the whole group of students. This self-selection bias can create an abnormal group of participants, rather than a randomly selected set of participants. However, even if the self-selected participants felt strongly about the program's positive benefits, their perceptions show an example of what the program can do and what is possible for all students in similar programs. If the participants in the study chose to participate due to strong negative opinions of the program, their perceptions show us what problems program directors should aim to eliminate from the programs they work with.

The study also relied on students own perceptions of the benefits received from attending camp. Family and friends might see other changes that the students themselves do not see. Inversely, family and friends may perceive the differences to be less than
what the students perceive the changes to be. Potentially, the program could fail to change any thought processes or behaviors of the participants.

Finally, the researcher cannot come to the study without bringing prior experiences along. Extensive effort was made to reduce biases the researcher has; however, it is impossible to completely eliminate personal bias. The interview questions were selected in advance and the researcher was careful not to ask any leading questions in effort to eliminate any biases. The researcher shared personal examples of both positive and negative experiences at similar programs with participants in order to build rapport and establish the idea that all of the participant’s perceptions were acceptable.

Despite these limitations, the research has potential to be useful in comparing to other studies and to be helpful in planning transition programs.

**Delimitations**

The results of this study cannot be used to justify all orientation programs because the interviews were only given to participants of one program. Future studies could analyze multiple programs in an effort to have greater impact. This program used outdoor, overnight camping as a vehicle for participation but other programs use different vehicles such as Habitat for Humanity or indoor programs that utilize on-campus buildings like the recreation building or the student center building.

No differentiation was made in the selection of students regardless of race or background. Student participants brought their own backgrounds to the program and the interviews. Potentially, some of the participants could be first generation college students and some of the participants could have multiple relatives who graduated from the
University of New Hampshire. Each subset would have different perceptions about the program.
the same type of relationship. The relationships created at PAWs ranged from platonic to mentor to romantic. Some of the relationships dissolved after spending time on campus but were still considered helpful in the transition. According to one student, PAWs “gives you such an advantage over other people... when PAWsies come to town, we already had made friendships, made connections, knew some upperclassmen. So that’s a confidence booster right there: that you’re not just this lonely freshman.” Several students focused on this idea, that attendance in the program put them ahead in comparison with peers who did not attend the program. One student went so far as to say, “At first I thought that if you come to PAWs you have an advantage but now I feel like if you don’t do PAWs, instead of being neutral, you have a disadvantage.” This illustrates just how useful the participants perceived the program to be.

Creation of Friendships

As mentioned earlier, one of the main goals of PAWs is to create friendships and develop a support network (Oliver, 2010). The participants shared that goal going into the program. One participant said “I decided I’ll do this program just to make friends easily, which I did, and I’m still friends with a lot of people here.” In other words, lasting friendships were established. A sense of pride also came with having established so many solid relationships before the semester had even started. One student put it this way: “Now that I’m back, there’s people who are like ‘I don’t know anyone’ but I have this big group of friends so I tell them ‘oh you can just hang out with us, no problem.’”

One student reported that:
I made a group of friends that I would never have made otherwise and still hang out with... I really get along with these people really well... it was just awesome knowing that I could come back to campus and have somebody to just go out to dinner with, go to lunch with, hang out with.

In essence, this student perceived that PAWs introduced him to people he would not have been friends with or even found on his own. On the same note, one student said:

I met a lot of people who like to go out hiking and do nature-y type things but I’m from the city. They always invite me out so I can do that stuff more. I don’t think I would have gotten to know these people if I hadn’t done PAWs.

What this shows is that students perceive the creation of relationships with a diverse group of people, different from the people met in high school. This concept directly relates to the idea that diversity helps students build higher critical thinking skills. From this, we see that students do reap benefits from attending transition programs. Another student said, “the first thing that I noticed was that we were really different but at the same time, we were all the same in some ways.” This shows that PAWs exposed the participants to a diverse group of people and allowed them to try new activities. The situation provided an opportunity to connect with different people than with whom the participants expected to build friendships.

Even amongst the diversity, a student shared that “I felt like my group was a legitimate family. I was amazed at how just four or five days could make people so tightly knit.” She was not the only participant to pronounce her small group as a family or
a clan. Another student shared that PAWs “made me feel like I had people who were just like me but at the same time different in a way that they could show me new things.” Allowing students to interact with people they perceived as different from themselves allowed them to try things out of their comfort zone but still with psychological safety.

**Creation of Romantic Relationships**

In most of the interviews, the students mentioned multiple relationships were formed. One student said “I met my best friend through PAWs and I met my boyfriend through PAWs. It opened up a lot of doors for me, I guess.” Another student talked about both her counselor (“he was such a positive influence. Throughout the whole week we had really in-depth conversations”) and a friend she met in her group (“To this day he is like my best friend. Strictly meeting him was worth it [the time spent at camp]”). Another student shared that while she was at PAWs, “I found my best friend, my boyfriend, my future roommate. I’m so glad I found them.” Another participant talked about having “a web of people and upperclassmen, which your leaders are, and people like [the program directors] and that was such a comfort.” In essence, a support network was created that included physical and psychological safety, a space to employ youth voice, trusted adult mentors, and positive social norms.

**Creation of Mentor Relationships**

The leaders were spoken about both as new friends and as mentors. One participant said of her group’s leaders, “They were there to be leaders but also to be friends who help us make a good transition to college.” Another student felt his leader “definitely helped out a lot in easing the worries I had about college” while he was at
camp and then once the students returned to campus, “one of the leaders has a group on Facebook and we’ve gotten together for group dinners.” Another student talked about having a class with her leader, “so I had someone to sit with and I feel like I can go to him anytime I have a question still [after a semester on campus]” which illustrated the dual nature of peer mentorship.

Another student expressed appreciation for having peer mentors. “They were valuable in that they had an insider look from the student’s view out, instead of like the professor’s view in.” The peer mentorship was appreciated by the participants because “they were totally open to answering questions I had about drinking and stuff. Not really questions I was going to ask the staff so it was nice to have people who are normal college students.” Having the peer mentors helped the participants learn how to navigate college. “She told me where to get a haircut and where to find cheap clothes, how to do the bus. It’s really nice that she can show me all that and then just hang out and eat dinner together.” Another student talked about being able to ask her leaders questions about college life: “it’s stuff they know cause they’re living it right now and I can learn through their mistakes or their stories and things like that. It’s really nice. My leader is on my speed dial.” The same student also said she was the oldest child in her family and “I never have someone to look up to so I really liked being able to have a counselor who I can look up to but I can also talk to like a friend.”

One student also talked about the leaders and said “there was a really deep connection with all the PAWsies. They valued us.” Basically, the participants felt that the leaders accepted them as friends. These reciprocal relationships facilitated a support system amongst the students. One participant said her leader had “actually been a really
strong support for me this year.” She also shared that “PAWs people travel in packs and wave at all the leaders.” This data shows how the peer mentorship relationship was able to continue after the program had ended, eliminating the common problem of dissolving relationships after camp programs are finished.

The leaders, however, were not the only mentors mentioned. The directors of the program were also considered to be allies on campus. When asked if she gained anything from participation in the program, one student said “Yes. Having people. Like [the directors]. And they know the answers [to every question].” Another student mentioned that “I love [the director] and I know that he would answer me honestly about anything I asked.” A third student spoke about interacting with one of the directors after the program. “I’ve done a ton of programs with him and even before, he knew me by my first name and he’s writing me a recommendation for a job.” By meeting the director during the program, this student gained a trusted adult on campus that helped her grow further. She was not the only student who mentioned that one or both of the directors knew her by name. It was a source of pride for several students to know that someone on staff at the university knew who they were. Practitioners who are involved in these programs should be working to learn the names of the students they are interacting with throughout the program.

Also important to note is the bond the participants feel with other people who attended PAWs but did not meet until after being back on campus. Due to the number of participants in the program, students did not have the time to meet every other participant. One student said “I’ve become a lot closer to the kids in the other groups [since school started] because they’re also doing the same stuff that I am and I didn’t
even know they went to PAWs so I’m always like ‘you were a PAWzie?! So was I!’ It’s a good way to bond quickly.” To summarize, one student said “it’s just nice that I can have a go-to group of people that I can be comfortable with.”

**Reduction of Fear**

The second theme discovered involves lessening fears about college. All eight students spoke about a fear they overcame at camp. The most common fear was of not being able to relate to other people.

**Social Acceptance Fears**

Almost all of the participants discussed the fear of not being able to find friends. One student said “That was my biggest fear. How was I going to find someone who’s like me? Someone who I can just get along with. And it’s worked out great.” A second student said “I think everyone wanted assurance going to school and we left like ‘ok I have friends under my belt for the next four years.’” Another said “I was really nervous coming in [to UNH] so mostly it [PAWs] was just a good way to meet people.” One student described how the majority of the participants felt: “I was really nervous and fretting before coming here [to PAWs] but then meeting all these great people made me realize that it was worth it.” The perception most participants shared is that the program allowed the students to get comfortable. One student shared how he felt during the program and the few days leading up to the start of the semester. “I was really worried coming to camp that I wouldn’t really relate to any of these kids. But the cool thing about it is there are some people [in my group] that I can really see myself hanging out with.” This displays how helpful the students perceived the program to be.
One student stated that through camp, she realized “we’re all in the same boat, we’re all new here, we don’t know what we’re doing.” Also stated in one of the interviews, “we realized we’re all having similar feelings [of fear]. So that was really comforting.” This concept of realizing everyone had the same fears and worries about college reoccurred consistently across all the interviews. At the start of the program, one student said “I was so scared but I went there and realized everyone else was in the same situation as me.” By the end of the program, one student felt that “we all had the same questions and we all felt comfortable, like we were in it together.” Another student said “it was especially reassuring to hear, they [leaders] were like ‘oh we went through the same thing [worrying about finding friends] and look at us now. We have plenty of friends.” Her leaders shared that piece of advice after she told them she was worried no one was going to like her and she was not going to make any friends. They also told her “Don’t be nervous. Everyone else is in the same boat.” Talking about these fears out loud allowed the participants to feel more comfortable.

Miscellaneous Fears

While most of the fears and concerns centered on finding friends and fitting in at college, a few other fears also existed. One student went to talk to her leader during some down time at camp and said “I was like ‘I’m freaking out about this, this, and this’ and he explained like half of it to me and then I was like ‘I really wish I could talk to my advisor’ so we went over and I actually got to talk to him [advisor].” She was extremely relieved to have those worries taken care of before the semester started. Another student had a different worry, “I was worried about jobs but my leader told me about the art department’s modeling job. Because of PAWs I got the job and I get paid well.” A third
student was worried about getting lost on campus but “because I had such a big group of friends, I would know how to get to one building they didn’t know but they would know how to get to a building I didn’t know so we all fed off of each other. I basically learned the layout of campus before school started because I had those friends. And of course the leaders knew all the shortcuts.” PAWs reduced one fear by facilitating friendships, which then reduced the fear of getting lost on campus.

One student said that PAWs “lowered my fear of transitioning to college is going to be so hard. It definitely made college more enjoyable for me.” This is an excellent example of what transition programs are designed to do. The time spent in the program allowed students to eliminate many of their uncertainties. As one student said, “I definitely felt more relaxed going in [to the semester]. I knew school wasn’t going to be as nerve-wracking as I thought [before PAWs].”

**Involvement**

In addition to allowing students to dispel their concerns and find friends, PAWs facilitated campus involvement. According to one student, the leaders “gave us a lot of information about events, ways to get involved on campus, and so I’m trying to get more involved. They really encouraged us to get involved and to try to do new things.” She also said that “PAWs encouraged me to actually be involved and do things which has given me connections to more people.” In effect, PAWs led this student to campus involvement which led to the formation of even more friendships. One student mentioned getting involved in Leadership Camp. When asked how she got involved in that program she said “Dave [PAWs director] told us about it.” Another student shared that she
"applied for Leadership Camp because at PAWs they were telling me about Leadership Camp and even throughout the year they were like ‘are you going to apply?’" Later in the interview, that same student said “What PAWs did for me was that it opened my eyes to all the resources and opportunities at UNH.”

Another student talked about joining intramurals with her leader. “I was on his water polo team and his soccer team.” Through their peer-mentor relationship, this student got involved in a healthy, on-campus opportunity that allowed her to meet more people. The same student was asked by another PAWsie to do a massage class together. She noted that “It was awesome! That was a blast in itself which technically came from PAWs. It all leads back to PAWs.”

Another student talked about how she “wouldn’t have known about Freshman Jukebox where all the clubs go cause no one talked about it on my floor.” Going to Freshman Jukebox got her involved with an on-campus organization and thus PAWs facilitated her involvement.

**Conclusion**

The most important thing students’ perceived they gained from attending this transition program was social support from both peers and authority figures on campus. Students also perceived that the program reduced many fears based on preconceptions about college life. Finally, the students perceived that the program facilitated campus involvement which helped the students stay connected with and build their social support networks.
The purpose of this study was to find what experiences student participants in transition programs found useful. Personal interviews with participants illustrated several major points. The first key point is the importance of providing transitioning students with a support network.

**Community**

According to Lin, the more social support a college student receives, the less the student perceives his or her stress to be (2009). The same study also suggests that “more social contact with local people may help students to enlarge their social network, thus offering better social support for alleviating perceived stress” (Lin, 2009). The data from this study illustrates the importance of a college student being involved in the campus community. There must be community support which can come in the form of involvement in organizations around the area, local government, and businesses in the community. The community can provide both human and material resources to college students. In this case, the PAWs program provided the participants with human resources in the form of friends and mentors. In the future, the program could look to involve the community in the program. A culture of support should be a goal of institutions and their communities. The participants in this study spoke about the community built during the program that carried on after the program ended.
In addition to the influence of the local community, peers are also a big influence on transitioning students. PAWs created a psychological community amongst the PAWsies. Peers are found to be the biggest change agent in the transition time (Antonio, 2004). Peers influence everything from the classes a student chooses to take to the amount of alcohol a student consumes. College students make many decisions based on perceived social support (Kitsantas et al, 2008). Using peer leaders to communicate positive social norms is a vital part of transition programs. In this case, the peer leaders encouraged students to get involved on campus and the students perceived positive outcomes related to being involved. Peer leaders provide a model for students to base their own behaviors on (Antonio, 2004). This is particularly helpful when students can interact with peers who have already succeeded at completing a class or program that is difficult. By seeing that a peer has succeeded, a student's perception of his or her own self-efficacy increases (Kitsantas, Winsler, & Huie, 2008). Part of being a Leader in the PAWs program is maintaining a healthy grade point average which provided the students with examples of successful students.

The social network cannot just be community and peers, though. There must be positive role models who are considered to be people of authority around campus. Relationships with authority figures on campus have a large influence on college students’ academic achievement (Ullah & Wilson, 2007). It is important to note that the social network is needed regardless of whether a student is from within the state or out of state (Ullah & Wilson, 2007). In the college setting specifically, faculty and staff serve as surrogate parents, role models, and teachers who keep the focus on eventual graduation (Kingsbury, 2009). First year students look to the faculty and staff to fill these roles in
their lives away from home. Faculty and staff who have built a relationship with a student will be able to tell when the student is struggling and can then help provide the needed support that peers might not be able to provide. Interpersonal relationships are a primary contributor to the development students have during their time in college (Antonio, 2004). For practical application, students who have built relationships with faculty and staff are more likely to have respect for those adults and are therefore less like to act out or behave in anti-social ways. When anti-social behavior is demonstrated, faculty and staff who have a relationship with the student have the ability to redirect the behavior. Several students in this program spoke about the staff members who were considered to be allies on campus although none spoke about faculty members. Regardless of whether the authority figure is faculty or staff, the students in transition programs should have the opportunity to build a relationship with these figureheads. Student behavior is positively linked to academic success, so encouraging relationships to build respect and reduce misbehavior positively impacts academic success (McDonald, 2010). Simply put, relationships built over the course of a student’s college career are vital to the student’s success. Attendance at a transition program such as PAWs gives students the opportunity to start building those relationships early.

**Positive Youth Development**

Aspects of Positive Youth Development (PYD) are also applicable during both transition programs and the years a person spends in college. Administrators must be able to build an environment where all students feel they can belong and trust others (McDonald, 2010). This was just one of the eight elements of positive developmental settings demonstrated by the PAWs program that other programs could emulate. If
students do not feel they belong, the likelihood that they continue to persevere at the
institution is not high. Also demonstrated was the opportunity for skill building element.
Students had the opportunity to try new activities with the support of their peers and
mentors. Community involvement was also apparent in this program when the students
heard from a panel of programs around the campus. Transition programs can be more
successful by implementing all eight elements.

In transition programs, allowing students to be challenged without exceeding their
limits builds feelings of mastery that continue into the time at college, which in turn
encouraging students to meet other school-related challenges (McDonald, 2010). The
students in this study spoke about challenge but did not talk about being challenged too
much. Another PYD concept that can be instrumental in successful transitions is the
strengths-based approach. The students should be viewed as resources that can be
developed to benefit both the student and the campus community (Lerner, Almerigi,
Theokas, & Lerner, 2005). By creating an environment in which the community looks at
freshmen as resources instead of potential problems, a campus invests in and empowers
first year students. In the program that was evaluated in this study, participants were
valued by the peer leaders as new friends and important parts of the community. PYD
promotes the idea of giving youth a space of their own in an effort to allow them to feel
comfortable (Witt, 2005). In a way, having a transition program is providing freshmen a
space of their own even if it is only temporary. In this study, students showed
appreciation for having the time and space to themselves before the rest of the campus
community came back for the start of the new school year. Once the students entered the
community, they perceived the community to provide opportunities and support
throughout their first year of college. The study of PYD has led to the knowledge that community-based organizations have a direct impact in the process of improving student development (Lerner et al, 2005). This study produced data that supported that concept. The students who were considered to be successful were involved in organizations that were both affected by the community and produced an effect on the community.

**Involvement**

This study also demonstrates how important campus involvement is. College students’ learning is directly proportional to student involvement on campus (Ullah & Wilson, 2007). This involvement can be with classmates and friends, in campus or community organizations, and with faculty and staff, illustrating the importance of the support network. In this case, the students who spoke of involvement were the students who perceived their success to be the greatest.

**Implications for Theory**

Csikszentmihalyi’s Theory of Flow shows the importance of having an equal amount of skill and challenge to create an environment that is both enjoyable and empowering for participants (Moneta & Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). Though every single participant in this study was asked about challenge, none of the participants had very much to say about the concept. When the researcher probed for more information, the challenge students talked about was leaving home. This challenge exists outside of the context and was already faced by the time the program started. What we can take from this is that challenging activities might not be as vital to this specific experience as previously thought. Students are already experiencing enough emotional challenge by
leaving home. Challenge does still hold an important place in student learning and development but potentially, adjusting to college is enough of an emotional stress that it is a challenge, without adding in any additional challenges. In this case, the stress level and the amount of activities the participants are successful at need to be balanced to create an optimal environment for growth and development.

PYD theory emphasized three important factors: positive places, positive people, and positive opportunities (Gomez & Ang, 2007). This study provided support for both having positive people and positive opportunities; the relationships built and the involvement opportunities acquired during the program were two out of three of the most important things to the participants. A positive place was also deemed helpful in this study, however the place did not last. To expand on that concept, youth do need positive space of their own, even if it is only their own occasionally or for the duration of a specific event. Before the program started and after the program ended, the outdoor recreation area was open to the public to use, but for the duration of the program, the space was designated only for the participants.

Theory surrounding the transition to college shows that initial experiences in the college setting influence students’ persistence in higher education (Pitkethly & Prosser, 2001). All of the participants in this study willingly spoke about their success in and outside the classroom, as well as the positive experience they had at PAWs. From this example, we find support for this transition theory.

Theory surrounding critical thinking skills suggests that experiences with diversity build critical thinking skills (Pascarella, 2001; Pascarella et al, 1995). In this
study, diversity was found amongst the participants and the experiences. While no measures of critical thinking skills were taken, students did perceive the diversity to be a benefit.

Social Constructionist Theory suggests that meaning is developed through social interactions. People discover reality through interacting with other people and then try to share their social reality (Henderson, 2006). Reality can be unique to a locale or particular situation. Behavior will be consistent with the perceptions of reality that individuals hold. In the transition camp setting, peer mentors model social acceptable behaviors for college students, providing a reality for transitioning students. The students in this study had different perceptions about college life before attending the program than after constructing their own realities based on experiences in the program.

**Implications for Practice**

The importance of small group time was stressed repeatedly in the interviews. Social support can act as a buffer against the stress of the transition and thus there is value in continuing to have students separated into small groups where strong supportive relationships can be established. According to a 2008 study by Reilly and Wood, the small group needs the inundation of positive social norms so using peer leaders who have already proven themselves to be successful on campus is extremely valuable. In an effort to provide small groups with positive social norms, program directors should focus peer mentor criteria on qualities such as a good Grade Point Average and involvement on campus or in the community. Reilly and Wood’s study aimed to prove behavioral change results from the influence of positive social norms; changes in group members’
perceptions were the main outcome. This shows the importance of providing students with transition programs prior to the semester starting to help influence perceptions to create positive social behaviors instead of using programs that use small groups throughout the semester.

Also important to note is that college student retention is positively associated with involvement with peers, faculty, and staff (Ullah & Wilson, 2007). Current research shows that about one out of every three first year college students withdraw by the end of the first year at college (Talbott, Martin, Usdan, Leeper, Umstattd, Creemans, & Geiger, 2008; Kitsantas, 2008). Transition programs should plan to have time for the participants to interact with faculty and staff in addition to the time spent with peer mentors in an effort to reduce the amount of students who do not return after their first year of college. Satisfaction with the interactions is important; students who end the interaction feeling that the faculty or staff member was not engaged could continue to project that perception of being disengaged on multiple other faculty and staff members, creating distrust and lack of successful relationships.

Because the students in this study focused on the relationships developed during the program, practitioners who build college transition programs should build the programs around developing relationships and building a sense of community. Programs already in existence should be evaluated to make sure they are providing these benefits deemed most important by the participants. The biggest fear of the participants focused on having a new support system for their new setting. This is a concept that can be transferred to any transition. When leaving a place where a good support system is
established, a person will need to develop a new support system in his or her new location.

**Implications for Future Studies**

Future studies are needed to understand the transition from college into the workforce. Regardless of what a person is transitioning from and to, transitions involve change and therefore support is needed. Adults might be more capable of transitioning than youth, but they do still need support during transition periods.

Future studies could also address universities with different populations, larger attendance, or Historically Black Colleges and Universities. These studies could address the transition for non-traditional students who are going back to college after being in the workforce for a period of time. Not every student is going to transition in the exact same way (Pitkethly & Prosser, 2001). According to Antonio, questions regarding student experiences and student development on today's campuses must include the role of racial diversity in their formulation (2004). By looking at multiple populations, researchers could find ways to help each unique young adult during the transition period.

Future studies could expand upon this study by interviewing both students who attended PAWs and students who did not attend PAWs. This would illustrate whether or not the students who did not participate were able to build a support network and get involved on campus as successfully as the program participants. An alternative would be to compare students who attended similar transition programs at different universities to see what elements of each program had a high level of influence on the participants.
Another interesting study could be to investigate parents’ perceptions of how a transition program affected their children. An outside view of the transition might yield gradual changes that the students did not even notice. Another study could be done to evaluate the effect the students had on their peer mentors, as well. Peer mentorship can be a reciprocal relationship; Program designers might also focus on what the peer mentors can gain from participation.

Finally, research in the area of peer influence on alcohol consumption has been over-simplified; the research in existence focuses on the abstinence side of the alcohol consumption discussion but in practice, the students in this study were holding open dialogue about drinking that did not focus on abstinence. There is very little research on what college students tell each other about drinking alcohol in an effort to remain politically correct. Participants in this study however, chose to explain how their peer mentors talked to them about alcohol. Peer influence is one of the most powerful factors in how college students consume alcohol (Borsari & Carey, 2006). Research should be done to discover how peer mentors are having these discussions with under age students and what effect these discussions have.

**Conclusion**

Students’ perceptions of the transition to college are directly related to how well they succeed during the transition and continuing into their time at college. The goal of this research was to discover what students felt was significant about transition program experiences, what helped in the transition and what did not help. The results can easily be applied to existing programs in an effort to provide students with a better experience.
concept of amplifying challenge explains a personal experience the researcher had when attending a similar transition program. As a camper, too much emotional challenge and constructed activity challenge added to the fear of leaving home and the support system there caused me to back down from the challenges. I did not leave the program feeling empowered. The participants in this study, however, all possessed a sense of confidence in themselves as members of the campus community. Even though confidence was not one of the goals of this specific program, it is a wonderful product. Transition programs certainly can have a positive impact on college students.

Across the country, many colleges and universities are seeking to help students successfully transition from high school to the college lifestyle. The single most important thing a higher education institution can do for transitioning students is to provide them with the opportunity to build a support network.

"We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can

build our youth for the future." Franklin D. Roosevelt
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APPENDIX A

Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

University of New Hampshire
Research Integrity Services, Office of Sponsored Research
Service Building, 51 College Road, Durham, NH 03824-3585
Fax: 603-862-3564

07-Oct-2010

Thies, Kathryn
909 Cypress Drive
Allen, TX 75002

IRB #: 4930
Study: Perceived Benefits of College Freshmen Attending Transition Camps
Study Approval Date: 20-Jul-2010
Modification Approval Date: 30-Sep-2010
Modification: Change in interview timing and recruitment

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research (IRB) has reviewed and approved your modification to this study, as indicated above. Further changes in your study must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval prior to implementation.

Researchers who conduct studies involving human subjects have responsibilities as outlined in the document, Responsibilities of Directors of Research Studies Involving Human Subjects. This document is available at http://www.unh.edu/osr/compliance/irb.html or from me.

If you have questions or concerns about your study or this approval, please feel free to contact me at 603-862-2003 or julie.simpson@unh.edu. Please refer to the IRB # above in all correspondence related to this study. The IRB wishes you success with your research.

For the IRB,

[Signature]
Julie F. Simpson
Manager

cc: File
    Harrist, Christopher
APPENDIX B

Questions Used in Interviews

1. What kinds of activities did you participate in while you were at camp?

2. What kinds of things did you enjoy most about your PAWs experience? What experiences of events stick out as a big memory now that you have had some time to reflect on camp?

3. What kinds of things did you not like about camp or wish had been different?
   a. Tell me more about __________?
   b. Why?

4. What kinds of things do you think you gained from attending PAWs?

5. What kinds of people did you meet at camp? Tell me about your student leaders.
   a. Have you hung out with anyone you met at PAWs since you came to campus? What kinds of things did you do with them?
   b. Have you hung out with any of the student leaders?

6. What kinds of things did the leaders share with you at camp that adults affiliated with UNH might not have told you?
   a. What were the things that the leaders told you about that you felt you already knew or didn’t need to know?

7. What would you tell your closest friends about your experience at PAWs?

8. If you had a friend coming to UNH what would you tell them about PAWs?

9. Are there any things that you would have changed about camp?

10. Do you have any suggestions for what PAWs should include next year?

11. How has camp changed your perspective about college life or UNH?
   a. What changes occurred and why?
   b. Have your perspectives changed now that you have been on campus and started the semester?
12. What challenged you at camp?
   a. What was the red zone?
   b. Did you ever hit your red zone?

13. Why did you decide to go to camp?