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FAMILY IMPACT, MAJORS, SELF-EFFICACY, & RETENTION

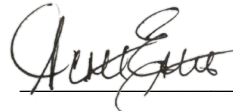
THE IMPACT OF FAMILY RESEARCH ON
MAJOR DECLARATION, SELF-EFFICACY, AND RETENTION OF COLLEGE STUDENTS

A Scholarly Research Project

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Approved:



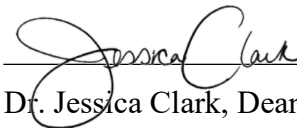
Dr. Scott Estes, Research Mentor



Dr. Erik Dalmasso, Program Director



Dr. Patricia Nugent, Department Chair



Dr. Jessica Clark, Dean

Felicia L. Keelen

Bradley University

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FAMILY IMPACT, MAJORS, SELF-EFFICACY, & RETENTION

ABSTRACT

Retention and student success are priorities for many universities. At Midwest Public University (MPU), a pseudonym for a four-year, urban, public, first-time, first-year students have been retained at lower rates than the national average for four-year public institutions. However, MPU students with declared majors have been retained at higher rates than students without majors. This mixed-methods study examined the impact of family research on major declaration, self-efficacy, and retention of college students with the intent of providing additional data on methods used to impact the retention rates of college students. First-time, first-year students in one of MPU's summer bridge programs participated in a family career research activity and a final group project. Qualitative data were obtained from surveys, retention data, and major declaration data. Select questions from pre-program and post-program surveys were reviewed to measure students' self-reported sense of self-efficacy and ability to choose a major and understand career choices. MPU retention and major declaration data were reviewed and compared to the survey results. Quantitative data were obtained from interviews and observational data from the family career research activity and the final group project. The results of this study indicated that family research activities may have a positive impact on students' comfort with choosing a major, and their commitment to continuing college and obtaining a degree. However, MPU's first-time, first-year students' level of comfort and commitment to choosing a major does not result in those students declaring majors. Implications for practice include implementing university-wide and consistent activities to encourage first-year students to declare majors within their first year or first 30 credit hours and conducting family research projects that are connected to career development in different university cohort programs.

DEDICATION

This research project is dedicated to my family elders. My grandmother, (Grannie) Dorothy M. Byrd, who exemplified love of family; my great aunt Luesther Chapman, who is the personification of resilience; my great uncle Dr. James W. Johnson, who exemplifies scholarship; and my great aunt Dr. F. Frances Johnson, who also exemplified scholarship and was my role model for my career in higher education. Each of these people has had an impact on my sense of self-efficacy, my resilience, and my academic and career pursuits, and I am thankful for their influence.

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Thanks to my mom, Caletha Keelen, my daughter, Dyani Keelen, and the rest of my family for your love and support.

Special thanks to Tirrany Thurmond. Your TEDx Talk and interview on the *Black Womyn Voices Podcast* were the inspiration for my action research topic. Thank you for sharing your work on ancestry research and college students.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

First-time, first-year students who enrolled at four-year public universities in Fall 2018 were retained at 75.6% (National Student Clearinghouse, 2020). At Midwest Public University (MPU), a pseudonym for a four-year, urban, public, first-time, first-year students who enrolled in Fall 2018 were retained at 58.8%. Furthermore, MPU first-year students with declared majors were retained at 74.6% from Fall 2020 to Fall 2021 compared to 60.6% of first-year students without declared majors. These numbers show that not only is MPU's first-to-second-year retention rate for first-time, first-year students lower than the national percentage but MPU first-year students without declared majors are also retained at an approximately 15% lower rate than first-year students with a declared major.

MPU does not actively encourage students to declare majors during their first year. Students may indicate an interest in a major in their application to MPU; however, they must complete a major declaration form and obtain additional signatures before an official major is listed on their transcript.

Although students are not encouraged to declare majors during their first year, 67 first-year students enrolled in Fall 2020 had declared majors. Of those 67 students, 74.6% were retained from Fall 2020 to Fall 2021. Only 60.6% of the first-year students without declared majors were retained from Fall 2020 to Fall 2021.

MPU does not have a standard method to encourage students to explore majors and careers. There have been recent efforts to encourage students to declare majors with one-time drop-in events that allow students to learn about a major. The career development office offers career counseling. However, there is no university-wide structure to "require" or guide students

to those services. Four of MPU's five summer bridge programs include career exploration activities. First-year students who do not participate in one of those four programs do not have exposure to career exploration before they begin in the Fall and may have limited exposure during their first two years at MPU.

Tinto (2016) has stated that students are more interested in persisting than retention; therefore, institutions should seek to shape student experiences that will enhance their motivation to persist. Three items influence motivation to persist: students' self-efficacy, sense of belonging, and perception of the curriculum's value. Tinto has gone on to state that concerning the perceived value of the curriculum, "institutions should see to it that students enroll in a field of study appropriate to their needs and interests" (Tinto, 2016, p. 1). Regarding self-efficacy, Tinto has stated, "What matters for success in that year, however, is not so much that students enter college believing in their capacity to succeed, as it is that they come to believe they can as the result of their early experiences" (Tinto, 2016, p. 1).

Tinto stated that students with a high sense of self-efficacy will put more effort into engagement and persistence. Many students begin college with the belief they will succeed. However, it is more important that students come to believe they can succeed because of their early college experiences.

MPU offers multiple programs to assist with the transition of first-year students. These programs include orientation, first-year experience (FYE) courses, success programs, and summer bridge programs. For this study, pseudonyms are used MPU's summer bridge programs. Four of MPU's summer bridge programs, the General Bridge Program (GBP), the Business Careers Bridge Program (BCP), the Computer Bridge Program (CBP), and the Health Careers Bridge Program (HCP), are the only programs to offer career exploration consistently and

intentionally as part of their programming. Although summer bridge participants participate in career exploration activities, there is no intentional discussion about declaring a major within their first year.

Review of Current Literature

Several studies have addressed college student persistence and retention, summer bridge programs and performance, career goals and persistence, culture and identity formation, and family.

“Niila Myaamia (I Am Miami): Identity and Retention of Miami Tribe College Students” looked at the impact of identity formation on the retention of a Myaamia Tribe (Miami Nation) college student cohort and their collegiate journey at Miami University, a predominately White institution that shares their tribal name. The initial results showed that students who participated in the culture and heritage course had higher retention and graduation rates than Myaamia students who did not participate in the course. This study was the first stage of a longitudinal study (Mosley-Howard et al., 2016).

“Leaking Pipeline: Issues Impacting Latino/a College Student Retention” reviewed current data on how student retention is impacted by campus involvement and environmental, personal, and socio-cultural factors. The authors concluded that retention is complex, Latino students are heterogeneous, and “cookie cutter” approaches to retention efforts will not be effective with all students. Therefore, additional research on Latino students is needed (Hernandez & Lopez, 2004).

There are multiple studies and articles about ancestry and genealogical research, such as Mitchell and Shillingford’s discussion on counselors using the Ancestry Identity Model (AIM) to assist with the identity development of African American clients. However, these articles do not

address ancestry research and identity development with college students or the impact of this form of identity development on retention (Mitchell & Shillingford, 2017).

The variety of studies on summer bridge programs have reviewed the effectiveness of these programs on the academic performance and retention of student participants. Covarrubias et al. (2016) found that borderline students, or students who fall just below the admissions cutoff of a four-year institution, in a summer bridge program performed slightly better than students who did not participate in the summer bridge program, including students with higher GPAs.

Douglas and Attewell (2014) found that students who participated in summer bridge programs had higher graduation rates. However, these results may only be significant at universities with obstacles to academic momentum, such as placement testing and remedial coursework. MPU utilizes both placement testing and remedial coursework which are listed obstacles to academic momentum according to the study.

Flanders (2015) found that students who declared a major and successfully completed a gateway course within their declared major had higher retention rates than students who did not declare a major and those who declared a major but did not successfully complete a gateway course. The author suggests encouraging first-time, first-year students to declare a major and take a gateway course within the major during their first semester of college (Flanders, 2015).

Kline and Duncan (2018) found career development to be a motivator for college enrollment. Of the students who responded to their survey, 59% listed career materialism, or obtaining a good job, as their motivation for enrolling in college (Kline & Duncan, 2018).

Deficiencies in the Literature

Although various studies have addressed specific parts of my proposed study, there is limited research that includes family research and its impact on the topics of career and major

declaration, self-efficacy, and retention. Specifically, there is limited research on the impact of family and genealogical research on career and major declaration or retention. Several articles have addressed cultural identity and retention, but those studies do not include family research as part of cultural identity development. There is also a lack of research on the impact of family research and cultural identity on career interest, major declaration, and self-efficacy in the context of summer bridge programs. Most studies on summer bridge programs focus on academic performance and social transition. My research did not find current data on family research used during summer bridge programs.

In addition to limited research data available from the literature, MPU's summer bridge assessments also have deficiencies in data. The assessment of MPU's summer bridge programs is not longitudinal and only measures end-of-program progress and first-to-second-year retention. MPU's current assessment data does not track major declaration, class completion, and retention beyond first-to-second year.

Significance of Study

Although there have been several studies on college student retention, summer bridge programs, and the impact of career and major declaration on retention, there is limited research that involves family research and its impact on the aforementioned topics.

This study provides additional data on methods used to impact retention. Specifically, this study adds to the existing body of research on the use of family research to impact self-discovery/identity, major declaration, and retention.

In addition to adding to the existing body of research on the aforementioned topics, this study provides information and possible methods that allow for more inclusive conversations

about student success and retention by involving students in discussions and decisions about their goals and success.

Purpose

“We need more complete representation to have more complete conversations. More complete conversations lead to more complete solutions” (J. Bonsu, personal communication, January 16, 2020). Bonsu is a scholar and activist who has worked with the Black Youth Project to achieve educational freedom and justice for Black people. Bonsu’s statement indicates a flaw in discussions about the access, retention, and success of college students. The needs and success of students are based on various standards and measures. However, discussions on needs and success ignore the fact that students are not part of the conversation when the standards are set. Nor do these discussions consider that institutions are trying to provide equal and equitable access to programs and spaces that were not originally designed with today’s students, especially students of color, in mind. Often, students are not included in the conversations on how to provide support and resources for their success or how these students should define their success. Therefore, these conversations are incomplete.

This researcher wants to facilitate more complete conversations by involving students in discussions and decisions about their goals and success. More inclusive conversations will lead to more complete solutions for student success and retention by having students design their resources and define their success.

This researcher hopes that the results of this study will provide information on effective methods to help students develop their own goals and standards of success, and that it will also provide data on the effectiveness of encouraging self-discovery via family/genealogical research

and its impact on self-efficacy, setting career goals, and major declaration, as well as motivation, retention, and persistence.

The purpose of the study is to provide additional data on methods used to impact the retention rates of college students and to determine the impact of family research on major declaration, self-efficacy, and retention for college students. The use of family research was inspired by Tirrany Thurmond, Anne Arundel Community College, and her work involving her students' ancestry research and its impact on their sense of identity, potential, and self-worth. Thurmond states that her students learned that resiliency exists within them due to their ancestors (Thurmond, 2018).

Definition of Terms

To facilitate understanding of this study, the following terms are defined herein:

- **Business Careers Bridge Program (BCP).** A pseudonym for the MPU summer bridge program designed to introduce business as a career gateway and further develop leadership skills with an emphasis on social change.
- **Computer Bridge Program (CBP).** A pseudonym for the MPU summer bridge program designed to prepare students for computer science studies and careers.
- **Family research/family research project.** In this study, the phrases “family research” and “family research project” refer to an activity in which summer bridge students interviewed a family member about their current careers and career goals.
- **Final project/final group project.** In this study, the phrases “final project” and “final group project” refer to a group project completed by summer bridge students. The project includes a short biography and information about family members from each student.

- **General Bridge Program (GBP).** A pseudonym for the MPU summer bridge program designed to assist students with their transition to college through academic courses, academic workshops, and student development workshops and activities.
- **Health Careers Bridge Program (HCP).** A pseudonym for the MPU summer bridge program designed to introduce students to academic disciplines related to health and wellness in urban communities, health advocacy, and equity.
- **Major declaration.** Refers to the process of MPU students completing a form to officially indicate a field of study on the student's transcript.
- **Math/English Bridge Program (MEP).** A pseudonym for the MPU summer bridge program that includes a math session (MEP Math) and English (MEP English) session. Each session is designed to improve math and/or English skills. Students may participate in one or both sessions of MEP.
- **Persistence.** Percentage of students who return to college at any institution (National Student Clearinghouse, 2022).
- **Retention.** Percentage of students who return to the same institution (National Student Clearinghouse, 2022).
- **Self-efficacy.** A person's belief in their ability to produce desired results by their actions (Bandura, 1997).
- **Summer bridge programs.** Refers to programs that occur during the summer between high school and college. These programs are designed to assist students with the transition to college by providing academic and social skills needed for college success (Institute of Education Sciences, n.d.). In this study, the phrase "summer bridge

programs” is used when referring to all of the summer bridge programs offered at Midwest Public University (MPU).

Research Questions

The research question for this project is “What is the impact of family research on major declaration, self-efficacy, and retention of college students?”

This study included the examination of the following questions comparing General Bridge Program (GBP) 2022 students who completed the family research project and Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2020, and 2021 students, who did not have a family research project. Data for 2017 and 2018 are not included because GBP did not exist in 2017 and 2018. Comparisons involving summer bridge pre-program and post-program surveys will not include 2020 because the summer bridge surveys were not distributed in 2020. To thoroughly examine the impact of family research on major declaration, self-efficacy, and retention, this study attempted to answer the following sub-questions:

- What is the impact of the family research project on self-reported self-efficacy of 2022 General Bridge Program (GBP) students compared to Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, and 2021 students?
- What impact will completion of the family research project in Summer Bridge 2022 have on the number of GBP 2022 students who report a commitment to declare majors by their second year at MPU compared to Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, and 2021 students?

The original plan of this study included the examination of the following questions comparing General Bridge Program (GBP) 2022 students who completed the family research project and Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2020, and 2021 students, who did not have

a family research project. Data for retention and major declaration rates of Summer Bridge 2022 students will not be available until 2023. The following questions will be evaluated upon receipt of this data in 2023:

- What is the impact of completing the family research project on the number of General Bridge Program (GBP) 2022 students who declare majors by their second year at MPU compared to the number of Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2020, and 2021 students who declared majors by their second year at MPU but did not complete the family research project?
- What is the impact of the family research project on retention rates of GBP 2022 students compared to Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2020, and 2021 students?
- What will be the relationship between major declaration rates and retention rates of GBP 2022 students who complete the family research project?

Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced this study's research problem and questions; provided a brief overview of literature related to the research problem and research questions; explained deficiencies in the literature as it relates to this study; and described the significance and purpose of this study. Chapter 2 will provide a more detailed review of literature related to the research problem and questions. Chapter 3 will explain the research methods and methodology.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Retention and student success are priorities for many universities. Like many universities, Midwest Public University (MPU) has implemented programs and services to assist with student transition, success, and retention. My research reviewed how family research combined with summer bridge programs impact major declaration, self-efficacy, and retention. This literature review provides data, research, and perspectives on the topics of summer bridge programs, family and cultural identity, and major declaration in the form of major exploration, and their impact on student success and retention.

First-time, first-year students who enrolled at four-year public universities in Fall 2018 were retained at 75.6% (National Student Clearinghouse, 2020). Unfortunately, the retention numbers at Midwest Public University are lower than the national average, and MPU enrollment data for Fall 2019 and Spring 2020 has shown a decline in recent student enrollment and retention numbers. However, MPU's Program Retention Report Fall 2020 to Fall 2021 shows that students who have declared a major have higher retention rates than students who have not declared a major. This trend is consistent for each class.

Research Questions

The research question for this project is "What is the impact of family research on major declaration, self-efficacy, and retention of college students?"

This study included the examination of the following questions comparing General Bridge Program (GBP) 2022 students who completed the family research project and Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2020, and 2021 students, who did not have a family research project. Data for 2017 and 2018 are not included because GBP did not exist in 2017 and 2018.

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The original plan of this study included the examination of the following questions comparing General Bridge Program (GBP) 2022 students who completed the family research project and Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2020, and 2021 students, who did not have a family research project. Data for retention and major declaration rates of Summer Bridge 2022 students will not be available until 2023. The following questions will be evaluated upon receipt of this data in 2023:

- What is the impact of completing the family research project on the number of General Bridge Program (GBP) 2022 students who declare majors by their second year at MPU compared to the number of Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2020, and 2021 students who declared majors by their second year at MPU but did not complete the family research project?

- What is the impact of the family research project on retention rates of GBP 2022 students compared to Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2020, and 2021 students?
- What will be the relationship between major declaration rates and retention rates of GBP 2022 students who complete the family research project?

Impact of Summer Bridge Programs on College Student Retention and Student Success

MPU offers summer bridge programs to improve retention rates among new students. Coleman-Tempel and Ecker-Lyster (2019) have reviewed the impact of college transition programs. The authors studied the perceptions and experiences of first-generation, low-income, and minority students in a year-long college transition program. The results showed that college transition programs can assist underrepresented students with increased campus knowledge and social connectedness, leading to a successful transition to college.

Covarrubias et al. (2016) conducted an “admissions experiment” using two studies to evaluate the effectiveness of requiring borderline students, or students who fall just below admission criteria, to attend a summer bridge program. Study one looked at the academic performance of these students compared to two sample populations of regularly admitted students. Sample one included regularly admitted students with similar high school GPAs and ACT/SAT scores. Sample two included regularly admitted students with slightly higher GPAs and ACT/SAT scores. Study one found that the borderline students performed slightly better than sample one, and sample two performed better than both the borderline students and sample one. Study two included interviews to gather data on components of the program that were perceived, by the borderline students, as helpful or detrimental to their adjustment and performance in college. Study two found that some components, such as early access to academic and social resources, helped with the transition to college. However, “tough love” messages had mixed

reactions and varied impacts on the students' feelings of belonging. This study provides an understanding of possible factors that influence performance and impact the resilience and success of students in summer bridge programs.

Douglas and Attewell (2014) have asked the following questions: Do summer bridge programs improve retention, and do students who attend them graduate in higher numbers as a result? First, the questions were addressed by analyzing a nationally representative survey of approximately 15,000 students from 2004–2009. The authors also analyzed data from a multicampus community college system of approximately 10,000 students from 2010–2012. A review of both sets of data revealed that students who participated in summer bridge programs had higher graduation rates. However, Douglas and Attewell indicate these results may only be significant at universities, like MPU, which have obstacles to academic momentum such as placement testing and remedial coursework.

An additional review of summer bridge programs was conducted by Grace-Odeleye, B., & Santiago, J. (2019) both university administrators of their campus summer bridge program. This review studied four sample summer bridge programs from diverse public, open-access universities in large urban and non-urban areas. The categories of data available are not consistent among the four studies. The authors make recommendations for the assessment of summer bridge programs. Suggestions include conducting a longitudinal assessment of quantitative data. The authors' recommendations for the assessment of summer bridge programs provide possible categories I should include when evaluating the impact of my action research project.

Additional Factors Impacting College Student Retention

Summer bridge programs are one way to assist with college student retention, but factors such as academic performance, motivation, and sociocultural and familial influence also impact retention.

Academic Performance

DeNicco et al. (2015) reviewed some factors influencing college student retention at a public state college and found that freshman year performance was the strongest predictor of freshman retention.

The relationships between grit, academic performance, and educational attainment, as measured by the number of attempted credit hours at the collegiate level, were explored by Reysen et al. (2019). The authors attempted to learn whether academically at-risk students (those with less than a 2.0 GPA) had lower grit scores than their non-at-risk peers. The findings included potential interventions and future directions for research in this area. The study found that students with higher grade point averages tended to have more grit, and at-risk students showed less grit. The authors suggested that at-risk students had less grit due to problems such as personal/family issues, homesickness, and not having a sense of belonging. The authors also suggested having at-risk students participate in grit-building activities.

Sociocultural Factors

The impact of campus involvement and environmental, personal, and sociocultural factors on Latino student retention was reviewed by Hernandez and Lopez (2004). The authors concluded that retention is complex, Latino students are heterogeneous, and “cookie-cutter” approaches to retention efforts will not be effective with all students. Therefore, additional research on Latino students is needed.

Motivation for Enrolling in College

Understanding the motivation for why students enroll in college can help with understanding why they persist and are retained. Kline and Duncan (2018) conducted a study with 9,000 undergraduates and 600 graduate students at a public institution in Pennsylvania to determine the motivation of at-risk students for enrolling in college. The most common enrollment motivation was career materialism (59%). However, 43% of respondents also listed seeking a fresh start, wanting a change of scenery, and pursuing extracurricular activities. The survey had a low response rate of 13% and was conducted with students at one university, limiting the ability to apply the results to a larger population of students.

Family Influence

Research from Griffin et al. (2012) explored habitus and family influence on the college selection of immigrant families. The study results showed that a student's habitus is strongly influenced by culture, prestige, and the value parents place on education, (Griffin et al., 2012). Cultural capital, historical and family background, and education were viewed as critical to social mobility for the students in this study. The importance of social mobility lead to an expectation to attend college and obtain a degree from an early age (Griffin et al., 2012).

The Impact of Identity Development on Self-Efficacy and Retention

Dixon et al. (2019), Black women higher education professionals, interviewed Tirrany Thurmond, the coordinator for inclusive excellence at Anne Arundel Community College, about her experience in higher education, her current work in a diversity position, and how she began her personal genealogical research. Thurmond noted helping students see the resiliency within them because of their ancestors. My action research project was inspired by the discussion of genealogical research in this podcast.

Korgan and Durdella (2016) used narrative inquiry to review resilience as it related to students' interpretation of themselves and the environmental messages they have received. The study found that students develop resilience and meaning-making in different ways, but the home environment, peer groups, and instructors had the primary influence on how students saw themselves.

Some of the literature has studied the impact of cultural identity on students' self-perception. Mitchell and Shillingford (2017) have looked at family research in identity development and discussed counselors use of the Ancestry Identity Model (AIM) to assist with the identity development of African American clients.

Mosley-Howard et al. (2016) studied one Myaamia Tribe (Miami Nation) student cohort and their collegiate journey at Miami University, a predominately White institution that shares their tribal name. These students participated in a culture and heritage course. The initial results showed that students who participated in the culture and heritage course had higher retention and graduation rates than Myaamia students who did not participate in the course. This study was the first stage of a longitudinal study and examined identity development, college adjustment, and retention of Myaamia college students at Miami University. In addition to having a positive impact on retention and graduation, the culture and heritage course had a positive impact on cultural identity development.

Nash (2002) examined the relationships between ideas of nation, family, and the diaspora. The author concluded that genealogical results often challenge ideas of ethnic purity and belonging as it relates to location. This article provided input on potential conflicts regarding genealogical results, location of "origin" and current location, and ethnic purity for people who are part of their cultural diaspora.

Although there have been various studies on cultural identity and student identity development, there is very little information on the impact of genealogical research on student identity and retention. However, Thurmond (2018) has shared her experience with beginning her genealogical research and how it inspired her to a greater purpose. During her TEDx Talk (Thurmond, 2018) and an interview with Dixon et al. (2019), she also discussed the impact of having her students conduct their own family research on their sense of identity, potential, and self-worth.

Career and Major Declaration and Retention

Tinto (2016) has stated that students are more interested in persistence than retention; therefore, institutions should seek to shape student experiences that will enhance their motivation to persist. Specifically, three items influence motivation to persist: students' self-efficacy, their sense of belonging, and the perceived value of the curriculum. The studies outlined in this section review the connection between curriculum directly related to majors and future careers and student retention.

Flanders (2015) conducted a study to measure how first-to-second-semester retention was impacted by first-time, first-year students taking a gateway course within a declared major during their first semester. Students who declared a major and successfully completed the course had higher retention rates than students who did not declare a major and those who declared a major but did not successfully complete the gateway course. The authors suggested encouraging first-time, first-year students to declare a major and take a gateway course within that major during their first semester of college.

Reardon et al. (2015) examined the impact of completing a for-credit undergraduate career course on graduation rates at a selective southern university. Graduation rates were higher

for students who took the career course, although the participants had lower GPAs and SAT scores than the student body average. The results indicated that completion of the course was one of four factors predicting graduation. However, completion of the career course was one of the weaker predictors.

Tuffley and Antonio (2013) implemented a three-stage retention strategy on a cohort of 258 first-year students, using lectures, career interest assessment, and a survey. In the first stage, the lecturer presented material across a range of cutting-edge technological topics and the characteristics of high-performing IT professionals. In the second stage, students explored their ideal career using a web-based career assessment tool. In the third stage, three questionnaires were administered to determine the students' attitudes towards the first two stages. In the final analysis, 63.4% of students surveyed indicated that the experience helped them become more committed to finishing their degree programs. The authors suggested these results would support a follow-up study for when the students in this cohort were close to graduation.

The studies above looked at early selection and engagement impact with career courses and majors. However, Wapnick (2015) has challenged the assumption that students must find “the one” career and has encouraged the acceptance of multipotentialites—people who have various interests and pursue multiple careers over a lifetime. Wapnick identified idea synthesis, adaptability, and rapid learning as skills of multipotentialites.

Chapter Summary

Although there is literature to support the success of summer bridge or transition programs in improving the retention rates of college students, some of those same studies have stated a need for additional research and the consideration of other factors, such as university-required placement testing and remedial coursework, which function as obstacles for students.

Additional literature has studied the influence of cultural identity and career coursework on retention. However, there is little literature available that has studied the impact of family research on the topics of career and major declaration, self-efficacy, and retention.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted to provide additional data on methods used to impact the retention rates of college students. Mixed-methods research design was used to answer the question “What is the impact of family research on major declaration, self-efficacy, and retention of college students?” Student participants in Midwest Public University’s summer bridge programs during Summer 2022 were the subject of this study. The summer bridge students completed pre-program surveys (see Appendix A) used to assess major/career declaration and self-efficacy, completed self-reflection and family research projects, completed post-program surveys (see Appendix A), and participated in focus groups or interviews used to reassess major/career declaration and self-efficacy (see Appendix B). Existing university data and custom reports specific to the retention and major declaration of Summer Bridge 2021 students were obtained from MPU’s Office of Research and Assessment and used to assess retention and major declaration. Custom reports specific to the retention and major declaration of Summer Bridge 2022 students will be obtained from MPU’s Office of Research and Assessment in 2023.

Research Problem

Midwest Public University (MPU) experienced a 28% decline in enrollment from 2017 to 2021. In addition to a drop in enrollment in first-time, first-year students, there was a 32.8% decrease in overall first-year student enrollment (new and continuing) from Fall 2019 to Spring 2020.

However, students with a declared major (85.9%) have been retained at a higher rate than undeclared students (67.6%). However, MPU does not have a standard method to encourage students to explore majors and careers.

Research Questions

The research question for this project is “What is the impact of family research on major declaration, self-efficacy, and retention of college students?”

This study included the examination of the following questions comparing General Bridge Program (GBP) 2022 students who completed the family research project and Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2020, and 2021 students, who did not have a family research project. Data for 2017 and 2018 are not included because GBP did not exist in 2017 and 2018. Comparisons involving summer bridge pre-program and post-program surveys will not include 2020 because the summer bridge surveys were not distributed in 2020. To thoroughly examine the impact of family research on major declaration, self-efficacy, and retention, this study attempted to answer the following sub-questions:

- What is the impact of the family research project on self-reported self-efficacy of 2022 General Bridge Program (GBP) students compared to Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, and 2021 students?
- What impact will completion of the family research project in Summer Bridge 2022 have on the number of GBP 2022 students who report a commitment to declare majors by their second year at MPU compared to Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, and 2021 students?

The original plan of this study included the examination of the following questions comparing General Bridge Program (GBP) 2022 students who completed the family research project and Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2020, and 2021 students, who did not have a family research project. Data for retention and major declaration rates of Summer Bridge 2022

students will not be available until 2023. The following questions will be evaluated upon receipt of this data in 2023:

- What is the impact of completing the family research project on the number of General Bridge Program (GBP) 2022 students who declare majors by their second year at MPU compared to the number of Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2020, and 2021 students who declared majors by their second year at MPU but did not complete the family research project?
- What is the impact of the family research project on retention rates of GBP 2022 students compared to Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2020, and 2021 students?
- What will be the relationship between major declaration rates and retention rates of GBP 2022 students who complete the family research project?

Description of Research Site and Program

Midwest Public University is a vibrant, urban learning and research community. With more than 100 countries represented by its student body, MPU is one of the most ethnically diverse universities in the Midwest. In 2021, MPU's total fall enrollment was 6,440 students. Of that total, 4,608 students were undergraduates and 330 were new first-year students.

At the time of this study, MPU had five summer bridge programs: Math/English Bridge Program (MEP); Computer Bridge Program (CBP); Business Careers Bridge Program (BCP), General Bridge Program (GBP); and the Health Careers Bridge Program (HCP). The programs provided an opportunity for students to get a head start on their academic careers, meet other students, learn about campus resources, and build confidence before they began the fall semester.

The total capacity of all five programs is approximately 260 students. However, less than

100 students participated in the various programs from 2019 through 2021. Forty-five unique students participated in and completed summer bridge programs in Summer 2022.

Research Participants

The subjects in this research were student participants in MPU's summer bridge programs during Summer 2022. Interview participants were volunteers from MPU's 2022 summer bridge programs.

The GBP is limited to first-time, first-year students admitted to MPU for the upcoming fall semester. The MEB, CBP, and HCP programs are open to continuing and transfer students if space is available. However, the target audience for MPU's summer bridge programs remains first-time, first-year students. The initial summer bridge programs at MPU were designed specifically for students who were placed into developmental courses to provide remediation and prepare the students for a smooth academic and social transition to collegiate life. In 2019, summer bridge recruitment shifted to include all first-time, first-year students and not just students in developmental courses.

Recruitment of Research Participants

At the time of this study, MPU's summer bridge programs were not mandatory. Each year, after being admitted to MPU, students have been encouraged to sign up for the summer bridge program of their choice. Presentations during meetings with high school counselors, presentations for students during Admitted Student Welcome Day, and mass e-mail messages have been marketing efforts used to generate interest in the program and encourage students to apply.

Academic advisors at MPU have also encouraged students to participate and helped them determine the best-suited program based on the student's academic and career interests, need for

remediation, and availability to participate. It was expected that students who participated in summer bridge programs had a high level of commitment to the programs since they self-selected for participation.

All Summer Bridge 2022 students who applied and confirmed their participation in one of the summer bridge programs were asked to complete the summer bridge pre-program and post-program surveys (see Appendix A), allowed to participate in self-reflection and genealogical research activities, and invited to participate in the focus groups and interviews (see Appendix B).

Summer Bridge 2022 students received an e-mail invitation (see Appendix C) to participate in focus groups and interviews during Summer 2022. Students were given the option of participating in a focus group with approximately five to eight other students or requesting a one-to-one interview. In the e-mail, students were asked to select and confirm a date for their focus group or interview. Each summer bridge participant who signed up for a focus group or interview received a confirmation e-mail (see Appendix D) with a confirmed focus group/interview date, time, and location approximately 24 hours after the summer bridge student signed up to participate in a focus group or interview. A reminder e-mail (see Appendix E) was sent to the students 24 to 48 hours before the selected date.

Names and e-mails were collected for planning purposes only and were not stored with data collected during the focus groups and interviews. This personal information was only privy to the researcher and has been kept in a password-secured digital format.

Methods of Data Collection

Mixed-methods research methodology was used to answer the research question and sub-questions. This methodology provides a more complete understanding of the research problem

through the use of quantitative and qualitative data (Mertler, 2020).

Student participants in Midwest Public University's summer bridge programs during Summer 2022 were asked to complete pre-program surveys to assess major/career declaration and self-efficacy (see Appendix A), to complete self-reflection and family career research projects, to complete post-program surveys (see Appendix A), and to participate in focus groups or interviews to reassess major/career declaration and self-efficacy (see Appendix B).

The plan for data collection has been divided into the following three general time ranges: pre-Summer Bridge 2022, Summer Bridge 2022, and post-Summer Bridge 2022. The chronological outline for data collection is:

- Pre-Summer Bridge 2022 (June 1–July 2022)
 - The summer bridge pre-program survey (see Appendix A) and informed consent form (see Appendix F) were distributed to Summer Bridge 2022 students at the summer bridge welcome program on July 1, 2022. The average time to complete the pre-program survey was approximately 10 minutes. The summer bridge pre-program survey was created by MPU staff in 2014 independently of this research study and has been used in the past to assess students' perceptions of their college readiness. Data collected from the survey results were from survey questions directly related to the following topics: career and major interest, cultural identity, and current level of self-efficacy (see Appendix A).
- Summer Bridge 2022 (July 1–August 12, 2022)
 - Data from the Summer Bridge 2022 pre-program survey (see Appendix A) was reviewed and compared to data results from GBP 2014, 2015, 2016, and Summer Bridge 2019, and 2021 pre-program surveys. There is no GBP pre-program

survey data for 2017, 2018, and 2020 because GBP did not exist in 2017 and 2018 and the summer bridge pre-program survey was not distributed in Summer 2020.

- Data via observation were obtained from the culminating student project presentations during the GBP closing program. The culminating project presentations include a short biography of each student in the cohort. Students were instructed to include the following components in their biography:
 - Student's name
 - High school and current neighborhood
 - Brief description of their family (who does the student consider to be members of their family?)
 - Family facts and notable "firsts" (e.g. the first member of their family to move to Chicago, work in a specific career, complete high school, or other interesting facts)
 - Student's major and future career plans
 - Student's notable "first" (current and future)
- The summer bridge post-program survey (see Appendix A) was distributed electronically to summer bridge students on August 11 and August 12, the last days of MEP Math and GBP, respectively. The average time to complete the post-program survey was approximately 30 minutes. The post-program survey was created independently of this study and has been used to assess if the programs have met stated learning outcomes. Data collected from the survey results were from questions directly related to the following topics: career and major interest, cultural identity, and current level of self-efficacy (see Appendix A).

- Post-Summer Bridge 2022 (August 13, 2022–approximately October 2023)
 - Data collected from the Summer Bridge 2022 pre-program survey and post-program survey (see Appendix A) was reviewed to determine if there have been changes in students' career and major interests, level of pride related to cultural identity, and self-reported levels of self-efficacy.
 - Focus groups and interviews (see Appendix B) were conducted with the students after MPU's summer bridge programs and before the Fall 2022 semester to obtain data on the students' perceptions of their experience in Summer Bridge 2022 and the impact of the program on their major and career interests, self-efficacy, and potential for retention. Focus group meetings and interviews lasted approximately one hour. To take a lower profile and avoid biases stemming from researcher effects on the site (Miles et al., 2013, p 297), some members of Cohort 3 of Bradley University's higher education administration doctoral program agreed to assist this researcher by facilitating the focus groups and interviews. The interviews were conducted via Zoom and recorded within the Zoom platform. This researcher took notes from the recorded Zoom interviews.
 - Retention rates and major declaration rates for Summer Bridge 2021 students were obtained from MPU's Office of Research and Assessment. The research data request form was used to request a custom report to compare retention and major declaration data for Summer Bridge 2021 students, past summer bridge students, and the general MPU student population.
 - Retention rates and major declaration rates for Summer Bridge 2022 students will be obtained from MPU's Office of Research and Assessment. The research data

request form will be used to request a custom report to compare retention and major declaration data of Summer Bridge 2022 students, past summer bridge students, and the general MPU student population.

- The doctoral program in higher education administration for the researcher's cohort is scheduled to end in Fall 2022; however, data to analyze Fall 2021 to Fall 2022 retention rates for Summer Bridge 2021 students will not be available until approximately October 2022, and data to analyze Fall 2022 to Fall 2023 retention rates for Summer Bridge 2022 students will not be available until the following year. Data collection and review of retention and major declaration data will therefore continue until Fall 2023 to allow for continued assessment of retention strategies for MPU students.

Methods of Data Analysis

Quantitative data from MPU's reports on retention and major declaration of MPU's summer bridge students and the pre-program and post-program summer bridge surveys (see Appendix A) were analyzed using descriptive analysis, inferential statistics, independent measures t-test, and repeated measures t-test or dependent samples t-test. Qualitative data from focus groups and interviews (see Appendix B) were analyzed using thematic analysis .

The null hypothesis states there is no difference, effect, or relationship (Pyrszak & Oh, 2018). For this study the null hypotheses regarding major declaration are (a) there is no difference in major declaration rates between students who participated in Summer Bridge 2022 and first-time, first-year students who did not participate in Summer Bridge 2022; and (b) there is no difference in major declaration rates between students who participated in summer bridge 2022 and students who participated in Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2020, and 2021.

The alternative hypothesis states there is a significant effect, difference, or relationship (Pyrczak & Oh, 2018, p. 107). For this study the alternative hypotheses are the directional research hypotheses: (a) major declaration rates of Summer Bridge 2022 participants are higher than first-time, first-year students who did not participate in Summer Bridge 2022; and (b) major declaration rates for students who participated in Summer Bridge 2022 are higher than students who participated in Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2020, and 2021.

The null hypotheses regarding retention rates are (a) there is no difference in retention rates between students who participated in Summer Bridge 2022 and first-time, first-year students who did not participate in Summer Bridge 2022; and (b) there is no difference in major declaration rates between students who participated in Summer Bridge 2022 and students who participated in Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2020, and 2021. The alternative hypotheses are the directional research hypotheses: (a) major declaration rates of Summer Bridge 2022 participants are higher than first-time, first-year students who did not participate in Summer Bridge 2022, and (b) major declaration rates for students who participated in Summer Bridge 2022 are higher than students who participated in Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2020, and 2021.

Qualitative data for this mixed methods study was collected during interviews and observational data from the family career research project and final group project. Thematic analysis was used for the quantitative data to identify themes related to self-efficacy ability to identify a major and understand career options. The results of the thematic analysis were compared to the quantitative data from the Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2021, and 2022 post-program survey results to develop a better understanding of student perceptions of self-efficacy and level of comfort for declaring a major.

Research Theory

This research was conducted to determine the impact of family research on major declaration, self-efficacy, and retention for college students. The research question is similar to Tinto's question "What can [universities] do to lead students to want and have the ability to persist and complete their programs of study within the university?" (Tinto, 2017) and aligns with Tinto's theories on persistence. Specifically, it aligns with the idea that college students are more interested in persistence than retention (Tinto, 2016) and that self-efficacy, belonging, and the value of the curriculum are three factors that impact motivation towards persistence (Tinto, 2016). Self-efficacy is listed in the research question and was directly studied in this research through summer bridge pre-program and post-program survey results related to self-efficacy and observation data obtained from the family research project, the final group project, and interviews. The value of curriculum was indirectly evaluated through summer bridge pre-program and post-program survey results related to level of confidence with declaring a major. Finally, sense of belonging was indirectly evaluated through observation data obtained from the family research project, the final group project, and interviews.

This research is also consistent with the constructivism view, as defined by Reiser and Dempsey (2018), in that the action research project created a summer bridge learning environment that accomplished the following:

- engaged learners in activities authentic to the discipline in which they were learning
- provided for collaboration and the opportunity to engage multiple perspectives on what was being learned
- supported learners in setting their goals and regulating their learning
- encouraged learners to reflect on what and how they were learning

This Study as Action Research

Mertler (2020) defined action research as a systematic inquiry by practitioners with a vested interest in the gathering of data on how their particular institution works. The purpose of the study was to provide additional data on methods used to impact retention rates of college students, and it involved the systematic inquiry into methods used to impact major declaration, self-efficacy, and retention of college students at MPU. The researcher is a practitioner at MPU in the student success and retention unit with a vested interest in the teaching, learning process, and environment for how MPU operates. The aforementioned conditions define this study as action research (Mertler, 2020).

Researcher Positionality

This action research project was conducted at MPU with students in MPU's summer bridge programs in Summer 2022. This researcher has direct experience with coordinating MPU's summer bridge programs and working with orientation, transition, and retention initiatives. The researcher's work at MPU has included regular review of program assessment data, enrollment and retention data, and correlation between student participation in onboarding activities and enrollment and retention. The researcher's understanding of the need to investigate and/or create new methods to improve retention rates at MPU and ensure the success of its students was the impetus for this study. Therefore, the researcher is positioned as an insider (Herr & Anderson, 2015).

Mixed-Methods Research Methodology and Design

A mixed-methods research design was used to answer the research question "What is the impact of family research on major declaration, self-efficacy, and retention of college students?" through the collection of quantitative and qualitative data that at about the same time. The

research design for this study also falls in the category of triangulation mixed-methods due to quantitative and qualitative data being collected during Summer 2022, given equal emphasis, and used simultaneously to answer the research question (Mertler, 2020).

Triangulation mixed-methods design was appropriate for this study as statistical data and surveys were collected throughout this research and within the same period that the observation, focus groups, and interviews were conducted. The variables within the research question were best answered by using a variety of methods. While survey results were used to assess the students' perception of their self-efficacy and level of comfort with choosing a major; observation, focus groups, and interviews provided a more complete story regarding the students' perception of their self-efficacy and comfort with choosing a major.

Consent Procedures

Participants in MPU's summer bridge programs include first-time, first-year college students. All the population in this study were at least 18 years of age or older. The Summer Bridge 2022 participation confirmation form included a statement of understanding (see Appendix G) that informed the students that data from the surveys and de-identified data about Summer Bridge 2022 would be used as part of a research project and that students would have the opportunity to participate in focus groups and interviews (see Appendix B). Students were also informed that participating in the focus groups and interviews (see Appendix B) was not a requirement of their participation in summer bridge programs. Students who participated in Summer Bridge 2022 completed the participation confirmation form.

The informed consent form (see Appendix F) included the purpose of the study, how data was collected, risks and benefits, and details on confidentiality versus anonymity. Students were informed that data would be reported in aggregate and personally identifiable information would

be removed from reporting. The study participants were college students; therefore, the form included space for the student to sign. The signature of a parent or legal guardian was also required on the form if the student was under the age of 18 at the time the form was submitted; however, all student participants were at least 18 years of age.

Chapter Summary

It is the hope of this researcher that the results of this study will provide additional information on effective methods for helping students develop their goals and standards of success. It also provides data on the effectiveness of encouraging self-discovery via genealogical research and its impact on self-efficacy, setting career goals, and major declaration, as well as motivation, retention, and persistence.

The collection of data in Summer 2022 provided information on the impact of family research on major declaration and self-efficacy of students who participated in Summer Bridge 2022. Additional data collected in Spring 2023–Fall 2023 will provide information on the impact of family research on retention of the Summer Bridge 2022 students. This researcher intends to continue with a longitudinal study and collect at least five years of additional data for 2023–2027 summer bridge programs. The results of Summer Bridge 2021 were used to revise and improve activities for Summer Bridge 2022. The results of Summer Bridge 2022 will be used to revise and improve activities for Summer Bridge 2023 and so forth.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of the study is to provide additional data on methods used to impact retention rates of college students, and to determine the impact of family research on major declaration, self-efficacy, and retention for college students. Chapter 3 describes the quantitative and qualitative data collection methods used to determine the impact of family research on major declaration, self-efficacy, and retention of college students. This chapter will include data results, discussion of data collection, data analysis, and data validation, and summary findings for this study.

Research Questions

The research question for this project is “What is the impact of family research on major declaration, self-efficacy, and retention of college students?”

This study included the examination of the following questions comparing General Bridge Program (GBP) 2022 students who completed the family research project and Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2020, and 2021 students, who did not have a family research project. Data for 2017 and 2018 are not included because GBP did not exist in 2017 and 2018. Comparisons involving summer bridge pre-program and post-program surveys will not include 2020 because the summer bridge surveys were not distributed in 2020. To thoroughly examine the impact of family research on major declaration, self-efficacy, and retention, this study attempted to answer the following sub-questions:

- What is the impact of the family research project on self-reported self-efficacy of 2022 General Bridge Program (GBP) students compared to Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, and 2021 students?

- What impact will completion of the family research project in Summer Bridge 2022 have on the number of GBP 2022 students who report a commitment to declare majors by their second year at MPU compared to Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, and 2021 students?

The original plan of this study included the examination of the following questions comparing General Bridge Program (GBP) 2022 students who completed the family research project and Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2020, and 2021 students, who did not have a family research project. Data for retention and major declaration rates of Summer Bridge 2022 students will not be available until 2023. The following questions will be evaluated upon receipt of this data in 2023:

- What is the impact of completing the family research project on the number of General Bridge Program (GBP) 2022 students who declare majors by their second year at MPU compared to the number of Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2020, and 2021 students who declared majors by their second year at MPU but did not complete the family research project?
- What is the impact of the family research project on retention rates of GBP 2022 students compared to Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2020, and 2021 students?
- What will be the relationship between major declaration rates and retention rates of GBP 2022 students who complete the family research project?

Procedures and Analysis

Summer Bridge pre-program and post-program survey data for 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2021, and 2022 were collected from MPU's survey platform. Custom reports and data sets

specific to retention rates and major declaration rates of Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2020, and 2021 students were obtained from MPU's Office of Research and Assessment in Summer 2022. Custom reports and data sets specific to major declaration and retention rates of Summer Bridge 2022 students will be obtained in Spring 2023 and Fall 2023. For this study, pseudonyms will be used for all reports and data sets obtained from MPU.

Self-efficacy was measured by reviewing the Summer Bridge 2022 pre-program and post-program survey results and Summer Bridge post-event survey results for 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, and 2021. To determine if there was a difference between GBP 2022 and previous GBP programs, self-efficacy results for 2022 GBP students was compared to the 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, and 2021 results for GBP students who did not have a family career research activity as part of their program.

Major declaration data for Summer Bridge 2022 students was not available at the time this study was completed. However, major declaration rates of Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2020, and 2021 students and first-time, and first-year students who did not participate in summer bridge were reviewed to determine past trends for major declaration for first-year students. Major declaration was measured by reviewing the MPU Research and Assessment *Major Declaration and Retention Summer Bridge 2021 vs Non-Summer Bridge 2021* report and the MPU Research and Assessment *Major Declaration Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2020* report. First-to-second-year major declaration data for the Summer Bridge 2022 students will be collected and analyzed in Fall 2023.

Retention data for Summer Bridge 2022 was not available at the time this study was completed. However, retention data of Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, and 2020 students and first-time, and first-year students who did not participate in summer bridge were

reviewed to determine past trends for retention of first-year students. Retention was measured by reviewing the Midwest Public University Research and Assessment *GBP Profile First- to-Second-Year Retention GBP 2014, GBP 2015, GBP 2016, Summer Bridge 2019, Summer Bridge 2020* report and the Midwest Public University Research and Assessment *Fall 2021 to Spring 2022 Retention Rates of Summer Bridge 2021 and Non-Summer Bridge 2021* report. First-to-second-year retention data for the Summer Bridge 2022 students will be collected and analyzed in Fall 2023.

The aforementioned data were analyzed using descriptive analysis (Mertler, 2020), inferential statistics (Pyrszak & Oh, 2018), independent measures t-test (Pyrszak & Oh, 2018), and repeated measures t-test (Mertler, 2020) or dependent samples t-test (Pyrszak & Oh, 2018).

Individual interviews with Summer Bridge 2022 participants were conducted to collect qualitative data. Observation and review of the Summer Bridge 2022 family career research project and the final group project was completed to gain additional qualitative data. The data sets were analyzed using thematic analysis (Mertler, 2020).

Data collection occurred in three general time ranges: pre-Summer Bridge 2022, June 1–July 1, 2022; Summer Bridge 2022, July 1–August 12, 2022; and post-Summer Bridge 2022, August 13–approximately October 2023.

The summer bridge pre-program survey was sent to Summer Bridge 2022 students approximately one week before the start of their respective programs. The summer bridge pre-program survey was created independently of this research study and has been used in the past to assess student's perceptions of their college readiness. Data collected from the survey results were from survey questions related to the following topics: career and major interest and current

level of self-efficacy. Informed consent forms were distributed and collected at the summer bridge welcome program on July 1, 2022.

Data from the Summer Bridge 2022 pre-program survey were reviewed and compared to data results from GBP 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, and 2021 pre-program surveys. There is no GBP pre-program survey data for 2017, 2018, and 2020 because GBP did not exist in 2017 and 2018 and the summer bridge pre-program survey was not distributed in Summer 2020. Data via observation were obtained for the family career research project and final project implemented as part of GBP activities. The summer bridge post-program survey was distributed on the last day of each program: August 5, 2022, for CBP; August 11, 2022, for MEP Math and GBP. The post-program survey took approximately 30 minutes to complete. The post-program survey was created independently of this study and has been used to assess if the programs have met stated learning outcomes. Data collected from the survey results were from questions related to the following topics: career and major interest and current level of self-efficacy.

Data collected from the Summer Bridge 2022 pre-program survey and post-program survey were reviewed to determine if there were changes in the students' level of comfort with choosing a career and major and self-reported levels of self-efficacy. Interviews were conducted with four students during the Summer 2022 semester to obtain data on the students' perceptions of their experience in Summer Bridge 2022 and the impact of the program on their major and career interest, self-efficacy, and potential for retention. Interviews lasted approximately one hour. Retention rates and major declaration rates for Summer Bridge 2022 students will be requested from MPU's research and assessment office. Data collection and review of retention and major declaration data will continue through Fall 2023 to allow for continued assessment of retention strategies for MPU students.

Results

Quantitative Results

Comparison of Summer Bridge 2022 Pre-program and Post-program Survey Results

Summer bridge students are asked to complete a pre-program survey before the start of their program and a post-program survey at the end of their program. Responses to eight questions from the surveys reflected a decrease in self-efficacy from the pre-program survey to the post-program survey. Specifically, the percentage of students who selected they were “Able” or “Extremely Able” to “Keep going in college and complete my degree” despite academic, personal, social, and familial challenges decreased by 5.26% and 6.18%, respectively. The post-program survey results indicated GBP 2022 students were less likely to select “Able” or “Extremely Able” on survey questions related to self-efficacy after participating in the family career research project and final project.

Table 1 shows a comparison of pre-program survey results to post-program survey results for Summer Bridge 2022. Responses for both surveys show 89.47%–100% of students believed they were “Able” or “Extremely Able” to “Keep going in college and complete my degree” despite academic, personal, social, and familial challenges. However, there was a slight decrease in the number of students who selected “Able” and “Extremely Able” between the pre- and post-program surveys. This decrease could indicate a negative impact of the family career research and final project activities. However, since all the students did not complete the pre-program or post-program survey, it is possible each survey population had slightly different students. The decrease seen in the post-program survey could also be the result of different students responding to the post-program survey.

Table 1*Comparison of Summer Bridge 2022 Pre-program and Post-program Survey Results*

2022 Summer Bridge survey questions	Selected response	Pre-program	Post-program	Difference
		N = 23	N = 19	
Q14	Extremely Able	52.17%	57.89%	5.72%
	Able	47.83%	36.84%	-10.99%
	Total	100.00%	94.73%	-5.27%
Q15	Extremely Able	52.17%	42.11%	-10.06%
	Able	47.83%	52.63%	4.80%
	Total	100.00%	94.74%	-5.26%
Q16	Extremely Able	47.83%	47.37%	-0.46%
	Able	52.17%	47.37%	-4.80%
	Total	100.00%	94.74%	-5.26%
Q17	Extremely Able	43.48%	36.84%	-6.64%
	Able	52.17%	52.63%	0.46%
	Total	95.65%	89.47%	-6.18%
Q19	Extremely Able	73.91%	76.47%	2.56%
	Able	26.09%	17.65%	-8.44%
	Total	100.00%	94.12%	-5.88%
Q20	Extremely Able	73.91%	76.47%	2.56%
	Able	26.09%	23.53%	-2.56%
	Total	100.00%	100.00%	0.00%
Q21	Extremely Able	78.26%	70.59%	-7.67%
	Able	21.74%	29.41%	7.67%
	Total	100.00%	100.00%	0.00%

Note. Letter and number correspond to the survey questions in Appendix A.

Q14 = Please indicate your level of ability to perform the following: Keep going in college and complete my degree, even if I run into academic challenges

Q15 = Please indicate your level of ability to perform the following: Keep going in college and complete my degree, even if I run into personal challenges

Q16 = Please indicate your level of ability to perform the following: Keep going in college and complete my degree, even if I run into social challenges

Q17 = Please indicate your level of ability to perform the following: Keep going in college and complete my degree, even if I run into familial challenges

19 = Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: I believe that someone from my ethnic/racial background can successfully complete a college degree

Q20 = Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: I believe that someone from my social class background can successfully complete a college degree

Q21 = Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: I believe that someone from my gender can successfully complete a college degree

Comparison of Post-Program Survey Results among Summer Bridge Cohorts

Responses to eight questions related to self-efficacy from the summer bridge post-program survey indicated that a smaller percentage of GBP 2022 students selected they were “Able” or “Extremely Able” to “Keep going in college and complete my degree” despite academic, personal, social, and familial challenges compared to GBP students from 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, and 2021. Specifically, GBP 2022 students were between 3.92% and 4.46% less likely to select “Able” or “Extremely Able” for survey questions related to self-efficacy. The 2022 results for “Keep going in college and complete my degree, even if I run into familial challenges” was the only response with an indication of statistical significance (Figure 1). Although the results show 2022 GBP students were less likely to select “Able” or “Extremely Able,” the difference between the years may not be statistically significant.

Table 2 shows a comparison of post-program survey results for Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2021, and 2022. Although a smaller percentage of GBP 2022 students selected they were “Able” or “Extremely Able” to “Keep going in college and complete my degree” despite academic, personal, social, and familial challenges compared to GBP students from 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, and 2021, only one of the eight questions compared had a statistically significant result. The lack of statistical significance for the other seven questions indicates there was no effect of the family career research and final project on self-reported self-efficacy.

Table 2*Comparison of Post-Program Survey Results among Summer Bridge Cohorts*

Survey questions		Post-program					
		2022 N = 19	2021 N = 15	2019 N = 30	2016 N = 48	2015 N = 55	2014 N = 64
Q14	Extremely Able	57.89%	53.33%	73.33%	58.33%	61.82%	59.38%
	Able	36.84%	46.67%	26.67%	41.67%	38.18%	37.50%
	Total	94.73%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	96.88%
Q15	Extremely Able	42.11%	46.67%	66.67%	58.33%	56.36%	46.88%
	Able	52.63%	53.33%	33.33%	41.67%	41.82%	48.44%
	Total	94.74%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	98.18%	95.32%
Q16	Extremely Able	47.37%	46.67%	66.67%	58.33%	65.45%	53.13%
	Able	47.37%	53.33%	30.00%	41.67%	32.73%	45.31%
	Total	94.74%	100.00%	96.67%	100.00%	98.18%	98.44%
Q17	Extremely Able	36.84%	46.67%	63.33%	41.67%	52.73%	48.44%
	Able	52.63%	46.67%	36.67%	39.58%	45.45%	48.44%
	Total	89.47%*	93.34%	100.00%	81.25%	98.18%	96.88%
Q19	Extremely Able	76.47%	83.33%	78.57%	62.50%	72.55%	69.84%
	Able	17.65%	16.67%	21.43%	37.50%	25.49%	26.98%
	Total	94.12%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	98.04%	96.82%
Q20	Extremely Able	76.47%	83.33%	71.43%	60.42%	72.55%	68.25%
	Able	23.53%	8.33%	28.57%	39.58%	27.45%	28.57%
	Total	100.00%	91.66%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	96.82%
Q21	Extremely Able	70.59%	83.33%	82.14%	68.75%	70.59%	69.84%
	Able	29.41%	16.67%	17.86%	31.25%	29.41%	26.98%
	Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	96.82%

Note. *p < .05

The letter and number correspond to the survey questions in Appendix A.

Q14 = Please indicate your level of ability to perform the following: Keep going in college and complete my degree, even if I run into academic challenges

Q15 = Please indicate your level of ability to perform the following: Keep going in college and complete my degree, even if I run into personal challenges

Q16 = Please indicate your level of ability to perform the following: Keep going in college and complete my degree, even if I run into social challenges

Q17 = Please indicate your level of ability to perform the following: Keep going in college and complete my degree, even if I run into familial challenges

19 = Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: I believe that someone from my ethnic/racial background can successfully complete a college degree

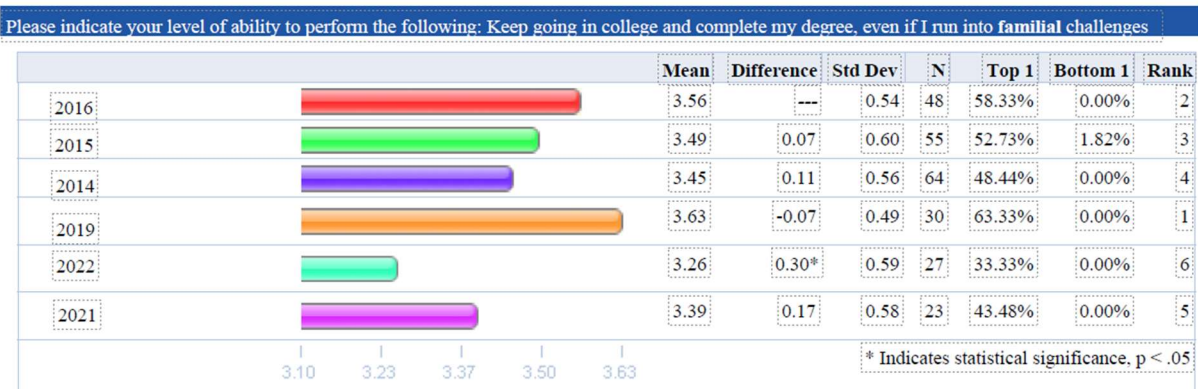
Q20 = Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: I believe that someone from my social class background can successfully complete a college degree

Q21 = Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: I believe that someone from my gender can successfully complete a college degree

Figure 1 shows the statistical analysis of the one question with statistically significant results. The statistical significance of the results indicates evidence against a null hypothesis for the question “Please indicate your level of ability to perform the following: Keep going in college and complete my degree, even if I run into familial challenges”.

Figure 1

Independent Measures t-Test for “Keep Going in College and Complete My Degree, Even if I Run into Familial Challenges”



Comparison of Major Declaration of Summer Bridge 2021 and Non-Summer Bridge 2021 Students

Major declaration data was not available for Summer Bridge 2022 students at the completion of this project. However, major declaration data for Summer Bridge 2021 students compared to non-summer bridge students showed that no Summer Bridge 2021 students declared majors by the Spring 2022 semester. Only 6% of first-time, first-year students who did not participate in Summer Bridge 2021 declared majors by Spring 2022.

Table 3 drawn from the MPU Research and Assessment *Major Declaration and Retention Report Summer Bridge 2021 vs. Non-Summer Bridge 2021* report shows the most recent available data regarding major declaration of summer bridge students. Although GBP 2021 students participated in career development activities, none of the students declared majors during their first year. This result indicates that exposure to career development activities does not mean students will declare majors.

Table 3

Comparison of Major Declaration of Summer Bridge 2021 and Non-Summer Bridge 2021 Students

Major	GBP N	GBP percent	MEP N	MEP Total percent	Non SBP N	Non SBP percent
Declared	0	0%	0	0%	18	6%
Not Declared	20	100%	12	100%	280	94%
Total	20	100%	12	100%	298	100%

Note. GBP = General Bridge Program; MEP = Math/English Program; SBP = Summer Bridge Program.

Comparison of Major Declaration for Summer Bridge 2021 and Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2020 Students

Major declaration data for Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, and 2020 indicate that only 6%–10% of GBP 2014, 2015, and 2016 students declared majors within their first 30 credit hours. The data also indicate that 9%–10% of MEP 2014, 2015, and 2016 students declared majors within their first 30 credit hours. There was an increase in major declaration for GBP 2019 and 2020 students with 21% of GBP 2019 and 78% of GBP 2020 students declaring

majors within their first 30 credit hours. Ninety-five percent of MEP 2020 students declared majors within their first 30 credit hours. However, none of the Summer Bridge 2021 students declared majors within their first two semesters.

Table 4 drawn from the MPU Research and Assessment *Major Declaration Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2020* report shows a trend of 6%–14% of Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, and 2016 students declaring majors within their first 30 credit hours at MPU. Although GBP students participate in career development activities as part of their program, MEP students declared majors at higher rates in 2014, 2015, and 2020. These results also indicate that exposure to career development activities does not mean students will declare majors.

Table 4

Comparison of Major Declaration of Summer Bridge 2021 and Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2020

Cohort	Major	GBP N	GBP percent	MEP N	MEP total percent
Cohort Total		79	100%	93	100%
Fall 2014	Declared	6	8%	10	11%
	Not Declared	73	92%	83	89%
Cohort Total		67	100%	66	100%
Fall 2015	Declared	4	6%	9	14%
	Not Declared	63	94%	57	86%
Cohort Total		73	100%	107	100%
Fall 2016	Declared	7	10%	10	9%
	Not Declared	66	90%	97	91%
Cohort Total		62	100%	0	0%
Fall 2019	Declared	13	21%	0	0%
	Not Declared	49	79%	0	0%
Cohort Total		40	100%	19	100%
Fall 2020	Declared	31	78%	18	95%
	Not Declared	9	23%	1	5%

Note. GBP = General Bridge Program; MEP = Math/English Program

Figure 2 shows a comparison of post-program survey results for GBP 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019 students and Summer Bridge 2021 and 2022 students. Although 91.3% to 95.66% of Summer Bridge 2021 students reported they were “Able” or “Extremely Able” to “Know what to major in” and “Understand possible career choices,” none of the Summer Bridge 2021 students declared majors in their first year. The results in Figure 2 also show 79.6% to 100% of GBP 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2019 students reported they were “Able” or “Extremely Able” to “Know what to major in” and “Understand possible career choices,” but none of the Summer Bridge 2021 students declared majors in their first year. These results indicate that confidence in one’s ability to choose a major or career does not mean students will declare majors.

Figure 2

Post-Program Survey Comparison of Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2021, and 2022 for “Know What I Want to Major in” and “Understand Possible Career Choices that Interest Me”

Please indicate your level of ability to perform the following: Know what I want to major in							
	GBP 2016 Post-Assessment	GBP 2015 Post-assessment	GBP 2014 Post-Assessment	GBP Post Program Assessment 2019	Summer Bridge 2022 Post-Program Assessment	Summer Bridge Post Program Assessment 2021	
Extremely able	47.92%	45.45%	32.81%	63.33%	59.26%	52.17%	
Able	41.67%	43.64%	46.88%	20.00%	25.93%	39.13%	
Unable	8.33%	10.91%	18.75%	13.33%	11.11%	4.35%	
Extremely unable	2.08%	0.00%	1.56%	3.33%	3.70%	4.35%	
Total Respondents:	48	55	64	30	27	23	

Please indicate your level of ability to perform the following: Understand possible career choices that interest me							
	GBP 2016 Post-Assessment	GBP 2015 Post-assessment	GBP 2014 Post-Assessment	GBP Post Program Assessment 2019	Summer Bridge 2022 Post-Program Assessment	Summer Bridge Post Program Assessment 2021	
Extremely able	54.17%	63.64%	48.44%	56.67%	48.15%	47.83%	
Able	45.83%	32.73%	43.75%	40.00%	40.74%	47.83%	
Unable	0.00%	1.82%	6.25%	3.33%	11.11%	0.00%	
Extremely unable	0.00%	1.82%	1.56%	0.00%	0.00%	4.35%	
Total Respondents:	48	55	64	30	27	23	

Comparison of Fall 2021 to Spring 2022 Retention Rates for Summer Bridge 2021 and Non-Summer Bridge 2021 Students

Retention data were not available for Summer Bridge 2022 students at the completion of this project. However, data for Summer Bridge 2021 students show 85% of GBP 2021 and 100% of MEP 2021 students were retained from Fall 2021 to Spring 2022 compared to 82% of first-time, first-year students who did not participate in Summer Bridge 2021.

Table 5 drawn from the MPU Research and Assessment *Fall 2021 to Spring 2022 Retention Rates of Summer Bridge 2021 and Non-Summer Bridge 2021* report shows the most recent available data regarding retention of summer bridge students. Summer bridge 2021 students were retained at a higher rate than students who did not participate in summer bridge. Although GBP 2021 students participated in career development activities, they were retained at a lower rate than MEP students who did not participate in career development activities. This result may indicate that exposure to career development activities may not impact retention as much as academic development. Retention data for Summer Bridge 2022 students with a comparison of GBP and MEP students will reveal if participation in family career research activities and the final project had an impact of higher retention for GBP students.

Table 5

Comparison of Fall 2021 to Spring 2021 Retention Rates for Summer Bridge 2021 and Non-Summer Bridge 2021 Students

Retention	GBP N	GBP percent	MEP N	MEP total percent	Non- SBP N	Non- SBP percent
First-to-second-semester Retention	17	85%	12	100%	244	82%
Cohort Total	20	100%	12	100%	298	100%

Note. GBP = General Bridge Program; MEP = Math/English Program; SBP = Summer Bridge Program.

Comparison of First-to-Second-Year Retention of Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, and 2020 Students

A review of Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, and 2020 students and first-time, first-year students who did not participate in summer bridge reveals that summer bridge students had higher first-to-second-year retention rates compared to students who did not participate in summer bridge. First-to-second-year retention data was not available for Summer Bridge 2021 and 2022 students at the completion of this project. This data will be collected and analyzed upon availability to determine if GBP 2022 students who participated in the family career research project and final project had higher first-to-second-year retention rates compared to MEP 2022 who did not participate in the family career research project and final project, as well as students who did not participate in Summer Bridge 2022.

Table 6 drawn from the MPU Research and Assessment *GBP Profile First to Second Year Retention GBP 2014, GBP 2015, GBP 2016, Summer Bridge 2019, Summer Bridge 2020* report shows that GBP 2014, 2015, 2016 and Summer Bridge 2019 and 2020 students were retained at a higher rate than students who did not participate in summer bridge. Although GBP students participated in career development activities, they were retained at a lower rate than MEP students who did not participate in career development activities. Similar to the results of Fall 2021 to Spring 2021 retention rates for Summer Bridge 2021 and Non-Summer Bridge 2021 students, this result may also indicate that exposure to career development activities may not impact retention as much as academic development. Retention data for Summer Bridge 2022 students with a comparison of GBP and MEP will reveal if participation in family career research activities and the final project has an impact on higher retention for GBP students.

Table 6

Comparison of First-to-Second-Year Retention of Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, and 2020 Students

Year	GBP		MEP		Non-SBP	
	Cohort total	First-second year retention rate	Cohort total	First-second year retention rate	Cohort total	First-second year retention rate
2014	80	82.30%			691	56.60%
2015	67	70.10%			679	52.10%
2016	68	60.30%			733	44.30%
2019	62	66.10%	10	80%	380	64.70%
2020	40	63%	20	85%	319	57%

Note. GBP did not take place in 2017 or 2018. Retention data for MEP was not collected prior to 2019. MEP English did not take place in 2019.

Qualitative Results

Summer Bridge 2022 Individual Interviews

Five summer bridge students signed up to participate in interviews. Only four of the students attended their scheduled time slots. All four students participated in the General Bridge Program (GBP). All four students were also female and Latina. Thematic analysis was used for the interview findings.

Two of the students indicated that the family career research project had a positive impact on their confidence with selection of a major. Three students indicated the family career research project had a positive impact on their self-efficacy.

One student indicated the final group project had a positive impact on their confidence with selecting a major. All four students indicated the final group project had a positive impact on their self-efficacy.

All four students indicated their overall summer bridge experience had a positive impact on their selection of a major and self-efficacy. All four students also indicated they were comfortable with declaring a major. One student indicated they had a scheduled a meeting with their academic advisor to discuss declaring a major.

The interview results indicate that the final group project and overall GBP experience had positive impact on each students' sense of self-efficacy. The family career research project had a positive impact on self-efficacy for three of the four students. Each project had a positive impact on confidence with selecting a major on two or fewer of the students. Although the students who were interviewed indicated an impact based on the family career research and final group project, the interview participants do not reflect the demographic diversity of the students in the 2022 summer bridge programs.

Table 7 shows the interview results indicate that the final group project and overall GBP experience had positive impact on each students' sense of self-efficacy. The family career research project had a positive impact on self-efficacy for three of the four students. Each project had a positive impact on confidence with selecting a major on two or fewer of the students. Although the students who were interviewed indicated an impact based on the family career research and final group project, the interview participants do not reflect the demographic diversity of the students in the 2022 summer bridge programs.

Table 7

Summer Bridge 2022 Individual Interview Summary

Topic	Impact area	Student A	Student B	Student C	Student D
Family Career Research Project	MJR	X		X	
	SELFEFF	X	X	X	
Final Group Project	MJR	X			
	SELFEFF	X	X	X	X
Overall GBP Experience	MJR	X	X	X	X
	SELFEFF	X	X	X	X
Comfortable with Declaring a Major	MJR	X	X	X	X

Note. MJR = Major Declaration; SELFEFF = Self-Efficacy

Summer Bridge 2022 Family Career History Workshop Activity

GBP participants were asked to interview a family member about their career. Nineteen students submitted their projects. Thematic analysis (Mertler, 2020) was used for the interview findings.

Most of the students who completed the project did not indicate the project had a positive impact on their confidence in selecting a major. However, one student stated that she “inherited” her love of performing from her mother. This student also stated she has a career goal of being a stage actor and plans to major in communication, media, and theatre.

Some students indicated this project helped them learn more about their family members and had an impact on their sense of self-efficacy. Sixteen of the students indicated their family members had their first job before they were 18 years old. Sixteen students also noted that their family members still had career aspirations and goals that were different from their current careers. One student mentioned that, before the interview, she did not know what her mother did for work. She learned about her mother’s job and how much work was involved. This same student also said the project made her want to be more like her mom regarding work ethic. Another student stated that she had previously thought of her sibling as someone who worked

and helped provide for the family. She has now realized that her sibling has career goals and aspirations.

The results from the family career project did not indicate the project had an impact on most students' confidence in selecting a major. However, the results indicate that the project inspired a greater sense of self-efficacy for many of the students.

Summer Bridge 2022 Final Group Project

All GBP students were asked to complete a legacy time capsule as a group project. Each student was asked to include a mini biography in the time capsule. Twenty-six of the thirty-two students who participated in the project listed a desired major and career in their mini biography. Nine of the thirty-two students indicated that a family member was the inspiration for them wanting to complete college and obtain a degree.

Summary of Data Findings

The research question for this project is “What is the impact of family research on major declaration, self-efficacy, and retention of college students?” The GBP 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2021, and 2022 post-program survey data regarding self-efficacy indicated the students believed they were “Able” or “Extremely Able” to “Keep going in college and complete my degree” despite academic, personal, social, and familial challenges (Table 2). This belief was consistent with MPU retention data that showed GBP 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, and 2020 students were retained, on average, at 68.36% compared to 60.94% for non-summer bridge participants (Table 6). It is also consistent with 85% of GBP 2021 students having been retained from Fall 2021 to Spring 2022 compared to 82% of first-time, first-year students who did not participate in Summer Bridge 2021 (Table 5). Although the GBP 2022 post-program survey indicated that students who participated in the family career research project were less likely to select “Able”

or “Extremely Able” on survey questions related to self-efficacy compared to GBP 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, and 2020 students, only one result had a statistical significance of $p < .05$, and the difference among the years may not be statistically significant. The qualitative data obtained from the family career research project, final group project, and interviews indicated students were committed to completing college and obtaining a degree. First-to-second-year retention data obtained in Fall 2023 for Summer Bridge 2022 students will reveal if the GBP students, who participated in the family research and final group project, have higher retention rates than non-GBP participants.

Data for major declaration and retention of Summer Bridge 2022 students was not available at the completion of this project. However, qualitative data obtained from the family career research project, final group project, and interviews indicated students were comfortable with declaring a major.

The results of the interviews and observational data from this study showed that completion of the family career research project and final project had a positive impact on the students’ commitment to choosing a major. Summer bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022 survey data regarding major and careers supports the students’ belief that they are “Extremely Able” or “Able” to choose a major and understand possible career choices (Table 4). However, this belief is not consistent with MPU data that shows 6–10% of Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, and 2016 students declared majors within their first 30 credit hours (Table 3). Major declaration data obtained in Fall 2023 for Summer Bridge 2022 students will reveal if the GBP students, who participated in the family research and final group project, have higher major declaration rates than non-GBP participants.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I presented quantitative and qualitative data results to determine the impact of family research on major declaration, self-efficacy, and retention of college students on MPU's Summer Bridge 2022 students. Quantitative data from summer bridge surveys, and retention and major declaration data of summer bridge and non-summer bridge participants, were evaluated along with qualitative results from interviews and observational data obtained from the summer bridge family career research project and final project. In Chapter 5, I will discuss the summary of the results, implications for practice, suggestions for future research, and limitations of the study.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The retention rates of first-time, first-year students enrolled at Midwest Public University continue to be lower than the national rate for four-year public universities. Although first-year students with declared majors are retained at higher rates, MPU does not actively encourage students to declare majors during the first year. I conducted this study to identify information on effective methods to help students develop their own goals and standards of success. I also conducted this study to provide data on the effectiveness of encouraging self-discovery via family/genealogical research, and the impact of such research on self-efficacy and major declaration, as well as motivation, retention, and persistence. This chapter will provide a summary of the results and discuss implications for practice, suggestions for future research, and limitations of the study.

Research Questions

The research question for this project is “What is the impact of family research on major declaration, self-efficacy, and retention of college students?”

This study included the examination of the following questions comparing General Bridge Program (GBP) 2022 students who completed the family research project and Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2020, and 2021 students, who did not have a family research project. Data for 2017 and 2018 are not included because GBP did not exist in 2017 and 2018. Comparisons involving summer bridge pre-program and post-program surveys will not include 2020 because the summer bridge surveys were not distributed in 2020. To thoroughly examine the impact of family research on major declaration, self-efficacy, and retention, this study attempted to answer the following sub-questions:

- What is the impact of the family research project on self-reported self-efficacy of 2022 General Bridge Program (GBP) students compared to Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, and 2021 students?
- What impact will completion of the family research project in Summer Bridge 2022 have on the number of GBP 2022 students who report a commitment to declare majors by their second year at MPU compared to Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, and 2021 students?

The original plan of this study included the examination of the following questions comparing General Bridge Program (GBP) 2022 students who completed the family research project and Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2020, and 2021 students, who did not have a family research project. Data for retention and major declaration rates of Summer Bridge 2022 students will not be available until 2023. The following questions will be evaluated upon receipt of this data in 2023:

- What is the impact of completing the family research project on the number of General Bridge Program (GBP) 2022 students who declare majors by their second year at MPU compared to the number of Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2020, and 2021 students who declared majors by their second year at MPU but did not complete the family research project?
- What is the impact of the family research project on retention rates of GBP 2022 students compared to Summer Bridge 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2020, and 2021 students?
- What will be the relationship between major declaration rates and retention rates of GBP 2022 students who complete the family research project?

Purpose

The purpose of the study is to provide additional data on methods used to impact retention rates of college students, and to determine the impact of family research on major declaration, self-efficacy, and retention of college students. The use of family research was inspired by Tirrany Thurmond, Anne Arundel Community College, and her work involving her students' ancestry research and its impact on their identity, potential, and self-worth. Thurmond has stated that her students learned that resiliency exists within them due to their ancestors, (Thurmond, 2018).

Summary of Results

The research question for this project is “What is the impact of family research on major declaration, self-efficacy, and retention of college students?” This study found some contradictory results regarding the impact of the family career research and final project on major declaration, self-efficacy, and retention of GBP 2022 students.

Quantitative data from summer bridge post-program survey results regarding self-efficacy indicated that past and current GBP students believed they were “Able” or “Extremely Able” to “Keep going in college and complete my degree” despite academic, personal, social, and familial challenges. Retention data for past GBP students supported this belief, with GBP students having higher first-to-second-year retention rates compared to non-GBP students. GBP 2022 students who completed family career research and final project were less likely to select “Able” or “Extremely Able” on questions regarding self-efficacy compared to GBP 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, and 2020 students. However, qualitative data obtained from the family career project, final project, and interviews indicated the projects had a positive impact on GBP 2022 students' commitment to obtaining a college degree. First-to-second-year retention data obtained

in Fall 2023 for Summer Bridge 2022 students will reveal if the GBP students who participated in the family research and final group project also have higher retention rates than non-GBP participants.

Quantitative data from summer bridge post-program survey results regarding self-efficacy indicated past and current GBP students believe they were “Able” or “Extremely Able” to choose a major and understand possible career choices. Qualitative data obtained from the family career project, final project, and interviews support the survey data. However, MPU data reveals less than 10% of 2014, 2015, and 2016 students declared majors within their first 30 credit hours. Major declaration data obtained in Fall 2023 for Summer Bridge 2022 students will reveal if the GBP 2022 students, who participated in the family research and final group project have high major declaration rates compared to past GBP students.

Self-reported survey results and observational data indicated the family career project and final project had a positive impact on GBP 2022 students’ commitment to completing a degree and their comfort with declaring a major. However, survey data for GBP 2022 students compared to past GBP students indicated a negative impact on questions regarding self-efficacy for GBP 2022 student. MPU data for GBP 2022 students regarding first-to-second-year retention rates and major declaration rates is needed to establish the positive or negative impact of the family career project and final project.

The multiple quantitative and qualitative data sources in this mixed methods study offer contradictory results. The quantitative data from the post-program survey questions regarding self-efficacy and qualitative data from student interviews, the family research project, and final project indicated a positive impact of family research on the students’ commitment to obtaining a college degree and on major declaration. Quantitative data on retention of past summer bridge

students showed these students were retained at higher rates than students who did not participate in summer bridge. However, past data trends also showed that all first-year students, including students who participated in summer bridge programs, were unlikely to declare majors. The students' belief that they were comfortable choosing a major did not translate to the action of declaring a major. Major declaration data for Summer Bridge 2022 students will reveal if students who participated in the family research activities declare majors at higher rates than past summer bridge students.

Implications for Practice

MPU data have shown that students with declared majors had higher retention rates than students without declared majors. There is a continued need to increase the number of students with declared majors to increase retention rates of first-year students. The following practices should be considered by administrators who desire to increase retention rates.

Past summer bridge participants indicated they were "Extremely Able" or "Able" to choose a major. However, they did not choose majors in their first year. MPU should implement consistent university-wide activities to encourage first-year students to declare majors within their first year or first 30 credit hours.

The family research project was implemented as part of a six-week summer bridge program. However, MPU has multiple cohort programs that run for one to two academic years. Conducting family research projects connected to career development in the cohort programs will provide more time for students to conduct more detailed family research. MPU's success programs currently include a biography project for their students. The biography project can be expanded to include family research. Extending family research projects to different groups of

students will provide additional data on the impact of family research on major declaration and retention for a larger population of students.

Bourdieu's concepts of cultural capital and habitus (Routledge, 2016) can be applied to assessing why students decide to attend college and attain advanced degrees. Specifically, college applications can include a prompt asking students to describe how their family has shaped their attitudes towards education, and how their formative experiences with family have impacted their pursuit of a degree.

Recommendations for Future Research

A longitudinal study is needed to obtain additional data and compare the impact of the family career and final group project on major declaration and retention for multiple years of summer bridge programs. Additional data from a longitudinal study could provide input on whether results are consistent over multiple years.

Results of this project indicate that the family career project and final group project have more impact on self-efficacy than on declaration of a major. Although there was an increase in major declaration for Fall 2019 and Fall 2020 first-time, first-year students, major declaration for Summer Bridge 2021 students was 0% (Table 3). A separate project should be conducted for assisting students in declaring a major within their first two semesters at MPU. A longitudinal study should review the retention rates of students who participate in the major declaration project, as well as the retention rates of students who declare majors within their first two semesters. The results of this data would provide additional data on retention rates for students who declare majors, as well as providing data to support efforts to encourage more students to declare majors early in their academic careers.

Additional research should also be conducted to determine the cause of the increase in major declaration for first year students in 2019 and 2020. MPU hosted one-time drop in events to encourage students to explore majors in February 2019. A positive relationship between the one-time events and the increase in major declaration in 2019 and 2020 would provide support for reinstating these events to increase major declaration rates among first-year students.

Limitations of Study

The initial plan for this study was to conduct the family career research project with Summer Bridge 2021 students. Unfortunately, the project was not implemented by the career development facilitator and this study was revised to conduct the project with Summer Bridge 2022 students. First-to-second-year retention data and major declaration data for the Summer Bridge 2022 students will not be available until 2023. Full assessment of the impact of the family career and final group project on major declaration and retention for the Summer Bridge 2022 students will be reviewed upon receipt of data in 2023.

The pre-program and post-program summer bridge surveys were not completed by all student participants. It is possible that different student participants completed each survey. For example, some students who completed the post-program survey may not have completed the pre-program survey. The possibility of different survey participants could impact the comparison of results from both surveys.

Although all Summer Bridge 2022 students were invited to participate in focus groups and interviews, only four students attended interviews. All four students were Latinx women and not representative of the entire Summer Bridge 2022 population. The results of the interviews may not be applicable to the entire Summer Bridge 2022 population.

Conclusion

This study was conducted to determine the impact of family research on major declaration, self-efficacy, and retention of college students. While the results of this study indicated that family research activities may have a positive impact on students' comfort with choosing a major, and their commitment to continuing college and obtaining a degree, additional research and data are needed to support the positive impact of family research on major declaration, self-efficacy, and retention. This study also showed that MPU's first-time, first-year students' level of comfort and commitment in choosing a major has not resulted in those students declaring majors. Although first-year students with declared majors were retained at higher rates, MPU does not actively encourage students to declare majors during their first year, and retention rates of MPU's first-time, first-year students have continued to be lower than the national rate for four-year public universities. Midwest Public University should implement strategies to assist students with completing the major declaration process while continuing to use family research projects in a variety of high-impact practices. These innovative practices will help students develop confidence in, and commitment to, declaring majors and completing college. They will also help students persist until they obtain a degree and possibly improve retention rates for MPU's first-time, first-year students.

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APPENDIX A**SUMMER BRIDGE 2022 PRE-PROGRAM AND POST-PROGRAM SURVEY
QUESTIONS**

Data from the following Summer Bridge 2022 pre-program and post-program survey questions were analyzed and compared to data for the same questions from the GBP 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, and 2021 GBP pre-program and post-program surveys.

Pre-Program Assessment 2022

Q9. Please indicate your level of ability to perform the following: Know what I want to major in.

Q13. Please indicate your level of ability to perform the following: Understand possible career choices that interest me.

Q14. Please indicate your level of ability to perform the following: Keep going in college and complete my degree, even if I run into academic challenges.

Q15. Please indicate your level of ability to perform the following: Keep going in college and complete my degree, even if I run into personal challenges.

Q16. Please indicate your level of ability to perform the following: Keep going in college and complete my degree, even if I run into social challenges.

Q17. Please indicate your level of ability to perform the following: Keep going in college and complete my degree, even if I run into familial challenges.

Q19. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: I believe that someone from my ethnic/racial background can successfully complete a college degree.

Q20. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: I believe that someone from my social class background can successfully complete a college degree.

Q21. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: I believe that someone from my gender can successfully complete a college degree.

Post-Program Assessment 2022

Q9. Please indicate your level of ability to perform the following: Know what I want to major in.

Q13. Please indicate your level of ability to perform the following: Understand possible career choices that interest me.

Q14. Please indicate your level of ability to perform the following: Keep going in college and complete my degree, even if I run into academic challenges.

Q15. Please indicate your level of ability to perform the following: Keep going in college and complete my degree, even if I run into personal challenges.

Q16. Please indicate your level of ability to perform the following: Keep going in college and complete my degree, even if I run into social challenges.

Q17. Please indicate your level of ability to perform the following: Keep going in college and complete my degree, even if I run into familial challenges.

Q19. Please indicate how strongly you agree with the following statements: I believe that someone from my ethnic/racial background can successfully complete a college degree.

Q20. Please indicate how strongly you agree with the following statements: I believe that someone from my social class background can successfully complete a college degree.

Q21. Please indicate how strongly you agree with the following statements: I believe that someone from my gender can successfully complete a college degree.

APPENDIX B

SUMMER BRIDGE 2022 FOCUS GROUP/INTERVIEW SCRIPT

Hello.

Thank you for meeting with me today.

As a Summer Bridge 2022 (Math/English Bridge Program, Computer Bridge Program, GBP, and Health Careers Bridge Program) student, you completed the summer bridge pre-program and post-program surveys and participated in self-reflection and genealogical research activities. Data from the surveys, de-identified data from Summer Bridge 2022, and this focus group/interview will be used as part of an action research project I am conducting as a student in Bradley University's Higher Education Administration Doctorate in Education. Personally identifiable information will be removed from this data before being distributed in reports, used for future research, or included in articles submitted for publication in professional and academic journals.

Today's focus group/interview should last approximately one hour. Let me know if you need to leave early to attend class, etc., and feel free to leave when needed. Your participation in this focus group/interview is voluntary, and you may end your participation at any time. Not participating or leaving early will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled.

Do you have any questions about anything so far?

A copy of your informed consent form was e-mailed to you after the summer bridge welcome event. Another copy was e-mailed to you when you confirmed your participation in today's focus group/interview. Have you recently reviewed the informed consent form?

<if the students respond with yes>

Great. Do you have any questions about any of the information in the form?

<answer questions, if any>

<if the students have not recently reviewed the form>

Let's take a few minutes so you can review the form again.

<after reviewing the form>

Do you have any questions about the information in the form?

<answer questions, if any>

Let's begin with some general questions about summer bridge.

1. Please tell me about your summer bridge experience and your transition to MPU this fall.
2. Did you feel prepared for classes?
3. What did you learn during the program that helped you transition during the first several weeks at MPU?
4. What were the most positive/helpful and least positive/helpful academic-related components of the program?
5. What were the most positive/helpful and least positive/helpful non-academic related components of the program?
6. Tell me about the self-reflection/genealogical research assignments in your academic course or workshop. (Please describe the assignment).
7. Tell me about the summer bridge final presentation that you completed with your cohort.
8. What did you learn from the assignment/activity and final presentation?
9. How did you feel as you conducted your research/completed your assignment? How did you feel as you presented your final project with your cohort?
10. Did you learn any new information from your research?
11. Are you able to connect any of the information you learned from the project to your personal experience? If so, how?

<questions based on summer bridge post-program survey>

The summer bridge post-program survey results show:

- X% of summer bridge students are able or extremely able to identify a major
- X% of summer bridge students are able or extremely able to understand options for career choices
- X% of summer bridge students are able or extremely able to continue with college even if they run into academic, familial, financial, or social problems

12. Do you think the self-reflection/genealogical research and final presentation helped you with:

- Identifying a major?
- Understanding career options?
- Believing you can continue with college despite setbacks?

Please explain why or why not.

13. Have you declared a major or feel comfortable declaring a major? Why or why not?

14. If you have not declared a major, do you know when you plan to declare your major?
15. How was your success coach/peer leader most helpful to you and your preparation/transition to college? How were they least helpful?
16. How were your instructors and/or workshop facilitators most helpful to you and your preparation/transition to college? How were they least helpful?
17. Knowing what you know now, would you participate in summer bridge and the self-reflection/genealogical research activities again?
18. Would additional summer bridge program activities help you during the fall and spring semesters? If so, what type – academic workshops, financial aid, career development, additional self-reflection/genealogical research activities, social get-togethers, etc.?
19. What are some things you would change to improve Summer Bridge 2023?
20. What was the best part of Summer Bridge 2022?

Thank you for your time and for assisting me with my action research project.

If you have any questions regarding your participation, please feel free to contact the researcher, Felicia Keelen, at fkeelen@mail.bradley.edu, and she will gladly inform you. You may also contact the research advisor, Dr. Eric Dalmasso at edalmasso2@fsmail.bradley.edu. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a participant you can contact the Institutional Review Board at (###) ###-#### or at IRB@MPU.edu. You may also contact the office of the Bradley University Committee on the Use of Human Subjects at (###) ###-####.

APPENDIX C

FOCUS GROUP AND INTERVIEW RECRUITMENT E-MAIL

Hello, Summer Bridge 2022 Students!

You are invited to participate in a focus group or interview to share your experience with this year's summer bridge program and your participation in self-reflection and genealogical research activities as part of Summer Bridge 2022.

Data from the focus groups and interviews will be used as part of an action research project conducted by Felicia Keelen, Director of Student Transition Services, and Bradley University's Higher Education Administration doctoral student. This action research project will provide additional data on methods used to impact retention; specifically, the impact of genealogical research on student perceptions on the ability to complete college, goal-setting (major and career declaration), and retention. Participation in the focus groups and interviews is not a requirement for participating in summer bridge.

Focus groups and interviews are scheduled for the following dates and times:
<list dates, times, and locations of each focus group and interview>

If you are available and interested in participating, please complete the RSVP form at
<insert link to rsvp form>.

Let me know if you have any questions.

Felicia Keelen
Bradley University
Doctor of Education: Higher Education Administration Student

APPENDIX D

FOCUS GROUP AND INTERVIEW CONFIRMATION E-MAIL

Hello.

Thank you for signing up to participate in a focus group or interview to share your experience with this year's summer bridge program and your participation in self-reflection and genealogical research activities as part of Summer Bridge 2022.

Your focus group/interview is scheduled for <insert date, time, location>.

<The following will be included if the focus groups and interviews are conducted via Zoom> The focus group/interview will be conducted via Zoom. Please make sure to display your first and last name when you join the meeting. This will enable me to recognize you and admit you to the Zoom meeting.

A copy of your informed consent form was e-mailed to you on <date>. Another copy is attached for your review. Feel free to contact me at fkeelen@mail.bradley.edu if you have questions about your informed consent form, the focus group/e-mail, or my research study.

Felicia Keelen
Bradley University
Doctor of Education: Higher Education Administration Student

APPENDIX E

FOCUS GROUP AND INTERVIEW REMINDER E-MAIL

Hello Everyone.

This is a reminder that your focus group/interview is scheduled for <insert date, time, location>.

<The following will be included if the focus groups and interviews are conducted via Zoom> The focus group/interview will be conducted via Zoom. Please make sure to display your first and last name when you join the meeting. This will enable me to recognize you and admit you to the Zoom meeting.

If you are no longer available to participate in your scheduled focus group/interview but would like to share your feedback and ideas, feel free to contact me at fkeelen@mail.bradley.edu to reschedule.

Felicia Keelen
Bradley University
Doctor of Education: Higher Education Administration Student

APPENDIX F**INFORMED CONSENT FORM****Midwest Public University**

DEPARTMENT: Student Success and Retention

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Felicia Keelen, Ed. D. student, Bradley University

FACULTY SPONSOR: Dr. Eric Dalmasso, Bradley University

TITLE OF STUDY: The Impact of Family Research on Major Declaration, Self-Efficacy, and Retention of College Students

Key Information about this research study:

The following is a short summary of this study to help you decide whether to be a part of this study. More detailed information is listed later on in this form.

- This study will provide additional data on methods used to impact retention. Specifically, the impact of genealogical research on student perceptions on the ability to complete college, goal-setting (major and career declaration), and retention.
- You are being invited to participate because you are scheduled to participate in one of this year's summer bridge programs. You will be asked to participate in one or more of the following activities:
 - Focus group with 5-8 other students (approximately one hour in length)
 - Individual interview (approximately one hour in length)
 - Participation in this study will have no direct risks or benefits.

Additional Information about this research study:

PROCEDURES INVOLVED IN THIS STUDY:

Data for this study will be collected from June 2022–Fall 2023 via summer bridge pre-program and post-program surveys, archived data from student participation in summer bridge programs, focus groups, and interviews. The data collected will include the number of Summer Bridge 2021 students who declare majors/careers, the number of students retained from Fall 2022 to Spring 2023 and Fall 2023, and student reported levels of self-efficacy. The data will be de-identified and used for future research. The de-identified and aggregate data will also be included in articles submitted for publication in professional and academic journals.

POSSIBLE BENEFITS:

Participation in the study is not expected to be of direct benefit to you, but the information you provide will help the researchers understand the impact of genealogical research on student perceptions on completing college, goal-setting (major and career declaration), and retention.

POSSIBLE RISKS:

Participation in the study is not expected to cause direct risks for you; however, discussion of personal genealogical research, cultural identity, and goal setting may cause emotional distress for some participants. Students who show signs of emotional distress will be directed to Student Counseling Services at counsect@MPU.edu

YOUR PARTICIPATION AS A RESEARCH SUBJECT: Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. Refusal to participate or a decision to discontinue participation will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. Students may participate in summer bridge without participating in focus groups and interviews. Students who participate in the focus groups and/or interviews have the option of participating in the focus groups and interviews but to not have personal anecdotal data included in reporting.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Efforts will be made to limit the use and disclosure of your personal information, including research study records. Data will be collected via summer bridge pre-program and post-program surveys, focus groups, interviews, and archived data of student participation in summer bridge programs. Data will be reported in aggregate and/or have personally identifiable information removed before being distributed in reports. If students choose to have personal stories included in reported data, personally identifiable information such as names will be removed from the data distributed in reports. Although personally identifying information will not be shared without your permission, your identity is known through your participation in summer bridge. Therefore this study is not anonymous.

CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS: If you have any questions regarding your participation, please feel free to contact the researcher, Felicia Keelen at fkeelen@mail.bradley.edu and she will gladly inform you. You may also contact the research advisor, Dr. Eric Dalmasso at @bradley.edu. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a participant you can contact the Institutional Review Board at (###) ###-#### or at IRB@mpu.edu. You may also contact the Bradley University Committee on the Use of Human Subjects office at (###) ###-####.

Optional Elements:

The following research activities are optional, meaning that you do not have to agree to them to participate in the research study. Please indicate your willingness to participate in these optional activities by placing your initials next to each activity.

I agree I disagree

_____ _____ The researcher may use voice dictation to aid with notetaking. The researcher will not share the voice dictation notes with anyone outside of the immediate study team.

_____ _____ The researcher may use my personal anecdotal data in reporting. An example of personal anecdotal data is a student explaining how learning one of their relatives owned a business has inspired them to major in business.

_____ _____ The researcher may contact me in the future to see whether I am interested in participating in other research studies by the principal investigator of this study.

PARTICIPANT’S CONSENT: If you would like to participate, please read the statement below and sign the consent form. If you are under the age of 18, please have your parent or legal guardian review and sign this document.

I have read the above information about the study and have been able to express questions and concerns, which have been satisfactorily responded to by the research investigator. I believe I understand the study.

Signature (Participant)

Date

PRINT NAME (Participant)

Date

Signature (Legally Authorized Representative)
Required for students under the age of 18

Date

PRINT NAME (Legally Authorized Representative)
Required for students under the age of 18

Date

Signature (Investigator or Person Obtaining Consent)

Date

PRINT NAME (Investigator or Person Obtaining Consent)

Date

THIS RESEARCH PROJECT/STUDY HAS BEEN REVIEWED BY MPU’S REVIEW BOARD FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN PARTICIPANTS AND BRADLEY UNIVERSITY’S COMMITTEE ON THE USE OF HUMAN SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH (CUHSR).

APPENDIX G**STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING REGARDING ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT**

Carefully read the following agreement.

As a participant in Summer Bridge 2022 (Math/English Bridge Program, Computer Bridge Program, GBP, and Health Careers Bridge Program) you were asked to complete surveys and participate in self-reflection and genealogical research activities as part of Summer Bridge 2022. Data from the surveys and de-identified data from Summer Bridge 2021 will be used as part of an action research project conducted by Felicia Keelen, a student in Bradley University's Higher Education Administration doctoral program. As a student who participated in Summer Bridge 2022, you are invited to participate in focus groups and/or interviews to obtain information and opinions about this year's program. Participation in the focus groups and interviews is not a requirement due to your participation in summer bridge.

Please choose one of the following:

- I have read the above information and I understand that data from the Summer Bridge 2022 activities and surveys will be used as a part of an action research project. I also understand that participation in focus groups and interviews is not a requirement due to my participation in summer bridge.

- I have questions regarding the above information. List your question in the comments and questions box below.