# ABSTRACT

Kweneshia Price, INCREASING INTRINSIC MOTIVATION FOR BLACK RURAL, FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS THROUGH A SUMMER BRIDGE PROGRAM AT A HISTORICALLY BLACK UNIVERSITY (Under the direction of Dr. Crystal Chambers). Department of Educational Leadership, December 2021.

Rural students have been attending institutions of higher education in growing numbers over the last 10 years. Yet, little research has been conducted to examine the initial motivational factors amongst rural, first-generation Black students enrolled at a four-year institution. Even less research explores motivational differences among Black rural, first-generation students enrolled at a historically Black university. Self-determination theory is vastly used in research to describe motivation among individuals and the factors that increase and decrease motivation in students. Three orientations, including intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and a-motivation, are used to describe a specific student's motivation framework. This theory posits that if students integrate successfully, the impacts of the students' commitment to the institution, goals, and intrinsic motivation heighten. This, in turn, allows students to continue their educational journey. The purpose of this study was to examine how summer bridge programs assist Black rural, first-generation college students in developing intrinsic motivation and in facing the unique challenges encountered in their collegiate experience.

Five summer bridge students at a historically Black university participated in this study, which was impacted by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Data analysis indicated that summer immersed students exhibited higher levels of internal motivation than external motivation. Students who were not immersed in the Summer Bridge Program demonstrated higher levels of external motivation than internal motivation. Interviews invited participants to share personal narratives about their lived experiences and led to the discovery of four motivational themes, which included (a) family influence; (b) support; (c) sports; and (d) transition.

INCREASING INTRINSIC MOTIVATION FOR BLACK RURAL, FIRST-GENERATION

COLLEGE STUDENTS THROUGH A SUMMER BRIDGE PROGRAM AT A

HISTORICALLY BLACK UNIVERSITY

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Kweneshia Price

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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my angels protecting me every day, my great-grandparents, Isreal Johnson Sr. and Florance Johnson, and my grandfather, Clarence Goffner Sr. I strive to make you proud as I continue to build the legacy you all provided for me.

To TEAM PRICE, I dedicate this to you and G3. Thank you for supporting me throughout this entire journey. Words will never be enough to describe the gratitude felt through these past three years. Babyboy, all I do is for you! I hope one day you will remember, anything is possible if you keep God first and trust the process!

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Myriad studies have been conducted on the success of at-risk students during their collegiate experience. According to Schultz (2004), many retention theorists and practitioners consider first-generation and rural college students to be an at-risk population. Kallison and his colleagues (2012) suggested that researchers have asserted that a high percentage of high school graduates are not prepared to succeed in college-level courses. This ultimately prompted some students to drop out, thus decreasing retention and impacting student persistence to degree completion. Within this body of literature, rural students are generally marginalized, especially rural students of color (Means, 2019).

The purpose of this study was to examine how summer bridge programs assist Black rural, first-generation college students in developing intrinsic motivation and in facing the unique challenges encountered in their collegiate experience. Given the complexity of challenges, it appears to be the case in this population needing additional holistic support throughout the student's time at the institution from entry to graduation. Additionally, by focusing on intrinsic motivation and first-generation students of color from rural communities, I believe there is a difference in the motivation of students who do or do not participate in summer bridge programs.

This qualitative case study involves the lived experiences of rural first-generation students' motivational factors that increase their motivation from their first to their second year. The study focuses on one institution located in the Triangle area in North Carolina and is classified as a historically Black college or university (HBCU). There is a distinct gap that first-generation students from rural areas face when entering college for the first time. Schultz (2004) argues the gaps include a lack of experiences with large towns, large campuses, and diversity found in the college experience. For confidentiality, I refer to the examined institution as

Hillman University (or "HU"). Based on the data provided by the University of North Carolina systems office, also known as General Administration, students from rural communities who attend Hillman University are not as prepared academically compared to students from urban communities, thus academically declining sooner than their peers. Thus, it seems to be the case that summer bridge programs for students from rural backgrounds that promote college readiness could improve rural college students' sense of belonging and, ultimately, their persistence.

In the *Carolina Journal*, Saffron (2015) stated that five schools within the University of North Carolina system participated in bridge programs. Unfortunately, in 2015, five institutions within the UNC system lost state funding to support the summer bridge efforts due to the decline of persistence and graduation rates. Summer bridge programs differ widely in their programmatic components and implementations; however, most summer bridge programs aim to develop study and time management skills and utilize university services while exposing college courses and faculty (Cabrera et al., 2013). Summer bridge programs represent one type of intervention that postsecondary institutions have implemented to support first-generation college and rural students as they transition from high school to college.

## Problem Statement

Special populations such as first-generation college students have been widely researched. Some students enrolling in postsecondary education who identify as first-generation average at 4.5 million students; however, they remain a disadvantaged population (Young, 2016). First-generation students arrive at college lacking academic preparedness, are more likely to attend high schools with less rigorous curricula, and are less likely to enroll in Advanced Placement (AP) courses than students who have college attendance in their backgrounds (Hébert, 2017). Furthermore, researchers have discovered that first-generation college students were twice

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as likely to leave a 4-year institution before their second year than students whose parents earned a bachelor's degree (Choy, 2001; Ishitani, 2002). However, there appears to be limited research surrounding first-generation college students from rural communities. Studies support the claims that first-generation rural students face unique personal and institutional challenges before entering higher education and throughout their educational endeavors. With the recommendations of having students who identify as rural first-generation, they should participate in a transition program such as a summer bridge to combat some of the everyday struggles during their first year of college both socially and academically (Atherton, 2014).

Research specifies characteristics of people from rural communities. Means (2019), who studied the growth and psychological development of youth from rural communities, argues that rural Black and Latinx students lack social and cultural capital. Black rural students receive social capital primarily based on family and religious groups. All the participants were a part of a community or youth-based program, which centralized their commitment to paying it forward to their family and community. Thus, indicating the importance of proving motivation starts as early as 10 years old. There is a research gap in the literature for rural Black/Latinx students' experiences entering college. Means's study is limited because it is based on 12 Black rural students identified, leaving little room to generalize to this population. Means proposed how a network and youth-based program could start working with understudies before secondary school to open them to advanced education and to assist them with building up a school-going personality. Likewise, instructors and pioneers of youth-based projects must consider how to open understudies to more school information, including financial help (Means, 2019).

There is not much research about the college success rates of rural first-generation students. North Carolina's demographic makeup comprises majority rural areas with five major

cities or urban areas within 80 rural counties. North Carolina is the second-largest rural state, with Texas being the first. The UNC System and Hillman University identified this need within its five-year strategic plan. Students who identify as rural and first-generation are not persisting and graduating within the "four" year plan. According to the UNC System database "Navigate," Hillman University's retention rate for rural students is drastically lower than the retention rate of urban students. The goal is to increase persistence and the attrition rate; however, there is no programmatic plan to ensure the goal and rate are increased within the proposed deadline of 2022.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine how summer bridge programs assist Black rural, first-generation college students in developing intrinsic motivation and in facing the unique challenges encountered in their collegiate experience. According to Creswell (2013), the basis of conducting a case study is to develop an in-depth understanding of a single case or explore an issue or problem using the case as a specific illustration. This study was intended to explore the lived experiences of Black rural first-generation students and to determine if their motivation increased based on the utilization of a summer bridge program.

Summer bridge programs guide post-secondary success by presenting high touch, short-range, academic, and social resources through familiarizing university expectations and cultural backgrounds. They generally are offered in the summer between high school graduation and the first semester of college and fluctuate in content, funding, program demographics, size, and timeframe. Most involve five characteristics: an in-depth orientation to college life and resources, academic advising, academic coursework, academic support to prepare students for the rigors of college academics and college life, and social support to build strong networks

among students (and faculty) to foster a greater sense of connection to the institution (U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, What Works Clearinghouse, 2016). The summer bridge program at Hillman University provides all the previously listed characteristics to meet the needs of each participant, such as academic coaching, living-learning community, cultural enrichment, cultural excursion abroad experiences, and tracking throughout their matriculation at the institution.

These programs exist intending to help students succeed in college (Strayhorn, 2013). However, with recent funding declines to these programs within the state, their continuation is in jeopardy. Through this study, I explored the intrinsic motivation of rural college students of color within an HBCU context. I determined whether the program influences their likelihood of being retained by the institution. Strayhorn (2013) discovered a positive relationship between Summer bridge program participation and specified academic skills such as technology use, syllabus interpretation, academic self-efficacy, and non-cognitive workshops.

There are four main components within this study. First, this study examined the contributing factors of dropout and lack of motivation among first-generation college students from rural communities. Second, this study reviews literature that examines the academic achievement of first-generation and rural students. Third, this study identifies programmatic efforts to increase intrinsic motivation for rural first-generation college students. Finally, this study addresses the desperate need for further research and development in intrinsic motivation for first-generation college students from rural communities.

## Research Questions

The research questions for this study were: How do summer bridge programs influence rural, first-generation college students' academic integration during their first year of college?

What contributing factors/program components influence their intrinsic motivation? What are the matriculation and experiences of rural, first-generation students who participate in a summer bridge program?

Throughout the study, the goal was to identify Black rural first-generation students' intrinsic or extrinsic motivation and determine if summer bridge students were more intrinsically motivated than non-summer bridge students. While race is not a fundamental construct explored within this study, being at an HBCU, many students on campus and within the program are students of color. Through this study, it is the hope to identify factors that help students more generally by providing them a positive experience by assessing their experiences, ultimately increasing institutional retention at Hillman University or "HU."

## Theoretical Framework

People are generally concerned with motivation regarding how to shift others or themselves to act with results. Commonly, parents, teachers, and coaches combat how to stimulate those they mentor, and individuals battle to discern energy, mobilize efforts and carry on at the task of existence and work. Deci and Ryan (2012) state what "moves" people to action," who focus on both what energizes and offers direction to behavior. Self-determination theory was deemed best as I explored the motivational factors of students who did and did not participate in a summer bridge program.

Richard R. Ryan, a professor of clinical and social science in psychology, and Edward L. Deci, a professor of social sciences, both of whom work at the University of Rochester, argue that the extent of self-determination is responsible for the quality and persistence of our actions. Ryan validates notions of competence, autonomy, and relatedness as essential for the quality of behavior with much evidence; for example, free choice demonstrates greater performance than

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control with the influence of social surroundings on learning outcomes. The theory defines competence as the feeling of being able to resolve tasks efficiently, autonomy as a situation where behavior is aligned with someone's own interests, and relatedness as social integration, where others provide a person with the response of being part of them.

Referring to self-determination, motivational concepts address learning, performance, and behavior change. Self-determination theory has been useful for understanding college students' intrinsic motivation to learn (Goldman et al., 2016). Goldman et al. (2016) noted intrinsically motivated students flourish across academic settings, especially in comparison to extrinsically motivated and amotivated students. Self-determination plays a significant role in endorsing students' intrinsic motivation by helping fulfill their psychological needs in the classroom by staff and faculty supporting students' autonomy, competence, and relatedness through their behaviors (Goldman et al., 2016).

### Definition of Key Terms

All key term definitions are provided and included in the literature review found in the next chapter.

*Academic Persistence*—Students who continue their enrollment at the same institution from one term/semester to another (Kennel & Ward-Smith, 2017).

*Academic Success*—the positive outcome resulting in the academic achievement of a set goal; ideally involves establishing specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-targeted (SMART) objectives (Kennel & Ward-Smith, 2017).

*A-motivation*—A motivational dimension in which an individual performs an action or behavior that shows no contingency between their actions and their pending outcomes (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

*Extrinsic Motivation*—A motivational dimension in which an individual performs an action or behavior to obtain an external reward or outcome (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

*First-Generation Student*—Student for whom neither parent attained a credential beyond a high school diploma (Schultz, 2004).

*Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU)*—Refers to historically Black colleges and/or universities in the United States. They are institutions of higher education that were established before 1964 to serve the Black community. Some have lost their Black majority status by admitting students of all races in recent years (Boykin et al., 2017).

*Intrinsic Motivation*—A motivational dimension in which an individual engages in behavior due to personally rewarding; essentially, performing an activity for its own sake rather than external reward (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

*Rural*—Three definitions*:*

- *Fringe*—Census-defined rural territory less than or equal to five miles from an urbanized area and rural territory less than or equal to 2.5 miles from an urban cluster.

- *Distant*—Census-defined rural territory that is more than five miles but less than or equal to 25 miles from an urbanized area, and rural territory that is more than 2.5 miles but less than or equal to 10 miles from an urban cluster.

- *Remote*—Census-defined rural territory more than 25 miles from an urbanized area and more than 10 miles from an urban cluster (Provasnik et al., 2007).

*Social Integration*—The transition "between membership in past communities and membership in the new communities of college" (Wang, 2014, p. 270).

*Transition Programs*—Programs that assist students with developing academically and socially (Rall, 2016).

## Assumptions

I made several assumptions about this research study. The research participants would be truthful and honest with their responses either during the interview or survey. I also assumed the research participants would illustrate genuine interest in the research and complete survey instructions carefully.

## Scope and Delimitations

This study was conducted at Hillman University in the southeastern region of the United States. The primary concern is the lack of research on rural students of color and their contributing college success rates from their first year to graduation. The present study is based on data from an institution averaging 8,000 students regarding the experiences of first-generation, rural undergraduate students of color at a historically Black university.

## Limitations

This study has a few limitations due to the focus of this study. Data were provided by institutional research at a single institution (HU). Therefore, an assumption is the data provided by Institutional Research is accurate and complete. Also, research-imposed limitations exist since this study is limited to full-time, academically prepared rural first-generation undergraduates from one cohort at HU. Since summer bridge programs vary in scope and implementation, this study is limited to first-time, academically prepared, rural first-generation students participating in a single summer bridge program versus non-summer bridge program participants. Because of the global COVID-19 pandemic, the study evolved to seek to understand students' summer-immersed and non-summer-immersed lived experiences and to observe whether there were differences or advantages for students participating in the immersion experience.

## Significance of the Study

Rural, first-generation student retention and persistence gap among students is at a high at the university and the UNC system. The significance is imperative due to the lack of programmatic efforts geared towards this population. Hillman University has a distinct graduation gap from students from rural communities. Based on the data, students from rural communities who attend college are not as prepared academically as students from urban communities.

Developing a program for students from rural backgrounds to promote college readiness could improve the sense of belonging and ultimately their persistence at the institution. It is essential to invest research efforts among this population to ensure access and persistence at a public four-year institution. This underrepresented category of students needs much attention due to a lack of research, particularly at an HBCU. Transition programs such as summer bridge programs can provide a safety net for rural first-generation college students.

## Summary

The purpose of the study, the problem statement, an introduction of first-generation rural students, summer bridge programs and motivational implications of student's persistence, research questions, theoretical framework, and definitions were covered in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 covers the literature review outlining characteristics of first-generation students from rural communities, motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic), and summer bridge programs. Chapter 3 highlights the study's methodology, including Hillman's background, design, and rationale.

Rural, first-generation student retention and persistence gap among students is at a high at the university and the UNC system. The significance is imperative due to the lack of programmatic efforts geared towards this population. The research method for this study will

include a qualitative case study method, focusing on first-generation rural students. It is imperative to gather the data and lived experiences from students who participate in a summer bridge program at a historically Black university.

The platform for summer bridge programs differs based on the college or university's program design, student demographics, institutional goals, and strategic plan. The goal of most bridge programs is to assist underrepresented college students' transition for the college rigor and expectations of student success. The goal for these specialized programs is to focus on building a holistic experience through building community, academic support, and the development of non-cognitive skills, cultural enrichment, academic workshops, and peer mentorship.

# CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine the backgrounds and attrition rates of rural, first-generation college students, how summer bridge programs aim to assist these students, and the unique challenges faced in their collegiate experience due to a new environment. The transition from high school to college constitutes a developmental milestone in students' lives (Wang, 2014). As students celebrate their high school graduation, the mental shift from high school structure to post-secondary rigor and expectations can be daunting. The literature review focuses on rural first-generation students and detailed findings of this specific population, in addition to understanding the needs and barriers rural first-generation students face when entering college. The following overview examines current literature in the following areas: (a) rural students from middle school to post-secondary; (b) first-generation students; (c) summer bridge programs, program relevance, and effectiveness; and (d) motivation, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and a-motivation. A theoretical framework and self-determination theory can be used to better understand the connections between motivation and persistence.

## Theoretical Foundation

Self-Determination Theory (SDT), as presented by Deci and Ryan (2000), is a theory of human motivation and behavior. Self-determination theory is the "investigation of people's innate psychological needs for the students' self-motivation and conditions that exhibit these positive processes" (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 68). The components of self-determination theory provide an intentional and life-changing perspective for students' education, learning environment, and college experience. Self-determination theory is practical and critical regarding self-regulation, wellness, and social contexts focusing on supporting healthy psychological and

behavioral functioning (Deci et al., 2017). Self-determination theory is a macro motivational theory that builds on the classical distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and has been frequently used in research in educational contexts (Deci & Ryan, 2012). It is a multi-dimensional model that differentiates between the quality and quantity of motivation. Intrinsically motivated behavior derives from genuine interest, and it stems from pure pleasure and desire for success. Promoting intrinsic motivation can provide positive academic outcomes. Self-determination theory has successfully applied across domains, including parenting, education, healthcare, sports, and physical activity, psychotherapy, and virtual worlds, as well as the fields of work motivation and management (Deci et al., 2017). The review examined self-determination theory concerning intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Deci and Ryan (2000) clarify the thoughts of inspiration, including what makes inspiration show, what builds inspiration, and what diminishes inspiration—focusing on conditions that support or undermine positive potential inside individuals.

Trevino and Defreitas's (2014) study demonstrated intrinsic motivation directly relating to academic achievement with students' increasing desire to understand the provided materials. They focused on Latino college students, particularly first-generation and their positive role of intrinsic motivation and academic achievement for students of color. This study stressed the responsibility upon the education and support group to work together to ensure a motivational influence.

Much research has been studied in SDT in the educational setting showing how teachers' and parents' approaches on motivation can either be controlling or autonomy-supporting (Deci & Ryan, 2012). Deci et al. (2017) propose that controlled motivation has been shown to predict more impoverished learning and greater behavioral problems and risk of disengagement or

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dropout. The concept of "learner autonomy" (LA) has been defined either as an ability, capacity, or competence which allows learners to take greater responsibility for and control over their learning process and everything it encompasses (e.g., goal-setting, decision-making, assessment, problem-solving, etc.), with the fundamental aim of enabling them to function actively and effectively in society (Vázquez, 2018). School climates that support autonomy foster more self-motivation, persistence, and quality of learning (Deci et al., 2017).

**Historically Black College and University (HBCU)**

Historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) are founded on providing access to higher education for African Americans and students of color. Most of these institutions of higher learning were created between 1865 and 1910, formed under the support of the Freedman's Bureau and the American Missionary Association to support the advancement of Black ministers (Boykin et al., 2017). According to Marks and Reid (2013), HBCUs not only provided African Americans with their first chance to pursue higher education, but these schools also made the opportunity geographically accessible via numerous postsecondary choices in the south, mid-west, and mid-Atlantic states.

Initially, the United States endorsed a two-tier system of higher education to form, one for White students and one for Black students. White institutions dominated higher education overwhelming, leading the HBCUs to be 18 in the lower tier due to a lack of state and federal support; however, these steadfast institutions continued and endured. The characteristics of HBCUs provide uniqueness and rich history. Attending an HBCU for many students is a choice based on selectivity, academic reputation, size, and location. These factors have been identified as influencing the selection of one college over another in the set (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). However, these influences may now have added cultural significance in the selection of colleges

for African American applicants because of the inclusion of HBCU schools in the choice set (Tobolowsky et al., 2005).

**Rural Students**

The National Center of Educational Statistics (NCES) categorizes rural into three separate categories: Fringe, Distant, and Remote (Pascarella et al., 2004). Each definition categorizes locations according to their proximity from an urbanized area or cluster, with Fringe being the closest (2.5 miles) and Remote the farthest away (more than 25 miles). Ultimately, determining where school districts fall according to their proximity to an urbanized area.

According to U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service (USDA ERS; USDA ERS, 2017), the rural economy includes industries such as agriculture, mining, and forestry, with an increase in service and retail within the past decades. Though these industries may have a strong presence in these areas, poverty remains high in rural areas compared to urban. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) defines poverty at $12,752 for a person under 65 years of age. For a family of three with two adults and one child, the level is set at $19,730, and for a family of five with three children and two adults, it was set at $29,253. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2019), non-metro or rural poverty rates were 16.4% compared to metro or urban poverty rates at 12.9%. Within this population of rural individuals, African Americans accounted for the highest percentage of non-metro or rural residents, with 32% being poverty-stricken. The survey also designates the south as having one of the highest poverty rates compared to the Northeast, Midwest, and the West.

Employment rates within rural communities have consistently ranked lower within the United States compared to metro or urban areas. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA ERS, 2017), the employment-to-population ratios between urban and rural

areas is consistent considering the lower population of rural areas with metro or urban areas reporting 60.3% and non-metro or rural areas reporting 56.0%. Though employment is rising in rural areas after the recession, it has not reached the growth seen in metro or urban areas. Looking specifically at occupations in education, teachers are the most influential in the education of youth. According to the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), between 2011 and 2012, teachers in suburban areas made $7,000 more than their rural area counterparts ($40,500 compared to $33,200, respectively; Latterman & Steffes, 2017). Factors that influence this disproportion number include baby boomers retiring from positions, the lack of retention, and the lack of college students following a degree in education. The hope is that students who reside in rural communities will earn their education and return to teach in their home schools, but that assumption has proven otherwise.

Extensive research on the educational access of many under-represented groups, scholarship on postsecondary access, and choice for rural residents remain somewhat sparse (Chen et al., 2018). Postsecondary education is a challenge for rural students (Jaeger et al., 2015). With these challenges, pursuing "college can be intense with complexities for rural, first-generations because the decision has meaning for their future and the future of their families" (Tieken, 2016, p. 203).

The transition from high school to college can be physically, mentally, and emotionally drastic, as the change will be inevitable due to the unfamiliarity of the decision made. From a high school perspective, "rural schools are less likely to offer rigorous college-prep courses, such as Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) classes, than city or suburban schools" (Próspero & Vohra-Gupta, 2007, p. 963), and many struggles to provide adequate academic and occupational counseling (Tieken, 2016). In North Carolina, the lack of college

prep courses contradicts the expectations of students attending college. In addition, there is an influx of early and middle colleges in North Carolina, which are college prep schools preparing students for college while taking college courses in high school. So, students from a rural community are already at a disadvantage based on the institution's academic expectations.

Historically, rural economies have been defined by trade industries—farming, logging, mining, and manufacturing—that do not require higher education (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2018). With nearly half of all jobs requiring postsecondary education, young people today rely on a college degree to help establish a solid footing for the years ahead (Nelson, 2016). This trend has direct implications for the number of rural youth matriculating to college and universities (Jaeger et al., 2015). Educational climates must find ways to support students' needs for competence and self-determination to promote an interest in learning, a valuing of education, and an affirmation of personal capabilities (Hardre & Reeve, 2003).

Research has proven that attention on rural students attending, persisting, and graduating college is exceptionally prevalent in postsecondary education. Researchers have found that rural Black youth face significant systemic challenges that impede their college and career aspirations—lack of knowledge about postsecondary education, concerns about the cost of higher education, lack of community and economic infrastructures, and lack of social contacts to provide information on higher education (Means et al., 2016).

**First-Generation Students**

First-generation college students typically come into college at a disadvantage because of a lack of academic preparation and a general lack of knowledge of what to expect (Atherton, 2014). However, receiving a postsecondary education is crucial for career placement in the 21st century's economy, as students with diverse backgrounds seek higher education. The distinction

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of the term first-generation students was first established administratively to demonstrate student eligibility for outreach programs that were federally funded, such as TRIO (Ward et al., 2012). The U.S. Department of Education defines first-generation college students in 1996 as one whose parent or guardian does not have more than high school education.

Various literature defines first-generation students more specifically as "a student for whom neither parent attended college," while others describe them as "a student for whom neither parent attained a baccalaureate degree" (Ward et al., 2012, p. 3). For this study, first-generation status is defined as neither parent has earned a bachelor's degree; this is also the definition used by the federal TRIO grant programs (Stableton et al., 2014). Being prepared as practitioners is a crucial factor for the holistic success of any college student, hence the importance of having one clear definition for first-generation college students.

Colleges are continuously striving to attempt to reach, teach, and nurture first-generation students. The first-generation college student has been in force of a growing body of research (Pascarella et al., 2004). The distinct disadvantage of a first-generation college student would include basic knowledge about postsecondary education, level of family income and support, educational degree expectations, plans, and academic preparation in high school (Pascarella et al., 2004). The National Center of Education Statistics' Beginning Postsecondary Study describes the situation for first-generation students in terms of college success. First-generation, low-income students were nearly four times more likely to leave higher education after their first year than non-first-generation students (Stableton et al., 2014).

Social and cultural capital is a significant component of the college experience. This lack of social and cultural capital that first-generation students experience leads to frustration and isolation transitioning from high school to college. Successful transitions, then, bridge the

student's home environment with the collegiate atmosphere and are critical, primarily in the student's first year of study (Inkelas et al., 2007). First-generation students tend to enter college with a lower cultural/social capital stock than their non-first-generation students.

Understanding first-generation status requires cognizance that this label is descriptive and not necessarily a deficit. First-generation college students benefit more from extracurricular activities and engagement with their peers; however, they are less likely to participate in these extracurricular activities designed for non-first-generation (Inkelas et al., 2007). The social environment may significantly impact whether a first-generation student can integrate, obtain support, and achieve academically at the institution (Woolsey & Shepler, 2011). Additionally, first-generation students benefit academically from contact with faculty outside the classroom, especially in living-learning environments; faculty collaborations increased first-generation student persistence (Woolsey & Shepler, 2011). Woolsey and Shepler (2011) emphasized that faculty and higher education professionals may improve first-generation students' success at the institution. Creating and fostering a campus environment that enables students to feel accepted and promote academic performance would provide a higher academic and social achievement, thus increasing a positive collegiate experience.

First-generation students may experience a lack of belonging. A sense of belonging is a need or desire to be connected through formal and informal settings (Stableton et al., 2014). Research indicates that the more significant the sense of belonging to the academic and social community for the student, the more likely the student will persist towards graduation (Stableton et al., 2014). First-generation college students are more likely than their continuing-generation college students to have pre-college characteristics that ultimately place them at an immediate disadvantage to college success (Stableton et al., 2014). However, first-generation college

students and higher education leaders could reframe these pre-college characteristics and shift the paradigm to view them as managing stress and ultimately thriving and succeeding within the college environment (Stephens et al., 2015).

Atherton describes the overall lack of information and expectations for succeeding in college for first-generation college students. I display the unique aspect of college preparedness, retention, and attainment of first-generation students. Composed in the sample of Atherton's study were first-generation and non-first-generation first-year students; of the sample, 39% identified as first-generation leaving 59% considered as non-first-generation students. The findings based on this study indicated that the "lack of social capital transmitted from family and friends contributes to the lack of awareness to the extent that lower standardized scores and GPA might affect their academic outcomes" (Atherton, 2014, p. 824). Researchers describe the importance of transitional programs from high school to college, such as summer bridge programs, which can assist with the gaps between self-assessments and academic preparedness. Academic enrichment programs for first-generation college students can do more than promote student retention and academic performance; they can also support the holistic development of these diverse students (Swanbrow Becker et al., 2017)

**Summer Bridge Programs**

Summer bridge programs are often used to help students adjust to college academically and socially, and many target at-risk populations such as first-generation college students (Sablan, 2014). If students integrate successfully, the impacts of their commitment to the institution, goals, and intrinsic motivation heighten, which, in turn, allows the student to persist instead of leaving the institution. First-generation college families are less able to prepare them

for what to expect in the college environment, how to work with faculty and staff members, and how to get involved (Tinto, 1993).

Historically, summer bridge programs target students at risk of dropping out in the first year, such as minority students, students from low-income households, and first-generation college students (Howard & Flora, 2015). While the notion of the summer as a critical time in student education is not new, this intermediary period between high school and college has still only been sparsely researched (Rall, 2016). The summer following high school graduation, several college-intending students lack the essential knowledge, resources, and direction needed for a smooth transition to college (Rall, 2016). Rall (2016) investigates the "summer melt" for urban low-income, racial/ethnic minority students. He describes the immediate college enrollment rate (ICER) as all students who do not enroll in college immediately after their senior year of high school, not just specific population that the summer melt includes: the focus of his study on the issues of access for urban low-income minority population of college-ready high school completers (Rall, 2016).

Summer bridge programs is an initiative intended to provide the essentials desired for incoming first-time first-year students. To provide a significant impact, the number of students who participate in a summer bridge directly affects the quality of the program and attention for each participant. Transitional programs such as summer bridge programs that colleges and universities employ to help students at risk of dropping out of school early, such as first-generation college students, teach them how to succeed in college and graduate (Sablan, 2014).

The structure and curriculum for summer bridge programs vary on each college campus; however, most programs target a specific population, such as underrepresented students, to assist with college readiness (Otewalt, 2013). Transitional programs intend to consummate first-

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generation college students by immersing these students on college campuses, earning college credits, and receiving cultural enrichment while offering supplemental support through tutors, staff, and faculty. The curricula address unique challenges for onboarding students, exposure to the University resources and setting, and opportunities for students to develop meaningful social connections (Otewalt, 2013). Seminars or workshops within the summer bridge programs offer students imperative information, including but not limited to what to expect in college, goal setting, time-management, how to study in college and read materials such as a syllabus, and utilization of institutional resources. These intentional efforts provide students with the familiarity necessary to transition successfully from high school to college.

Lonn et al. (2015) investigated student motivation using a learning analytics intervention tool during a summer bridge program. Learning analytics is designed to measure the academic and motivational success of at-risk students participating in the summer bridge program. The motivation of the students' views in three components intrinsic, extrinsic, and a-motivation; their findings in this study had significant effects on students' academic achievement, motivational orientation, and the desire to persist in college.

Morton et al. (2018) proposed multifaceted barriers for prospective college students from rural high schools. The authors described the challenges rural high school students faced and the need to continue research on this population. Their theoretical framework was based on social capital theory. Sampling 41 high-achieving high school students examined in this study, the findings included concerns about academic preparation and college application knowledge, including financial aid and scholarships. Social capital is a source in the students' home and school; however, they identified more barriers than assets. The literature about rural k-12

students is noteworthy due to the lack of research displaying the deficit in the rural community; however, there is room to build on the educational contribution of rural youth going to college.

The research identified 10% of the high school students participating in the pre-college program. The article indicated asking the students if they identified as first-generation or students of color, but the author did not disclose the total number of students who selected first-generation or students of color. There was a clear understanding of the barriers the students either faced or anticipating facing when entering college.

This research fills the gaps of this intended study as the authors recommend transitional programs for incoming first-year students for a student who identifies as rural or first-generation. Not only do rural students confront all the anxieties, difficulties, and dislocations of any college student, their experiences involve substantial academic, cultural, social transitions. It is critical for transition programming at institutions of higher education to consider academic preparation, family support, and cultural discontinuities in their bridging and transition-to-college programs, as these factors have been shown to shape the college success of rural students (Byun et al., 2017). While the research on summer bridge programs is mostly positive in terms of their effects on participants regarding academic integration, social integration, and retention, studies exemplify how one program can impact first-generation college students with greater academic and social integration (Sablan, 2014).

Various studies have indicated prompt increases of summer extension programs on understudy maintenance in the primary year quickly following scaffold cooperation. In a quantitative study on a ladies explicit designing summer bridge programs (WISE), Felder (1995) showed the positive interest of first-year standards for the dependability of 70-80% contrasted with non-summer bridge program participants. Similarly, there are lasting advantages of summer

bridge programs. In a quantitative study of a student population of 15,000 students, Douglas and Attewell (2014) connected summer bridge program participation to a 10% increase in persistence to graduation six years of college compared to non-summer bridge programs. Using the score matching analytical technique, they compared summer bridge programs participants to similar peers who did not participate (Douglas & Attewell, 2014). The data utilized in their study was from six community colleges within a single system. Strayhorn (2013) indicates positive self-efficacy predicts first semester grades and explains about 30% of the variance in first semester GPA.

**Motivation**

The academic achievement of rural college students is becoming a more pressing issue in the higher education sector. With the growth of rural students in the college system, research on this population is ever essential. Academic motivation is a significant component of a student's influence to retain and attain a degree. First-generation and rural students are of focus and interest concerning college motivation due to a lack of research for rural first-generation college students. Due to college completion rates decline amongst rural students, it is essential to evaluate the contributing factors such as lack of motivation. Deci and Ryan (2000) explain the ideas of motivation, including what causes motivation to manifest, what increases motivation, and what decreases motivation (Trevino & DeFreitas, 2014).

Self-determination through the lens of motivation consists of three distinct motivational orientations: (a) intrinsic motivation, (b) extrinsic motivation, and (c) a-motivation (Goldman et al., 2016). Research shows that intrinsic motivation has been shown to promote positive academic factors that indirectly relate to academic achievement. Students who found school relevant reported high levels of intrinsic motivation and higher levels of classroom engagement

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(Trevino & DeFreitas, 2014). Those intrinsically motivated are most likely to pay attention, participate, and remain engaged in the materials provided.

Crumpton and Gregory suggest that intrinsic motivation may also protect against that usually decrease students' success, such as truancy, delinquency, dropout, disengagement, and disinterest (Trevino & DeFreitas, 2014). The opposite of intrinsic motivation is extrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation is related to adverse educational outcomes, and extraneous behaviors lack any internalization and integration necessary for enough motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In the higher education setting, intrinsic and extrinsic motivations have research for their influence among college students.

Harackiewicz et al.'s (1998) study examined college students' goals, including performance, and mastery goals can influence intrinsic motivation. This study conducted 20 years ago is still relevant today as there is a decline of students remaining motivated to persist and graduate. The study showed that mastery and performance goals had self-regulating, positive effects on interest and performance, thus enhancing intrinsic motivation. Mastery goals may increase intrinsic motivation because mastery rises seeking persistence and challenges in the academic setting (Trevino & DeFreitas, 2014). Increasing intrinsic motivation, in turn, promotes positive outcomes of mastery goals and perceived competence (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Research in the higher education sector has shown the positive impact of intrinsic motivation, but research on first-generation rural college students lacks particularly rural students of color. Therefore, promoting intrinsic motivation can have a significant favorable influence on the educational domain (Trevino & DeFreitas, 2014).

**Summary**

This study sought to identify the motivational orientations rural first-generation students encounter during their transition from high school to college while providing a descriptive interpretation. Thus, it can help practitioners further develop transition programs designed to increase intrinsic motivation, academic success, persistence, and ultimately, graduation rates. The next chapter provides a detailed analysis of the methodology of this qualitative study. Focusing on first-generation rural students' motivation factors and the experiences of summer bridge participants and non-summer bridge participants would further explain this study.

# CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the backgrounds and attrition rates of rural, first-generation college students, how summer bridge programs aim to assist these students, and the unique challenges faced in their collegiate experience due to a new environment. As I direct input from effective programming and services can support their success through consistent monitoring from their first year to the second year of their college matriculation. This chapter highlighted the methods employed to address research questions.

Additionally, providing an in-depth look into this study as I explore the motivating factors of academic persistence through Black, rural, first-generation first-year and second-year students. My expectation was to identify missing gaps in academic motivation. In this study I aimed to interview five rural first-generations students who participated in a summer bridge program, the Flight program, versus five students who are a part of the same demographics but did not experience a summer bridge program before their fall semester. My goal was to identify the major impact of summer bridge programs for underprepared students due to their demographics, such as rural. There were significant limitatations on my discovery of program impact due to the Coronvirus pandemic which is discussed futher in Chapter 4.

As the study examined the students' experiences at Hillman University with a combination of participants and non-participants in the summer bridge program, the Flight program. For both groups, it was my intention to provide a series of questions to assess the motivating factors of each student interviewed. Each participant in the study met with me monthly to examine the lived experiences of their college involvement throughout their first year. The design of the summer bridge program provides a sense of belonging and support throughout the student's college career until graduation. Using a 10-question survey instrument

followed by semi-structured interviews of participant volunteers, I explored the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations of rural first-generation students as they meet the challenges of their first year of college. These questions are available in the appendix. To restate the study questions:

1. How do summer bridge programs influence rural first-generation Black college students' integration during their first year of college at an HBCU?

2. What aspects of the summer bridge program influence the intrinsic motivation of these students?

3. What are the shared lived experiences of rural, first-generation Black students who participate in a summer bridge program at an HBCU?

The first study question aimed to understand the 4- to 5-week pre-college exposure as a phenomenon and prelude to their first-year experience. Given the literature on the aims of transitional programs, this study explored how participants of transitional programs such as a summer bridge may impact the students' holistic experience. The second question called for an in-depth perspective from rural first-generation students' participants and non-participants comparing their academic and social experiences as first-year students. The third question intended to provide each student's lived experiences. Finally, guided by theories of motivation and whether the programmatic experience support student perseverance and persistence throughout their first year to the second year of college. Based on findings related to these questions, I aimed to examine whether the current structure of the summer bridge program at Hillman University, the Flight program, adequately supports the rural first-generation population.

## Study Design and Rationale

This qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2013). The case study design was selected as the most suitable to identify students' initial motivational alignment towards education entering the first semester of their first year of rural first-generation summer bridge participants and non-rural first-generation summer bridge participants at a minority-serving 4-year institution (Yin, 2014)

In this study I provide a descriptive analysis of rural first-generation and non-rural first-generation students as they matriculate from the first to the second year of their collegiate experiences. To maximize all components of this study, a qualitative case study design appeared to be the best path for obtaining the depth of information seeking to explore the motivational contributions or gaps for rural first-generation students (Yin, 2014).

### Site and Sampling Procedures

To begin, I uploaded a list of rural first-generation students from the university's student success management system for collaborative efforts between administrators, faculty, advisors, and staff. The educational management system is called Navigate. Navigate supports students from enrollment to graduation. The participants were selected based on the tier of rurality. The selection of the non-summer bridge participants was provided from Navigate, and the summer bridge participants were hand-selected.

The sampling procedure for participants was purposeful selection by the researcher. The unique component of Hillman University is the community engagement required for graduation, which includes completing 120 community service hours. The community service hours were presented once the participant concluded their personalized interviews for this study. As initially

planned, all participants, non-summer bridge program participants and summer bridge

participants, received 15 hours of community service. Additionally, each monthly meeting would

be conducted in a group setting with food provided. However, the coronavirus pandemic safety

protocols rendered this plan inoperable. Instead, I used video conferencing to interview

participants individually. I discuss study modifications in detail in Chapter 4.

**Instrumentation**

The case study design was chosen as it involves collecting interview questions while

gathering data in the first phases, analyzing the data, and then following up with qualitative

interviews to help explain confusing, contradictory, or unusual responses. Yin (2014) describes

this study as "when an investigator is trying to explain how and why event x led to event y" (p.

16). For this study, 10 initial interview questions were developed in the effort of gathering, and

semi-structured interviews were developed for the qualitative design of the study.

This study utilizes case study design to deliver a persistent propensity of the motivational

depiction among the rural first-generation first-time first-year students at Hillman University.

The interview instrument was administered by a leading research software Qualtrics.

Additionally, to receiving data collection through Institutional Research. Once verbal and written

consent from the students was conducted, the scholarly practitioner was sent to the students by

school email and administered the survey questions in a classroom setting during their 10:40

break. The verbal and written consent provides the purpose of the study, the use of the

information gathered, the level of their confidentiality would be maintained as the research will

not disclose their names within the study. The research will follow up with the selected

participants of the semi-structured interviews once the qualitative data is collected and analyzed.

Once the survey was complete, questions were structured to gauge the students' interest in a brief six-question follow-up interview. Each willing student was given one semi-structured interview. The purpose of using semi-structured interviews for data collection was to gather information from key informants who had personal experiences, attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs related to the topic of interest (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). The intended interviews will be given face-to-face on the campus of Hillman University. Before the start of the interview, verbal informed consent from the students was be conducted. The verbal consent explained the purpose of the study, how the information gathered will be utilized, the seriousness of their confidentiality, how the study will use an alien name to describe their experiences for the study. The scholarly practitioner utilized an audio application by the name of Otter to record with the students' permission then later transcribed each one-on-one interview.

Below are the guided questions for each interviewee:

1. Demographic Information: Name, Age, Classification, Where are you from?

2. Being a first-generation college student, how has your transition been from high school to college?

3. On a scale from one to five (with five being the highest), how would you rate the desire to continue your education and graduate from this institution?

4. How has participating in a summer bridge program impacted your college experience as a first-generation student from a rural community?

5. What are the top motivators to continue college?

6. What barriers exist for first-generation college students from rural communities?

**Stakeholders**

The stakeholders for this study include first-generation first-year full-time students from rural communities in the office of, whose alternative name is "First-Year College." Additionally, the stakeholders are rural summer bridge students and non-summer bridge students enrolled during the same year as the participants. The setting of Hillman University was classified by Carnegie as a 4-year public historically Black university with a liberal arts focus.

HU is described as the "first UNC System campus to require community service for graduation and has gained national recognition from the Carnegie Foundation as a community-engaged university" (The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, 2019). Hillman University (HU) is a large, public, historically Black selective 4-year university located in Durham, NC, which includes a master's comprehensive institution with over 8,000 students. It is a majority undergraduate institution with a primarily residential student population. Additionally, Hillman University has notable graduate programs in education, public administration, and others.

**Ethical Considerations and Informed Consent**

Before data collection, the scholarly practitioner completed the Collaborative Initiative Training Institute (CITI) modules, particularly the Social/Behavioral Research Investigators and Key Personnel. This module is designed for educational research that involves direct contact with participants. Upon completing the CITI training, the scholarly practitioner was qualified to apply for approval to conduct research through East Carolina University's and Hillman University's Institutional Review Board.

Relating to the recruitment of participants at Hillman University for the study, completing the survey is an optional choice from the initial request about this study. The

scholarly practitioner further explained the importance of the request and initial signed consent form. The survey was sent through the participant's email with full details of the study and the intentionality of the selected participants. The survey and responses were stored in Qualtrics and were protected by the scholarly practitioner password located on a personal computer.

The data from the study were protected and collected namelessly. The interview participants' names were anonymous, apart from the data recorded during the interview. Interview participants were reminded in future communication by email that their input was highly encouraged and recommended. Participants who declined to interview at any point would not be penalized.

## Instrument for Data Collection

The Academic Motivation Scale: A Measure of Intrinsic, Extrinsic, and Amotivation in Education created by Vallerand et al. (1992) (see Appendix B). This study utilized the college version of the Academic Motivation Scale (AMS) (Vallerand et al., 1992). It was designed to measure the students' motivational orientation towards education by identifying their level of motivation (intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, or amotivation). This survey instrument was also selected as it is one of the first scales to assess motivation towards education on all three constructs. Previous scales focus in great part on intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, or a combination of the two, specifically in post-secondary education studies (Vallerand et al., 1992).

Vallerand et al. (1989) first created and validated the French Echelle de Motivation in Education (EME) which is based specifically on the SDT as described by Deci and Ryan (1985). It was later translated into English using a three-step process which included a cross-cultural scale translation, review by a select committee, and a pre-test with confirmatory factor analysis

to 62 ensure scale relatability (Vallerand et al., 1989). The results of the confirmatory factor analysis laid the foundation for the structure of the AMS. The AMS is composed of 28 individual questions subdivided into seven separate sub-scales.

The scale uses these sub-scales to evaluate the three motivational levels identified by the SDT of intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation , and amotivation and broke them down into the seven motivational orientations. Intrinsic motivation is broken down into three orientations; IM-Knowledge (questions 2, 9, 16, 23), IM-Accomplishment (questions 6, 13, 20, 17), and IM-Stimulation (questions 4, 11, 18, 25). Extrinsic motivation is broken down into three orientations; EM-Regulation (questions 1, 8, 15, 22), EM-Introjected (7, 15, 21, 28), and EM-Identified (3, 10, 17, 24). The scale does not provide any specific types within amotivation so it is its own motivational level and orientation (questions 5, 12, 15, 22). Students responded to a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (does not correspond at all) to 7 (corresponds exactly) for 28 questions. The scale is designed with certain questions rating the student's level of motivation. The following elements were used to conduct the survey:

1. Demographic Information Sheet
2. Academic Motivation Scale: College Version

## Data Analysis

The following apriority themes were applied to analyze the Academic Motivational Scale, survey, and community meetings from all participants: (1) How do summer bridge programs influence rural first-generation college students' integration during their first year of college? What contributing factors/program components influence their intrinsic motivation? (2) What are the matriculation and experiences of rural, first-generation students who participate in a

summer bridge program? A comparative analysis was applied within this study to find the similarities and differences in the data gathered.

The Academic Motivation Scale (AMS) was administrated to measure participants' intrinsic motivation. Descriptive statistics will be used to report AMS findings. Regarding interview questions, the constant comparative method will be used to derive themes. My aim was to meet with five rural first-generation non-summer bridge participants and five rural first-generation summer bridge participants. In total, I was able to meet with five (5) rural first-generation participants. Each participant completed the initial survey during the first week of the semester. Once the survey was completed, interviews were conducted once a month virtually; each student received a link via email to complete their survey. I administered the survey four times during the fall semester. The timeline was created for the convenience of the participants and giving the researcher time to analyze the data. The surveys were conducted every 2 weeks; below is the schedule given to each participant:

1. Week 6: September 28-October 2, 2020

2. Week 8: October 12-16,2020

3. Week 10: October 26-30, 2020

4. Week 12: November 9-13, 2020

I present results in Chapter 4.

## Summary

Although research has exhibited the positive components of intrinsic motivation and academic achievement for first-generation rural students, there is still a much need focus on the research needing to be done for this population. Implementing a bridge program targeted intentionally for rural students can strategically increase their intrinsic motivation during the

summer and throughout their matriculation. The hope is to provide the data given from participants to identify their motivational factors and how additional support such as summer-bridge programs can contribute to their intrinsic motivation, all while providing the tools to successfully retain, persist, and ultimately graduate for Hillman University.

# CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

In this chapter, I provide an overview of data collection in this case study as modified under the restrictions due to the COVID-19 Coronavirus Pandemic, followed by a detailed analysis of the results and key findings in Chapter 5. This study appears to be the first study in which self-identified rural Black students report their lived experiences of the bridge program at Hillman University. While there exist several research studies investigating Black students, rural students, and students from historically Black universities discretely, there does not appear to be existent literature on lived experiences of students who report identifying with each of these characteristics in addition to having participated in a summer bridge program. I conducted interviews and administered surveys to address the three study questions.

The research questions that this inquiry addressed were:

1. How do summer bridge programs influence rural first-generation Black college students' integration during their first year of college at an HBCU?

2. What aspects of the summer bridge program influence the intrinsic motivation of these students?

3. What are the shared lived experiences of rural, first-generation Black students who participate in a summer bridge program at an HBCU?

As this study took place within the context of the novel COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, this is where I begin to detail deviations from the study as planned and modifications to adjust to the pandemic environment.

## Impacts of the Coronavirus Pandemic on Hillman and the Bridge Program

The coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) drastically affected the world, including Hillman University, beginning in March 2020. In North Carolina, a mandatory stay-at-home order was

issued and was in effect from March 30, 2020, through April 29, 2020. This was later extended through May 8, 2020 (NC.gov, 2020). North Carolina's Governor Roy Cooper moved the state through different phases of reopening and lifting restrictions throughout the summer months. COVID-19 continued to impact what was considered "normal" operations at Hillman University through the remainder of 2020 and into 2021. Specifically, the pandemic prompted a shutdown of Hillman University at the beginning of March 2020, moving all classes to an online format and requiring residential students to move off-campus and return home. The Hillman University first-year department was also affected by this shutdown.

In previous years, Flight bridge participants would be permitted to live in university residence halls and begin their summer bridge experience while taking Summer Session 2 classes in person on campus. Students would remain in the same residence hall and room for the academic year during their time on campus. Each group of students would have an upperclassman peer mentor who had previously participated in the summer immersion program. There is also both a graduate and resident assistant to support and assist the bridge program director.

The program's structure typically includes cultural enrichment programs, service-learning, traveling in and out of state, mandatory study hall, self-care activities, and three courses for academic credit: math, English, and a freshman orientation course. The structure of the Flight bridge program is rigorous, and every minute is accounted for throughout the program. The Flight program collaborative efforts involve students, staff, and faculty from various departments on Hillman's campus. The Flight program has developed and sustains strong relationships with peer organizations to assist with the retention and graduation of our students.

Furthermore, the Flight program works collaboratively to utilize various campus academic services such as Academic Advising, Tutorial and Supplemental Instruction Support, and the Writing and Speaking Studio. Working hand in hand with the academic units mentioned above, the Flight program can assist students in areas of educational needs, such as computational skills, writing and literary skills, critical thinking skills, practical communication skills, and soft skills needed to navigate successfully through the networks and climate of the University. Additionally, the Flight program has continuous relationships with organizations in the Durham community. Partnering with local entities allows students to gain a sense of pride, identity, accomplishment and facilitates change in the surrounding area.

The delay in students arriving on campus due to COVID-19, along with the change in return procedures in general, required revisions to many areas of this study as it had been originally proposed and designed. The modifications to the procedures and data collection methods due to the pandemic are discussed in detail within this chapter.

This study was also impacted by the pandemic as initially proposed, creating conditions that required changes to the procedures and data collection as they were originally designed. Data collection occurred during the global COVID-19 pandemic; unfortunately, the institution at which the study was performed did not permit the interviews to take place face-to-face for the fall 2020 semester. Although the study was originally expected to have been executed in August 2020, instead it was implemented between September and November 2020. All interviews, surveys, follow-up interviews, and participants' questions regarding the study were conducted on WebEx. Students selected for the 2020 bridge program completed a fully virtual experience; they did not participate in the typical on-campus immersion program. The following is a detailed list of changes implemented in the current study as a result of the pandemic:

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1. No Summer Immersion Program for the 2020 participants (June – July 2020).

2. All interviews and surveys were virtually conducted and recorded.

3. The study included student participants from both the immersion summer of 2019 and the non-immersion summer of 2020.

The study participants all grew up in communities in North Carolina. The study originally proposed to assess rural participants from both in and out of state. However, the resulting study group all came from rural communities in North Carolina. Due to COVID-19, the participants varied from summer immersed students from the 2019 cohort and the non-immersed bridge students.

All participants are a part of the program beyond the bridge experience itself; it provides a holistic four-year experience for all students who participate. The program includes year-round programming, academic coaching, peer mentorship, mandatory study hall, co-curricular activities guidance, and monitoring until their senior year. Both Hillman University's and East Carolina University's Institutional Review Boards granted approval to conduct research and collect data beginning September 11, 2020. The qualitative study permitted participants to deliver honest responses by including open-ended questions within the initial interviews.

## Study Overview as Modified

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the backgrounds and attrition rates of rural, first-generation college students, how summer bridge programs aim to assist these students, and the unique challenges faced in their collegiate experience due to a new environment. Before conducting this study, the objective was to interview and understand the lived experiences of summer-immersed rural first-generation college Black students' motivation. Because of the global COVID-19 pandemic, the study evolved to seek to understand students'

summer-immersed and non-summer-immersed lived experiences and to observe whether there were differences or advantages for students participating in the immersion experience. The Flight bridge program was conducted virtually from March 2020 to May 2021. Therefore, the non-immersed participants did not get to stay on campus and learn how to maneuver the university.

Overall, the study participants reported receiving continuous support, guidance, and constant follow-ups with program leadership due to participating in the program. Such support involved one-on-one coaching sessions, peer mentorship throughout their first year in college, participation in a living-learning community (residing in the same residence hall), and engagement in co-curricular activities, cultural enrichment activities, and service-learning. In addition, these students were able to meet prominent university leaders through organized panels and discussions about behavioral expectations, living on campus, utilizing campus resources, and learning ways to optimize their time at Hillman University.

This study used a qualitative case study design to explore the lived experiences of summer-immersed and non-summer-immersed participants and the impact on intrusive motivation and integration. According to Creswell (2013), "a qualitative case study can be composed to illustrate a unique case, a case that has unusual interest in and of itself, and needs to be described and detailed" (p. 98). Thus, this study is designed to shed light on rural, first-generation, Black students' lived experiences at Hillman University in its bridge program.

The information obtained from interviews with the participants at Hillman University provided the sole qualitative data for the study. Interviews were recorded and timed using the Otter application on a cell phone and were originally transcribed using the same application. Once transcriptions were completed through Otter, they were downloaded and reviewed by the

scholarly practitioner for accuracy. Corrections were made using Microsoft Word and updated on the transcriptions. This allowed for accuracy for each interview.

**Participants**

The participants for this study were students classified as freshmen and sophomores who were also members of the bridge program. Each participant self-identified as a Black, rural, first-generation student from North Carolina. The selection of students was based on an inquiry of participants for this study on GroupMe.

The participants included three female- and two male-identifying students. Amongst the group, there were three first-year and two second-year students. The second-year students participated in the full, immersive summer bridge experience in 2019. The first-year students were offered the opportunity to participate in the bridge program virtually; they did not experience the immersive summer program. Their online experience started in the fall 2020 semester with limited access to in-person interaction due to COVID-19. All five participants were considered full members of the program and lived in the same residential hall when they arrived at campus.

Based on the rurality ranking, the North Carolina Department of Commerce annually ranks the state's 100 counties based on economic welfare and is assigned each a Tier designation. For example, the 40 most distressed counties are assigned as Tier 1, the next 40 as Tier 2, and the last 20 least distressed as Tier 3. Four factors account for a county's tier ranking: (a) average unemployment rate; (b) median household income; (c) population growth; (d) adjusted property tax base per capita. The Tier designation is provided for each participants' county location.

**About the Participants**

*Jason*

Jason is a Black male who, at the time of the interviews, was a first-year student from Mount Olive, North Carolina, in Wayne County. Based on the rurality ranking, Wayne ranks as a Tier 1 county. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2019), Wayne County's median household income is $44,416, with 18.6% of the population living below the poverty line. Jason reports being proud of being from his community and plans to give back to his community after college. As a kinesiology major, he plans to become a physical trainer. Jason is a student-athlete on the football team at Hillman University and a member of the Flight bridge program. He is an only child and was excited about attending a historically Black university. As a first-year student, Jason experienced the bridge program virtually, in the heart of the pandemic. Therefore, he did not take part in the summer immersion component of the program. The first interview was conducted with Jason on September 11, 2020, and was held virtually via WebEx. The recorded portion of the interview was approximately 23 minutes, with the transcription being six pages in length.

Jason's highest assessment results indicated he was extrinsically motivated, categorized by the survey as extrinsic motivated-identified (EM-Identified). As a reminder, extrinsic motivated-identified acts occur when the reasons to engage in an activity are internalized such that the activity is judged valuable to the person. Jason became even more extrinsically motivated throughout the study, registering a motivation score of 28 in both the September and October assessments. The scoring is based on a seven-point scale, and the highest a participant can score is 28 points.

There was a slight decrease during Jason's third series of the assessment (see Figure 1); however, his extrinsic motivation scores were higher than his peers, as displayed in Figure 2. All five participants' extrinsic motivation-identified scores are shared in Figure 2 to demonstrate Jason's extrinsic motivation against that of the other four study participants. Jason stated that being a football team member made him feel that he was part of a team, in essence heightening his sense of belonging to his university. As a student-athlete in a revenue-generating high-profile sport, Jason's motivation was based on activities such as football to keep his motivation on target.

### Bianca

Bianca is a Black female who, at the time of the interviews, was a second-year student and is from Wilson, North Carolina, located in Wilson County. Based on the rurality ranking, Wilson County ranks as a Tier 1 county in North Carolina. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Wilson County's median household income is $42,850, with 18.5% of the population below the poverty line. She mentioned growing up in a two-parent household with both parents financially providing for the family.

Bianca is the oldest of two children and reported strongly being encouraged to continue her education at Hillman University. As a psychology major, she plans to become a clinical counselor. Bianca has a desire to attend graduate school as soon as she completes her bachelor's degree. She is highly involved on campus as a member of the student government association, Flight bridge program, cheerleading team, and psychology club. Bianca was a part of the summer-immersive component of the program.

The interview with Bianca took 17 minutes to complete. The transcription of this interview was five pages in length. The interview took place via WebEx due to the risk of
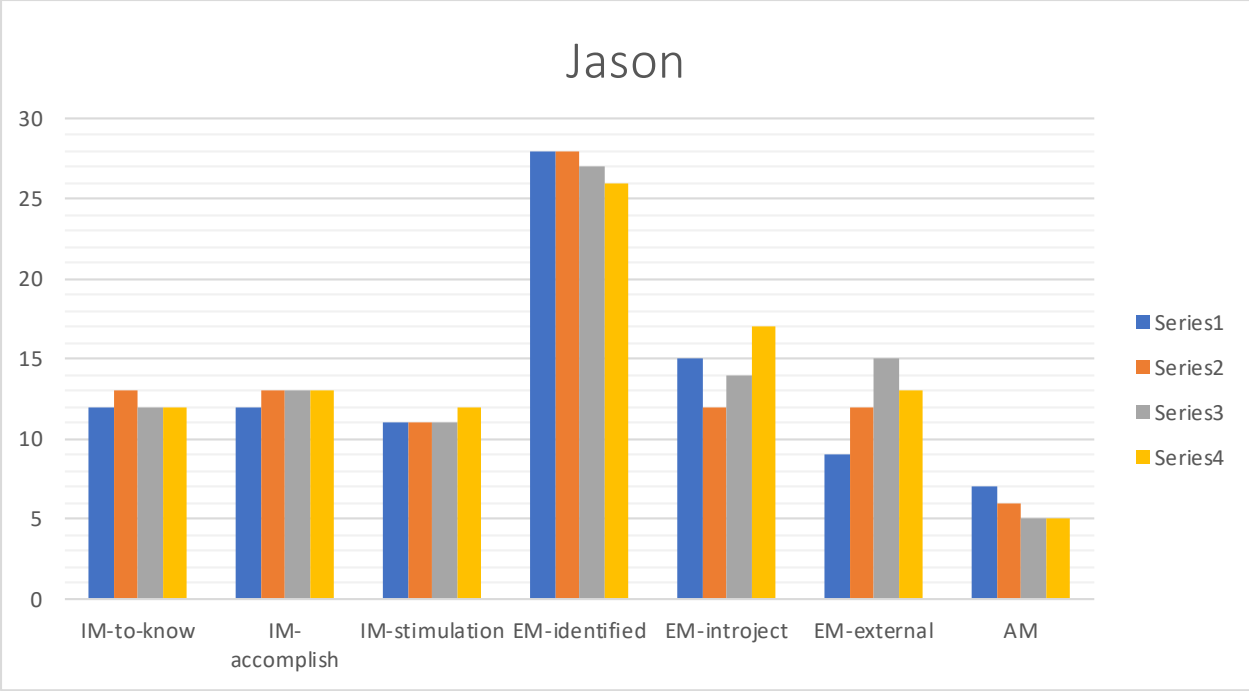
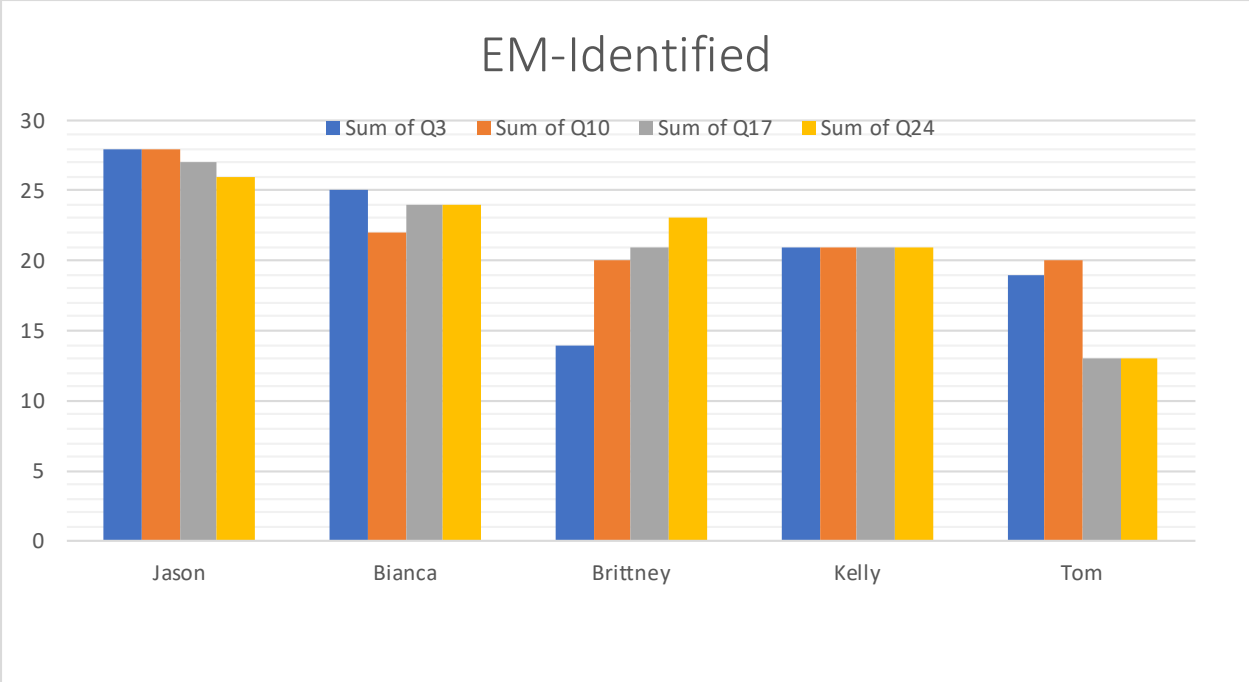*Figure 1*. Jason's motivational orientation results across four assessments.

*Figure 2.* Extrinsic motivation-identified scores from all participants.

exposure with COVID-19. The interview was conducted on September 28; she was the last initial interview conducted before the bi-weekly survey assessments.

There are three levels of intrinsic motivation, which are intrinsic motivation-to know, intrinsic motivation-stimulation, and intrinsic motivation-accomplished. According to Bianca's survey results, her highest assessment results were in the category of "intrinsically motivated-stimulation." There was a slight decrease during Bianca's results for series one, three, and four; however, her intrinsic motivation scores elevated during the second series (see Figure 3). She became even more intrinsically motivated throughout the study, registering a motivation score of 27 in October 2020. Overall, there was a slight decrease; however, as displayed in Figure 4, her intrinsic motivation scores were slightly higher than her peers.

### Brittney

Brittney is a Black female who, at the time of the interviews, was a first-year student from Pittsboro, North Carolina, in Chatham County. Based on the rurality ranking, Chatham County ranks as a Tier 3 county in North Carolina. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Chatham County's median household income is $55,322.00, with 11.7% of the population were below the poverty line. She described growing up in a two-parent household with both parents financially providing for the family. Brittney is the oldest of three. As a nursing major, she plans to become a midwife. She is involved in the Flight bridge program and is pacing herself with extra-curricular activities as a first-year student. Brittney was a part of the non-immersive component of the program. The interview with Brittney took 19 minutes to complete. The transcription of this interview was five pages in length. The interview took place via WebEx due to the risk of exposure with COVID-19. The interview was conducted on September 14th.

*Figure 3*. Bianca's motivational orientation results throughout all four series.
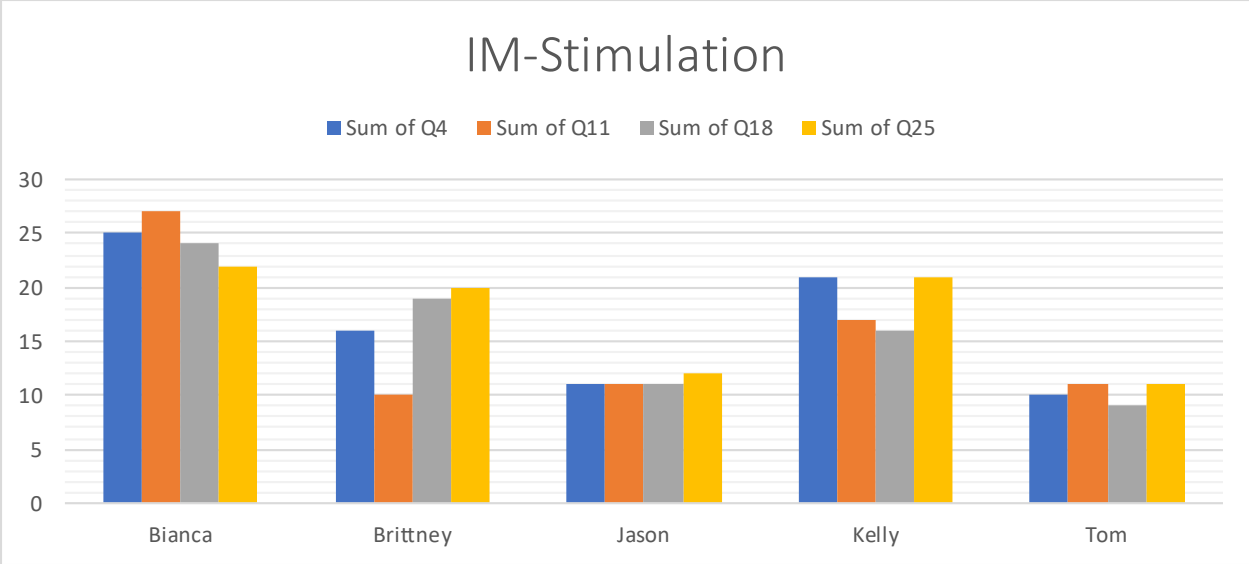
*Figure 4.* Motivational scoring by intrinsic motivation-stimulation from all participants.

There are three levels of intrinsic motivation: intrinsic motivation-to know, intrinsic motivation-stimulation, and intrinsic motivation-accomplished. According to Brittany's survey results, her highest assessment results indicated she was intrinsically motivated-to know (see Figure 5). According to her survey results, Brittney's highest assessment results indicated she was intrinsically motivated categorized as intrinsic motivated-to know (IM-to know). As a reminder, intrinsic motivation-to know engaging in activities because of the pleasure and satisfaction derived from learning, exploring, and understanding new things. Brittney's results remained high and consistent throughout the entire duration of the assessment series. Additionally, her assessment results in the area of IM-to know persisted higher than her peers (see Figure 6).

### *Kelly*

Kelly is a Black female. At the time of the interviews, she was a second-year student from Rocky Mount, North Carolina, in Nash County. Based on the rurality ranking, Chatham County ranks as a Tier 1 county in North Carolina. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Chatham County's median household income is $49,537.00, with 16% of the population were below the poverty line. Kelly is an only child and was raised by a single mother.

As an art major, she plans to become a teacher as well as a freelance artist. She is involved on campus as a member of the student government association, the Flight bridge program, and the art club. Furthermore, Kelly was a part of the summer immersive component of the program. The interview with Kelly took 20 minutes to complete. The transcription of this interview was five pages in length. The interview took place via WebEx due to the risk of exposure with COVID-19. The interview was conducted on September 23rd.
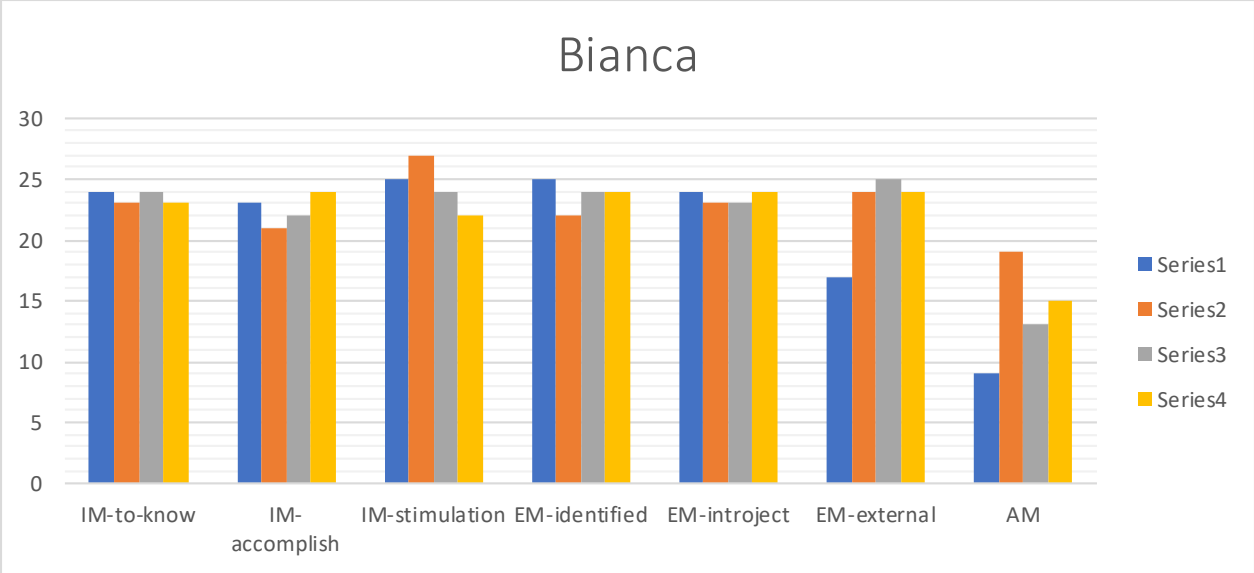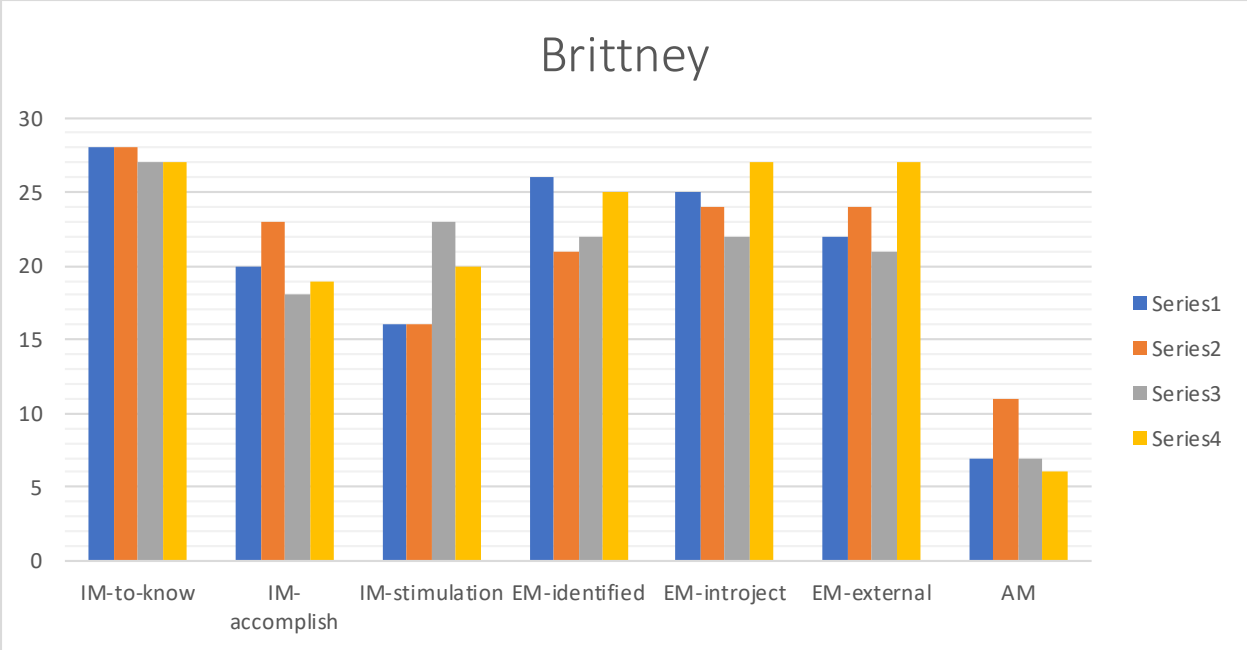
*Figure 5*. Brittney's motivational orientation results throughout all four series.
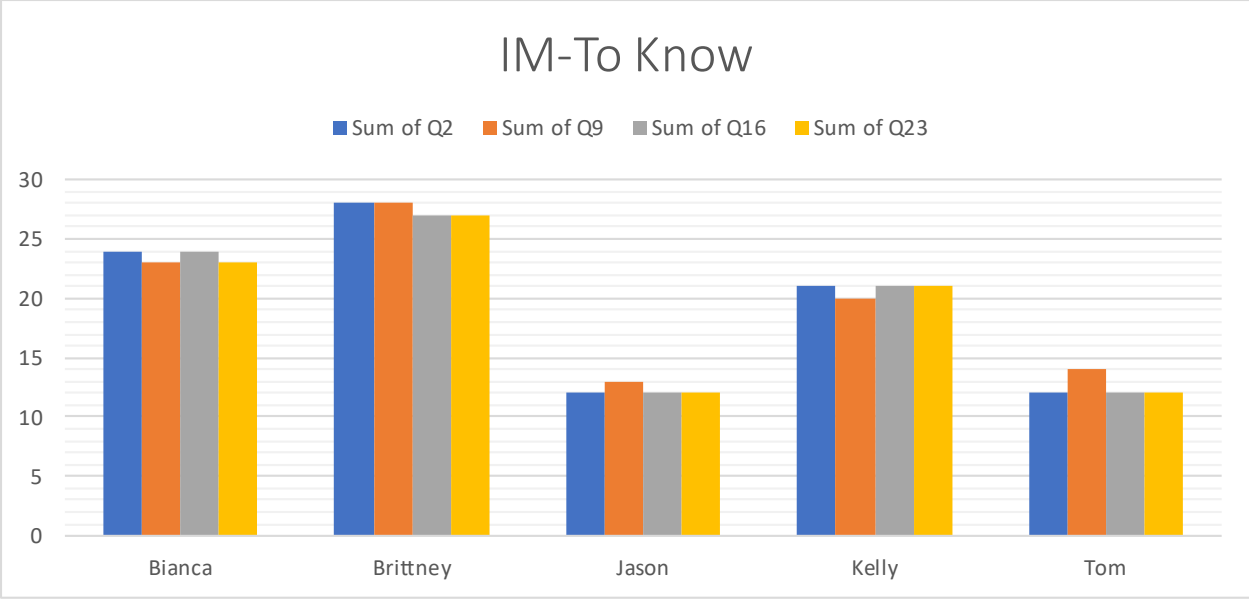
*Figure 6.* Motivational scoring by intrinsic motivation-to know from all participants.

According to her survey results, Kelly's highest assessment results indicated she was intrinsically motivated categorized as intrinsic motivated- accomplished (IM-accomplished). As a reminder, intrinsic motivation-accomplished means engaging in activities because of the pleasure and satisfaction derived from learning, exploring, and understanding new things. Kelly's results were high initially and declined throughout the series (see Figure 7). Nevertheless, her assessment as IM-accomplished was higher than her peers throughout (see Figure 8). Towards the end of the study, she became even more intrinsically motivated, registering a high motivation score of 27 in September 2020 and November 2020.

*Tom*

Tom is a Black male, and at the time of the interviews, he was a first-year student from Mebane, North Carolina, in Alamance County. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2019), Alamance County's median household income is $49,688.00, with 16.60% of the population were below the poverty line. The tier ranking of Alamance County is Tier 2. As a nursing major, Tom plans to become a nurse anesthetist. His involvement at Hillman includes playing on the football team and track team and being a member of the Flight bridge program. He is the youngest of five siblings; when interviewed, he expressed his joy in attending Hillman University, his first-choice institution. Tom was a part of the non-immersed component of the program. The interview was conducted on September 17th and was held virtually via WebEx due to the risk of exposure with COVID-19. The recorded portion of the interview was approximately 20 minutes, with the transcription being six pages in length.

There are three extrinsic motivation levels: extrinsic motivation-identified, extrinsic motivation-introject, and extrinsic motivation-external. According to Tom's survey results, his highest assessment results indicated he was extrinsically motivated-introject. As a reminder,
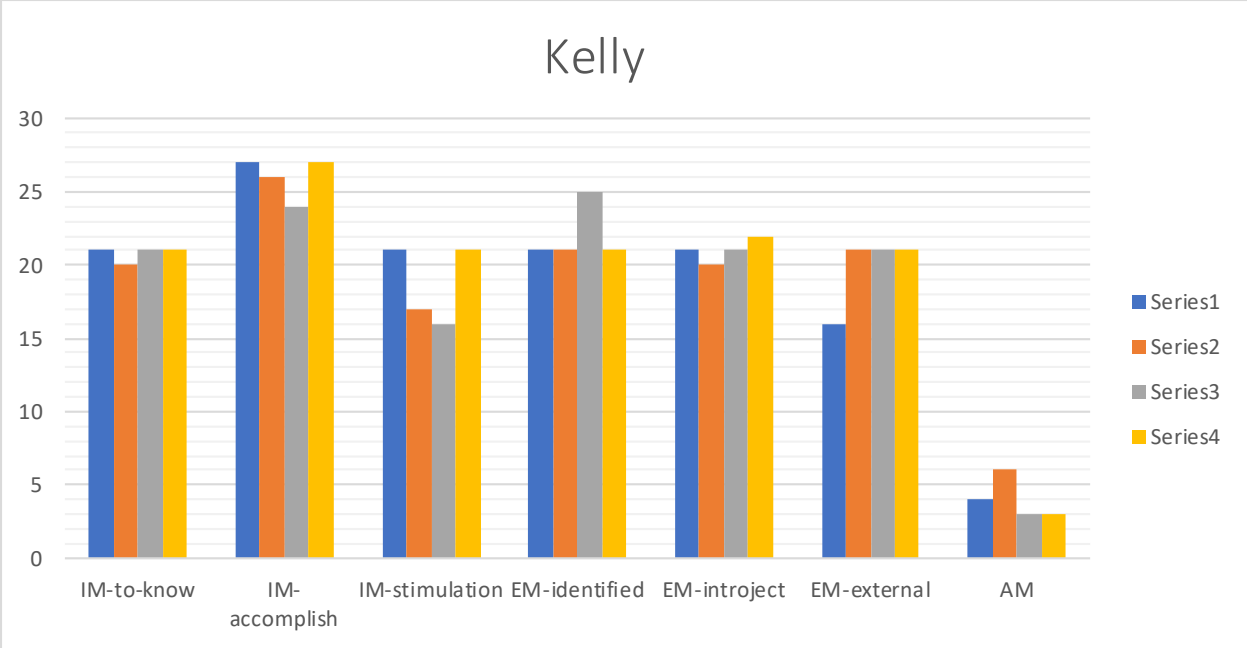
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*Figure 7*. Kelly's motivational orientation results throughout all four series.
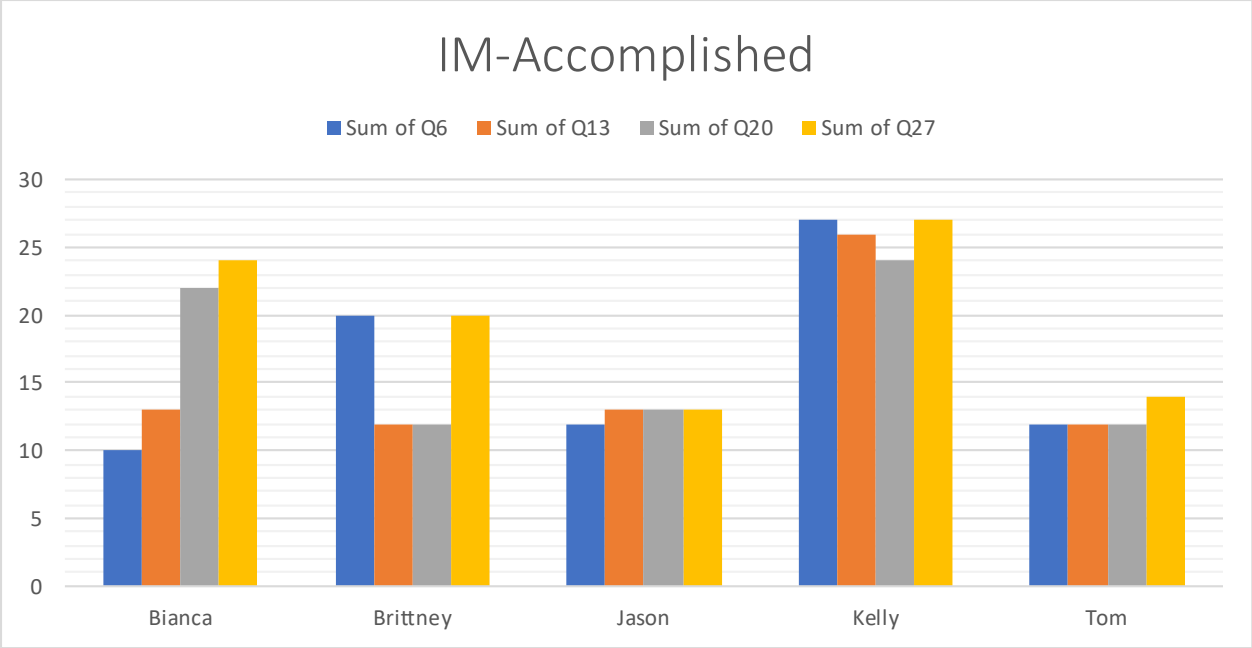
*Figure 8.* Motivational scoring by intrinsic motivation-accomplished from all participants.

extrinsic motivation-introject-acts are influenced by their environments, and, in turn, they bring that influence inside of themselves (see Figure 9). He became even more extrinsically motivated throughout the study, registering a high motivation score of 28 in September. Tom's results remained high initially and declined throughout the middle of the series compared to his peers' assessment results as an EM-Introject persisted higher than his peers (see Figure 10). Therefore, Tom was more motivated by his environment and subject to more external presses on his motivation.

**Aggregate Results**

*Intrinsic Motivation by Gender*

The scholarly practitioner broke down the assessment results based on gender, summer immersion, and non-summer-immersion participants. Figures 11 and 12 summarize the overall by gender for each of the motivational orientations. The female's orientation remained higher than the male's motivational orientation. The results reveal that there is no difference between the summer-immersed females and the non-summer-immersed female. However, there is a difference the females and males by the overall scores of their motivational orientation.

*Intrinsic Motivation by Emergent Experience*

Figure 13 summarizes the overall motivation by summer immersed and non-summer immersed for each of the motivational orientations. The results were gathered by totaling the overall scores of each motivational orientation established by the participants' experiences. The results indicate that the non-summer-immersed participants' overall motivational orientations were higher centered on the total number of each participant's scoring.
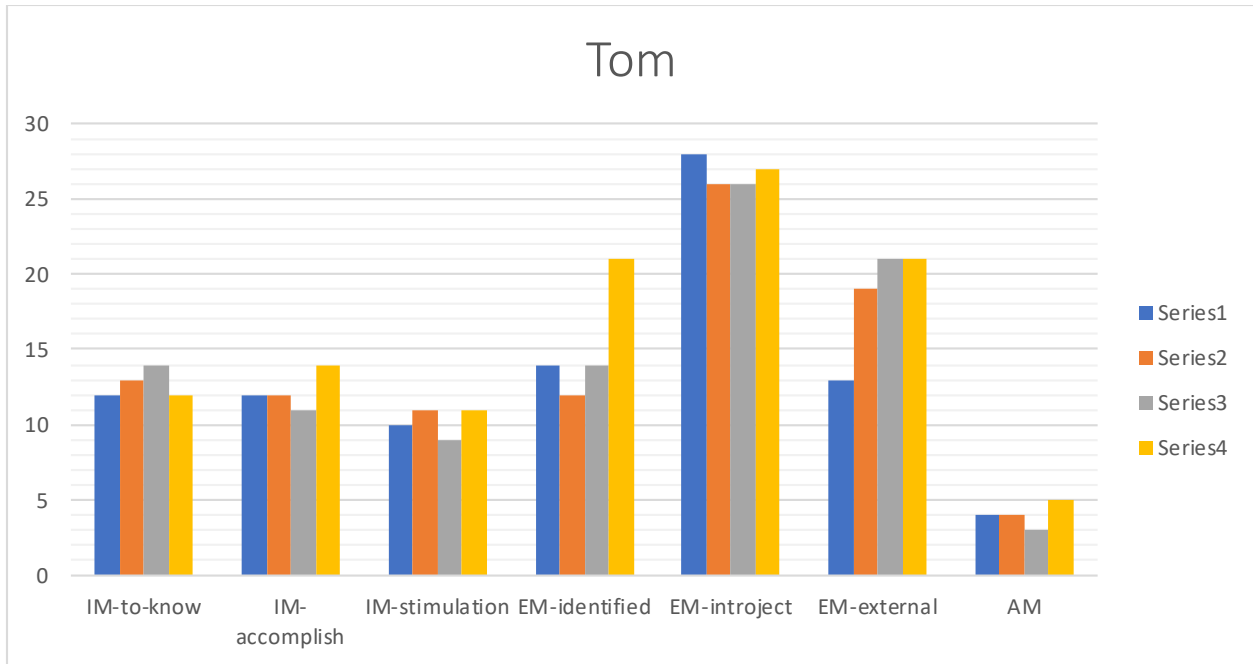
*Figure 9.* Tom's motivational orientation results throughout all four series.
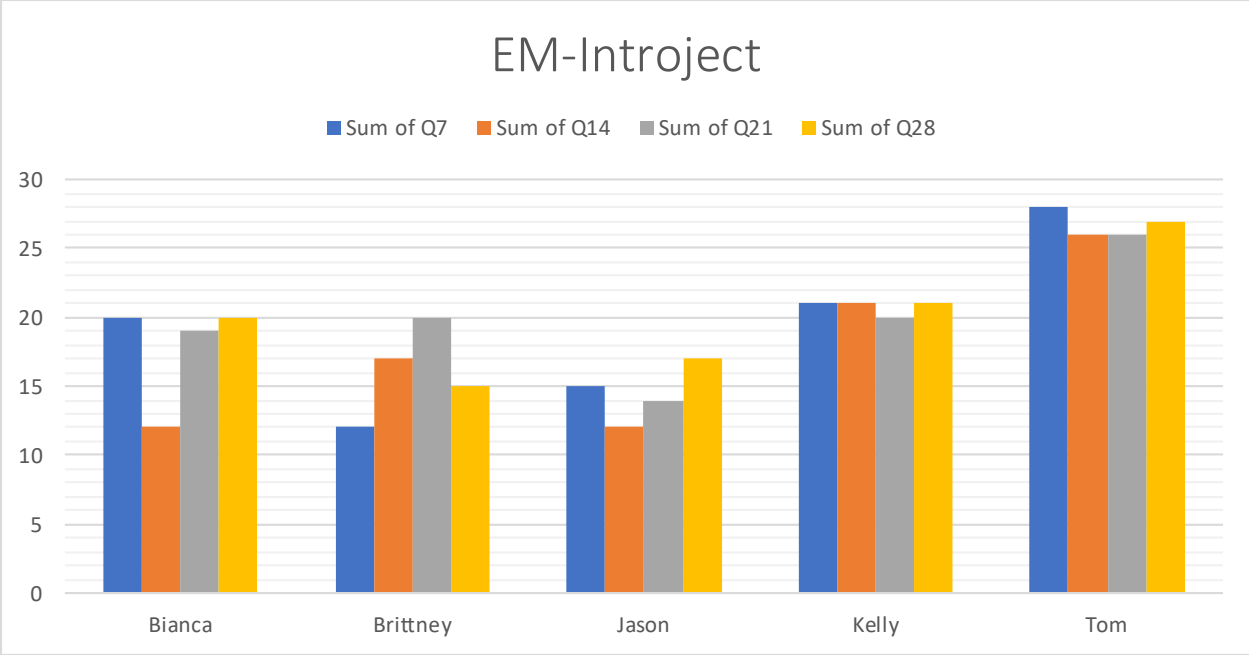
*Figure 10.* Motivational scoring by extrinsic motivation-identified from all participants.
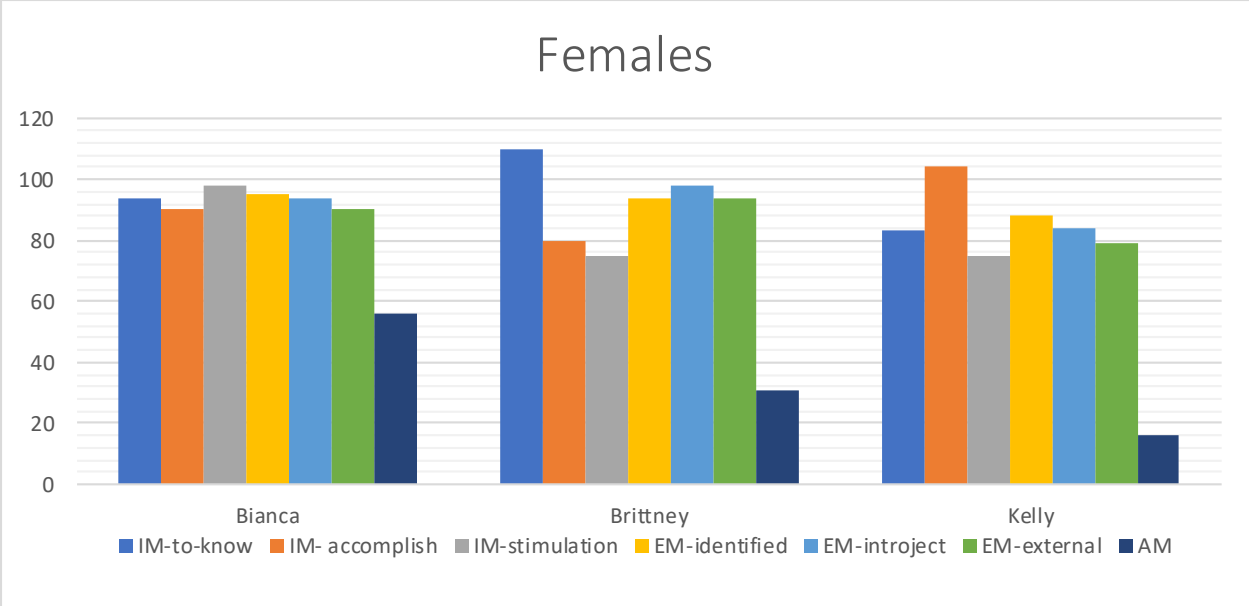
*Figure 11.* Motivational orientations by females.
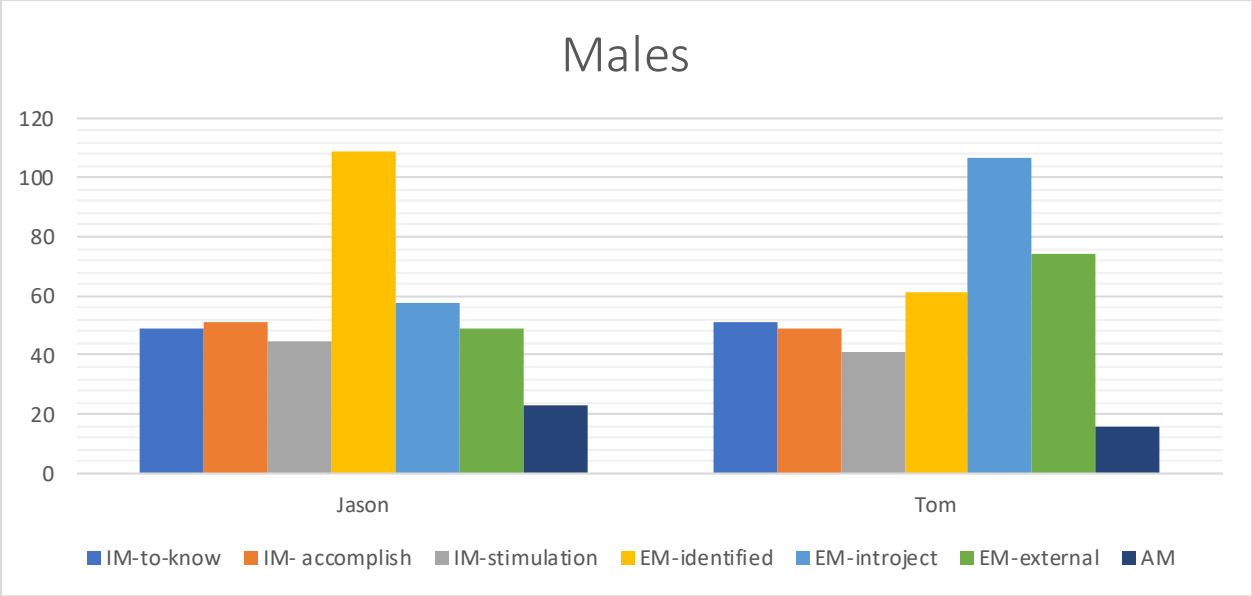
*Figure 12*. Motivational orientations by males.
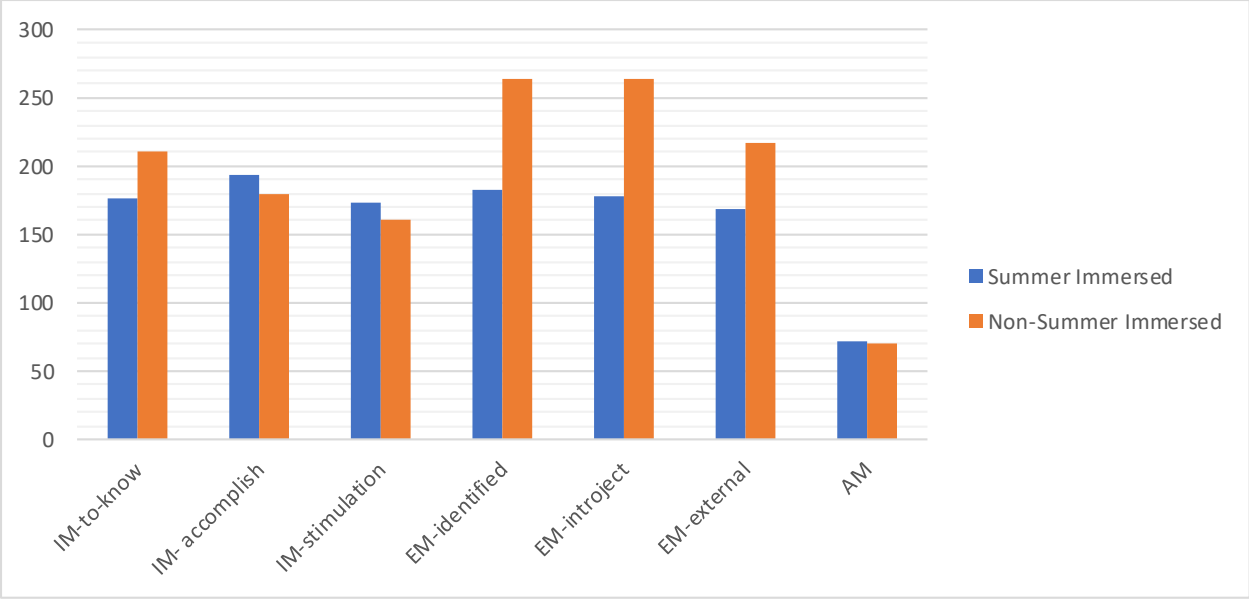
*Figure 13.* Motivational orientations by experiences.

**Qualitative Data Collection – Student Interviews**

The interviews were conducted between September 11 and September 28, 2020. All five of the interviews were held virtually via WebEx, an online platform. Each interview varied in length; no interview lasted longer than 30 minutes. Each interview was recorded and transcribed. Before beginning each interview, the scholarly practitioner thanked the participants for agreeing to be interviewed and participate in the research study. After completing their interviews, all participants received notification by email about their bi-weekly surveys.

The scholarly practitioner collected and safely secured each interview response on a password-protected computer. Once the participant acknowledged that they had no further questions about the study and signed the consent form, the scholarly practitioner could begin the interview. Participants were also asked if they would consent to the recording of the interview. When the participant agreed, the recording of the session began. A copy of the consent form that included contact information for the scholarly practitioner was provided to each participant.

## Results

Participants for this study were purposefully selected to best help understand the problem and research questions (Creswell, 2013). The students' responses were migrated to a Microsoft Word document from the transcription within the Otter platform. The Otter application identifies repetitive words as a guide to begin the process of coding and identifying themes. The scholarly practitioner began with these suggestions and determined the most relevant and useful identifiers that summarized and captured the essence of the information provided by the participants. Once the data was organized, initial codes were developed using a deductive approach based on the conceptual framework used in the study.

When reviewing the audio recordings, the scholarly practitioner identified codes that emerged from first impressions. "A code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 39). This process allowed the scholarly practitioner to organize the interviews, extract appropriate codes, and identify patterns. "A pattern is repetitive, regular, or consistent occurrences of action/data that appear more than twice. They become more trustworthy evidence for our findings" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 39). Their shared accounts presented are from lived experiences through active participation in the program at Hillman University.

A visual representation of this is shown in Table 1. This representation shows that the Four themes emerged from the many codes: (1) family influence; (2) support; (3) sports; and (4) transition. Motivational factors were gathered through administered surveys to examine to identify further if the students would persist in college based on their motivational factors. The scholarly practitioner requested data and conducted the study to ensure consistency throughout the process. This process of evaluating transcriptions and selecting codes concluded with identifying five themes, analysis of the data, and interpretation of the findings.

**Family Influence**

In the interview, I asked students to discuss their top motivators for college continuation as a way to get a sense of the essence that played into their decision-making process. The scholarly practitioner used quotes from the participants to demonstrate how the themes persist through the five students' narratives. In speaking with the students about their motivation to pursue and continue their college education, all five interviewed students explained that their motivation came from family or close family members.

Table 1

*Qualitative Data Codes and Themes*

| Codes | Resulting Themes |
|---|---|
| First-Generation Student-Athlete Football Transition Onboarding Family Influence | Importance of transitioning from high school to college |
| First-Generation Transition Support Onboarding Early Access | Importance of the relationship created between student and staff |
| Early Access Transition Onboarding First-Generation Support Mentorship | Collaboration to provide resources on campus in support of rural, first-generation students. |
| Student Athletics Transition Support Family Influence COVID-19 | Focus on structure and experiences for students. |
| Family Influence Support Belonging Onboarding Family Environment of campus | Expansion of programs during the summer for rural, first-generation students. |

While interviewing each participant, Jason and Tom simply expressed "family," however, Bianca specified, "My little brother, and other family members motivated me to go to college." Kelly shared, "My mom. She really helped motivate me, because she is the one that told me out of everybody to talk, she told me to continue my passion to go with my passion with art. My mom told me to go with my heart and my passion." While Brittney shared the same sentiments as Jason and Tom; however, she mentioned, "My mom and dad because I am the first of my family to go to college." In learning about their motivators, most of the students mentioned having their family as their motivation keeps them accountable as they continue their education. College is the ticket out of poverty and exposes students to a world outside of their community. Kelly mentioned,

> My parents did not tell me about college, because like their generation was set up. They did not know much about college. They told me that I should go into a college, and they encouraged me, my mom motivated me to go to a university to get out of Rocky Mount. Just getting out of Rocky Mount is my main goal because it is not much there to do out there.

## Support

Support appears to play an integral role in the success of students academically, personally, and socially. Students voiced the importance of support as it relates to being a first-generation college student. Having support throughout the program provided accountability throughout their matriculation up to the point of the interview. The program provides a director, peer mentorship, and a cohort model. Each student in the program is assigned a peer mentor; these mentors are also a part of the program. Most of their exchanges are based on individual

meetings, guidance with their academics, personal, emotional, and, at times, mental during the director and student interactions.

Bianca expressed,

I am glad to be the first-generation to start a legacy for my family, but when it came to knowing how to maneuver in college, it was different. Learning how to connect with people and navigate campus life was a journey. However, being a part of an organization such as the Flight program provided a sense of belonging. I cannot imagine not being in the program because a lot of what I know is based on my summer experience and living with my cohort. We all went through the same college experience together.

Kelly stated,

The Flight program changed my life and how I navigated my first year. I had a lot of friends who did not have the support that we received throughout the year. The accountability by my director and peer mentor actually made me stay on top of my work with mandatory study hall and meetings with the director. I looked forward to our meetings because I knew I had to provide a monthly update on my academics and overall wellbeing. This support I wish the university would give to all freshmen because I do not know what I would do without the Flight bridge program.

**Sports**

The Flight program typically engages 20 students each year. During their interviews, Jason and Tom mentioned their motivation derived from participating in their football and track teams. When asked about college choice, the answer in Tom and Jason's interview was athletics. When asked, "What made you choose your current institution?" Tom responded, "[Hillman] was my top choice to go to college. I wanted to be a part of their track and football team."

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Jason expressed, "I received a football scholarship, and I really wanted to go to an HBCU. This decision was easy to make, and I am happy with my choice to attend [Hillman]." During their interview, both students mentioned that their first impression was based on their visit and the warm feeling they received immediately after entering campus. Jason and Tom were motivated to attend their institution based on their interest in playing football and an opportunity to attend Hillman University by participating in the Flight bridge program.

**Transition**

High school to college can be electrifying and stressful at the same time. The interview participants expressed that the transition from high school to college was challenging to navigate; they recognized that being a part of a specialized program geared to underrepresented students made it manageable to persevere. Though some of the students' experiences were different, the transition from high school to college appears to have had a similar impact on each student interviewed. Kelly mentioned,

> I felt like my transition was smooth. I would had loved to be able to go home for at least one weekend. It was hard just not seeing my mom or my family from home; I was homesick. I got used to it eventually. The summertime kept us busy, which was great for me because I did not have time to focus on being homesick.

Meanwhile, Bianca expressed her transition as:

When it came to knowing how to maneuver in college, it was different. I was so used to being in a lot of programs and organizations in high school, and I did the same when entering college. However, I overextended myself my first semester in college and I learned quickly to pace yourself.

Tom directly answered the question regarding transition:

> Not entering college during COVID-19. That transition was challenging because it
>
> altered my senior and college experience. Everything is online from classes to programs
>
> on campus. It is hard to meet people outside of your resident hall or the Flight program.
>
> We hear so many stories about how your freshmen year should be and how much fun we
>
> should have, but truthfully speaking, it is hard and a little depressing.

### Analysis of the Research Questions

In this section, I present answers to the research questions explored in this study. I reiterate that these are tentative answers as due to limitations posed by pandemic constraints, further inquiry is needed to affirm or disaffirm results in a non-crisis setting.

The first research question was: How do summer bridge programs influence rural first-generation Black college students' integration during their first year of college at an HBCU? Due to the pandemic, a natural experiment emerged wherein students were participating in the Flight program who had engaged in the summer immersion program and those who had not. There seemed to be greater intrinsic motivation among the students who participated in the summer immersion program, as evidenced in their motivational scores.

The second question was: What aspects of the summer bridge program influence the intrinsic motivation of these students? During the interviews, summer-immersed students tended to engage more with me, which is likely a function of the greater opportunity to build relationships through the program. However, the greatest difference seemed to be by gender, participation in the summer immersion experience notwithstanding. Men in the study tended to be more extrinsically motivated, while women were more intrinsically motivated. Further work

beyond the scope of the present study is needed to confirm the influence of summer immersion experiences by gender.

The third question was: What are the shared lived experiences of rural, first-generation Black students who participate in a summer bridge program at an HBCU? Four common themes emerged across all students participating in the summer bridge program, whether immersed or not summer immersed. In the theme of family influence, students articulated family contributing majorly towards their motivation and why they continue their education at Hillman University. In the theme of support, students stated that

> the support in bridge program is genuine and consistent; everyone wants the best for you and is willing to help in any way. I would tell my friends who was not a part of the program that their missed out on an invaluable experience.

Athletics was also a significant theme in the motivations of men in the study. Finally, in the theme of transition, students shared that the benefits of participating in the Flight program provided a positive impact as they transitioned to Hillman University.

## Summary

This qualitative case study presented an opportunity to explore the academic motivation for Black, first-generation students from rural communities at a historically Black university while utilizing qualitative research methods to provide a descriptive analysis of motivation between summer immersed and non-summer immersed participants. The finding revealed the summer immersed students showed a trend of consistent scoring throughout the series of assessments revealing the summer immersed students within this study had higher levels of motivation ranged from IM (accomplished, then scaling down to stimulation and to-know) and EM (identified, and slightly down to introject and then external. The non-summer immersed

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overall motivational orientation revealed a trend of EM (identified, introject, and then external) and IM (to-know, accomplished, and then stimulation). This trend was steady for students across demographics, with a-motivation being the lowest indicated level. One component the scholarly practitioner noticed was the drastic scoring of the non-summer immersed participants; the scoring was higher based on Brittney's overall motivational orientation results. Brittney's scoring made the sub-group overall scoring higher than the summer immersed participants.

There were, however, some differences between gender types. The females within the study showed a trend of higher levels of motivation moving down from EM (descending from to identified, to introject, and then to external), to IM (descending from to-know, to towards accomplished and then to stimulation), with a-motivation being the lowest indicated levels. The males within the study showed a trend of higher levels of motivation moving down from EM (descending from to identified, to introject, and then to external), to IM (descending from accomplished, to towards to-know and then to stimulation), with a-motivation being the lowest indicated levels. The male scoring results were based on two participants and a total of five within the peak of a global pandemic; no significant differences between groups were found.

Qualitative data analysis revealed four factors contributing to student motivation. They were: (a) Family Influence, (b) Support, (c) Sports, and (d) Transition. The next chapter will expand upon the findings from qualitative analysis and provide interpretations, implications of the study, and recommendations for future actions.

## CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Research has suggested that first-generation and rural students can be categorized as an "at-risk" and disadvantaged population due to a lack of academic preparedness and unforeseen expectations (Atherton, 2014). Unpreparedness has been deemed a significant contributor to these students not completing their degrees; thus, retention and attrition are markedly impacted. My goal was to examine the intrinsic motivation of first-generation students of color residing in rural communities. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the motivational factors of rural, first-generation college students, how summer bridge programs aim to assist these students, and the unique challenges faced in their collegiate experience due to a new environment. I utilized a qualitative method to investigate how a summer bridge program impacted the intrinsic motivation of this rural population.

### Summary of the Findings

This chapter includes a discussion of major findings related to the literature related to attrition and persistence among first-generation, rural students. Additionally, this chapter will address intrinsic and extrinsic motivation among a summer bridge cohort of first-generation, rural students at a Historically Black College/University in the UNC system. Implications for additional research on this group can assist with narrowing the educational gap among first-generation, rural students that appears to exist within higher education. Also included is a discussion on emerging themes related to and motivational factors of study participants. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the study, areas for future research, and a brief synopsis.

This chapter contains discussion and future research possibilities to help answer the research questions:

- (R1): How do summer bridge programs influence rural first-generation Black college students' integration during their first year of college at an HBCU?

- (R2): What aspects of the summer bridge program influence the intrinsic motivation of these students?

- (R3): What are the shared lived experiences of rural, first-generation Black students who participate in a summer bridge program at an HBCU?

Student motivational factors were gathered through administered surveys to identify student propensity further to persist in college. I found a trend of consistent scoring in assessments for the summer immersed students. These students exhibited higher levels of internal motivation than external motivation. Students who were not immersed in the summer bridge program demonstrated higher levels of external motivation than internal motivation. However, these differences also have gender attributions, and further exploration is needed to clarify the results. A-motivation was ranked as lowest among all participants. Four themes emerged from the qualitative interviews: (1) family influence, (2) support, (3) sports, and (4) transition.

## Interpretation of the Findings

Byun et al. (2017) indicated that developmental and sociological researchers recognized several significant predictors of educational outcomes in students. In summary, developmental and sociological researchers have identified many important predictors of students' educational outcomes. In combination with individual characteristics (e.g., gender, ethnicity/race, and

academic ability), family- and school-related contextual factors can shape educational aspirations, college attendance, and graduation among rural youth.

While their motivational factors and differing life experiences may include variation for each individual, each of the four common themes was a prominent factor in motivating the participants interviewed for this study throughout their journey in the academy. These themes have a dynamic composition to them. Each theme is described in detail in the following sections.

## Family Influence as a Motivational Factor

Many scholars believe that family backgrounds play a crucial role in the educational outcome of students. Family engagement, interaction, and participation in educational activities help students complete their educational endeavors. A lack of such social supports may result in low integration and a lack of success (Woolsey & Shepler, 2011). Family background has been correlated with the academic outcomes of students. Socioeconomic status has also been correlated with student motivation as families that have the financial means can invest both time and resources into their child's academic endeavors. For those that may not necessarily have the financial means, the support still appears to exist. Such support comes from parents emotionally motivating their children and instilling feelings of success. Researchers have noted that parents' expectations of their children's performance or achievement have influenced their children's motivation. Parental involvement can also play a significant role in the lives of their children's education and their motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2012). If a parent is heavily engaged in the education of their child, the child establishes feelings of being able to handle the academic rigor, control, inquisitiveness, and an overall positive attitude about their educational endeavors.

Within this study, five participants cited that family was a major influencer on their decision to attend college and served as primary motivators. Family members catalyzed for students to pursue their education and as motivators for them to continue moving forward. One participant stated that although her family was not knowledgeable about the undergirding of college, they equated success with being educated and supported their student with gaining a college education. Familial support contributed to the student's intrinsic motivation as the support they received assisted with establishing autonomy, enhanced self-determination, and strengthened educational decision-making.

## Support as a Motivational Factor

Support for students can be multifaceted, not only inclusive of parents but also peers, instructors, and mentors. All of these persons collectively can be referred to as social supports. Backing from both educators and parents has served as a mediator against an academic decline in educational engagement. Simply put, the more support that a student receives from parents, teachers, peers, and external persons, the more impact there is on their levels of motivation and engagement.

A plethora of studies have been conducted on social support as motivational factors for engagement, and this has been held in academia. Deci and Ryan (2000) stated that content-oriented and process-oriented motivational theories suggest that a person's behavior can be predicated upon the stimuli that motivate the individual, external or internal. Deci and Ryan (1996) stated that social factors could determine both internal and external motivation. Such factors could include families, teachers, friends, and peers with which students frequently interact. Often people require support from others to assist in overcoming the educational and social challenges experienced. For them to be successful, social support elements are needed.

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These same social supports are provided in the program that our study participants engaged in and were notated in the findings.

Results from this study demonstrated that support played a role in academic, personal, and social success. The success was measured through the utilization of peer mentors, cohort engagement, and specific leadership; students acknowledged feeling more accountable and more motivated to succeed academically. Study participants indicated feeling that a culmination of supports assisted in them being successful and feeling motivated in their educational endeavors. Similar to the research of Lonn et al. (2015), students who received support and specifically those who received support from myriad areas tended to be more motivated to do well and have the resources to do so. In the Flight Program, participants receive a great amount of support that helps to motivate them to do well. The encouragement that they receive assists to empower them to do well in their personal and academic endeavors.

### Sports as a Motivational Factor

There are several motivational elements behind human behavior. Deci and Ryan (2012) discussed intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. They mentioned that motives such as fun, personal challenges, and social affiliations were autonomous, leading individuals to exercise and sports in an intrinsic manner. Collegiate sports can provide many positive benefits for students. Participation or engagement in team sports can provide the benefits of inclusion, being able to develop time management and the ability to balance academics with sports obligation, the benefit of learning about committing to something meaningful, the benefit of constantly improving oneself, the benefit of many social engagement opportunities, and the benefit of growing one's identity. All of the previously mentioned can strengthen one's motivational abilities, both internally and externally.

Regarding the study participants, results yielded gender differences, although I did not specifically examine gender. The two male participants in the study indicated feeling motivated to attend the institution because they were chosen to play collegiate sports. Similar to the research of Stableton et al. (2014), the findings demonstrated that affiliation and a sense of belonging enhanced both their intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

## Transition as a Motivational Factor

Many students face difficulties with levels of preparation migrating from high school to college (Wang, 2014). They can be unprepared for the expectations and experiences that college can bring. As the research solidifies, there are many disparities that different populations of students face. Some students are impoverished, and some are more advantaged. Nevertheless, all students will experience some degree of challenge as they transition from high school to college. A lack of access can impede a fluid transition from high school to college for students from rural areas (Rall, 2016). The establishment of the Flight program provided the participants the academic and behavioral supports that aid with retention and persistence. The interventions and supports that were put in place assisted their overall motivation both intrinsically and extrinsically. The utilization of a summer bridge program is vitally necessary for the success of some students. Although one cannot control for all circumstances, the establishment of bridge programs can aid with the transition from high school to college as it did within the sample population.

Results from the study indicated that the participants felt a more fluid transition by their engagement in the summer bridge program. They expressed that they were more focused on their educational endeavors and were aided with the tools to help them transition better. The students

indicated being able to navigate through the transition better and the ability to persevere better. This assisted with their overall motivation.

## Research Questions Answered

In sum, the following research questions were examined and addressed. An answer synopsis is provided below:

- (R1): *How do summer bridge programs influence rural first-generation Black college students' integration during their first year of college at an HBCU?* The summer bridge program influenced Flight program participants in positive ways. By providing appropriate and adequate resources, students could navigate through the first semester of college more fluidly while being positively intrinsically and extrinsically motivated. Students are provided supports to assist them, thus affecting their motivation in positive ways. Students establish feelings of inclusiveness and are given guidance, educational tools, and resources necessary for success. Additionally, these students can be more resilient and have a greater propensity for retention and future persistence.

- (R2): *What aspects of the summer bridge program influence the intrinsic motivation of these students?* Peer mentors, a cohort dynamic, and program overseers assist students in developing and honing intrinsic motivation. Students develop a sense of having something to look forward to accomplishing by having such supports. Furthermore, students can learn the tactics and skills to help them intrinsically motivate themselves due to success being a major goal.

- (R3): *What are the shared lived experiences of rural, first-generation Black students who participate in a summer bridge program at an HBCU?* First-generation, rural,

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Black students share potential lack of access, lower socioeconomic status, educational unpreparedness, and differing levels of support. All of these components impacted the motivational levels among the participants in this study. However, students who participated in the Flight summer bridge program demonstrated positive intrinsic and extrinsic motivation levels by offering and utilizing supports provided in the program.

## Limitations of the Study

There were five participants in this study, half of the originally intended sample. This was partly due to unforeseen conditions impacting the research. Due to the impact of novel COVID-19, the study was markedly impacted. The research period took place in the summer of 2020 when the pandemic was running ramped. There was no summer immersion program for the summer 2020 cohort. Also, interviews and surveys were conducted and collected virtually. The virtual experience negatively influenced the quality of the discussions conducted during this study. The study also was comprised of immersed 2019 and non-immersed 2020 participants. Trustworthiness can also be a limitation because I assumed that the participants were honest with their responses.

## Implications of the Findings for Practice

### The Importance of a Summer Bridge Program

I determined how necessary it is to have a summer bridge program for first-generation, rural students. These students come from varying backgrounds and have different experiences. Socioeconomic status and family dynamic can impact the level of preparedness that a student transitioning from high school to college may have. Similarly, the levels or lack of support can markedly impact a student transitioning from high school to college. What I found was that by having the Flight program implemented, a small population of first-generation, rural college

students has been able to enhance their levels of motivation, thus being retained and overall persisting at HU. This might not be the case if such a program did not exist. By examining the research and witnessing the existing educational gaps, I determined that the bridge program positively influences participants. The interviews conducted substantiated the students' feelings about their engagement in the program and how it helped motivate them toward success.

**The Need for Mentorship Programs**

I determined that there is a need for more "bridge-like" programs to exist across the board. It may be necessary for institutions that serve high populations of first-generation and rural students to implement mentor and engagement-guided principles into their curriculum to reach more students. Due to a lack of funding and resources, all institutions cannot provide a summer bridge program for all students of this population. However, various components of the program can be implemented in first-year experience courses or through departmental engagement. If students are taught in a cohort, provided peer mentors, and receive a plethora of social supports, the propensity of a positive outcome for them would be great.

The results from this study impact the practice that we have at HU. Student retention and persistence are "hot topics" in higher education. The viability of institutions rests on whether or not they can retain their students and graduate them. For state institutions, funding is dispersed based on the number of students they have. The state government would like to see the return on their investment. For that to occur, students not only have to be retained, but they also have to graduate. With this being stated, the findings shed light on what is necessary for students to be motivated to succeed.

It was also discovered that students might possess the ability to self-motivate or need external factors to contribute to their motivation (Hardre & Reeve, 2003). All in all, this requires

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them to have experience with support and resources. Much guidance is needed for our students to succeed, primarily those from backgrounds where there was an initial deficiency. Additional research in this area may add to the body of knowledge and shed light on what other factors are necessary to help promote student success and contribute to student motivation.

## Recommendations

Participation in summer bridge programs for first-generation, rural college students is necessary and should continue. Many studies have been conducted specifically addressing motivators for student success. However, many studies have not included minority, first-generation, rural students, especially attending HBCUs (Chen et al., 2018). This needs to be examined. The examining of structured programs should be conducted so that there can be continued dialog about what is working for the population of students that HU serves. This requires more HBCUs to engage in the research to enhance the pre-existing body of knowledge.

As I was compiling the literature review, it became apparent that there was not a plethora of existing research conducted on summer bridge programs at HBCUs. Additionally, the specific research population had not been studied in great detail. This may be because of a lack of funding that exists within the institution to establish such programs. Dialogue needs to take place about governmental funding that can be funneled to HBCUs for programming purposes. Data can be provided to administrators to substantiate the success of these students and a need for more funding for programs such as these to be established.

Additionally, research studies such as this one should be replicated by those with similar bridge programs. It would be interesting to determine if their results yielded similarities. Different individuals' express different motivational factors, and it would be interesting to see what a similar population would express. More research on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation

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should be conducted across many HBCUs to determine what serves as positive factors towards motivation. Even if the institutions did not have summer bridge programs serving a special population such as this one, it would be interesting to determine the contributors and then cross-reference this against demographics. A nationwide study on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation could be conducted across HBCUs, thus significantly adding to the body of knowledge.

It would be interesting to recreate this study and conduct it on another cohort of students post-COVID. With more participation and normal operating standards in place, results may yield more significant outcomes. On the other hand, the research could have been more robust and yielded different results that could serve as generalizing factors due to the small number and unconventional operating standards.

## Conclusions

It is important to examine and discuss motivating factors for college students. The research has indicated that students can be intrinsically, extrinsically, a-motivated, or a combination of both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated. These motivational factors can differ from the different populations that are served. The focus of this study was to examine one population in general, the first-generation, rural population at Hillman University. The participants in this study were a part of a summer bridge program entitled the "Flight" program.

The cohort was comprised of students that entered the program in the summer of 2020. Unfortunately, the pandemic impacted the immersed engagement that a typical cohort experienced, thus impacting the number of participants. This affected the generalizability and potential trustworthiness of the results. Nonetheless, I was confident that the accounts of the students were true. Additional research related to motivational factors for this population is needed. If we are charged with retention and persistence in higher education, we must identify

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potential barriers within our students. If our students do not possess the ability to be motivated to learn, they will not be successful. Therefore, we should take advantage of research opportunities before us. We can examine the factors impacting retention and persistence and get ahead of them by implementing the appropriate resources for student success.

The results in this study suggested that there are four themes related to motivating factors in the success of a population of first-generation, rural students participating in a summer bridge program. The themes are as follows: (a) family influence; (b) support; (c) sports, and (d) transition. The participants in this study were honest in their statements and identified these themes as contributors to their intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors. There were similarities expressed as well as differences.

Hopefully, there will be a magnifying light shed on first-generation rural students, primarily those attending HBCUs. This light may shine on the fact that additional research on this population needs to occur to fully understand how our students are motivated. Once we are aware of the how we can then focus on the what in terms of what we can do as educators to enhance their levels of motivation and provide necessary and needed supports. This, in turn, will help us to see the return on educational investment through both retention and persistence.

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# APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

**EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY**
**University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board**
4N-64 Brody Medical Sciences Building· Mail Stop 682
600 Moye Boulevard · Greenville, NC 27834
Office **252-744-2914** · Fax **252-744-2284** · **rede.ecu.edu/umcirb/**

Notification of Exempt Certification

From:    Social/Behavioral IRB
To:      Kweneshia Price
CC:      Crystal Chambers
Date:    8/18/2020
Re:      UMCIRB19-003390
         INCREASING INTRINSIC MOTIVATION FOR BLACK RURAL, FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS THROUGH A SUMMER BRIDGE PROGRAM AT AN HISTORICALLY BLACK UNIVERSITY

I am pleased to inform you that your research submission has been certified as exempt on 8/17/2020. This study is eligible for Exempt Certification under category # 1 & 2a.

It is your responsibility to ensure that this research is conducted in the manner reported in your application and/or protocol, as well as being consistent with the ethical principles of the Belmont Report and your profession.

This research study does not require any additional interaction with the UMCIRB unless there are proposed changes to this study. Any change prior to implementing that change must be submitted to the UMCIRB for review and approval. The UMCIRB will determine if the change impacts the eligibility of the research for exempt status. If more substantive review is required, you will be notified within five business days.

| Document | Description |
| --- | --- |
| Academic Motivation Scale(0.01) | Surveys and Questionnaires |
| Consent Form (0.04) | Consent Forms |
| Dissertation Proposal (0.01) | Study Protocol or Grant Application |
| Interview Questions(0.01) | Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions |
| KP ECU Flyer(0.01) | Recruitment Documents/Scripts |

For research studies where a waiver or alteration of HIPAA Authorization has been approved, the IRB states that each of the waiver criteria in 45 CFR 164.512(i)(1)(i)(A) and (2)(i) through (v) have been met. Additionally, the elements of PHI to be collected as described in items 1 and 2 of the Application for Waiver of Authorization have been determined to be the minimum necessary for the specified research.

The Chairperson (or designee) does not have a potential for conflict of interest in this study.

**North Carolina Central University**

**IRB AUTHORIZATION AGREEMENT**

This Agreement is entered into by and between the institutions identified below.

**Name of Institution Providing IRB Review ("Reviewing Institution/IRB"):** University and Medical Center Institutional Review Board (UMCIRB) at East Carolina University (ECU)
Federalwide Assurance ("FWA") #: 00000658
IRB Registration #: 00003781 (Social/Behavioral IRB)

**Name of Institution Relying on the Designated IRB ("Relying Institution"):** North Carolina Central University
Federalwide Assurance ("FWA") #: FWA00001108

The Officials signing below agree that the Relying Institution may rely on the Reviewing Institution/IRB for review of its human subjects research as described:

(X) The agreement is limited to the following specific protocol(s):
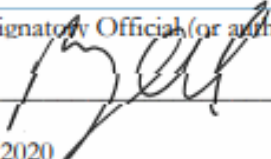
    **Name of Research Project:** INCREASING INTRINSIC MOTIVATION FOR BLACK RURAL , FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS THROUGH A SUMMER BRIDGE PROGRAM AT AN HISTORICALLY BLACK UNIVERSITY
    **IRB Study # at Reviewing Institution:**
    UMCIRB 19-003390 (Certified Exempt study)
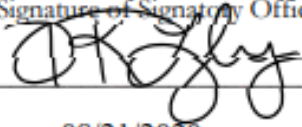
    **Principal Investigator at Reviewing Institution: Kweneshia Price (ECU student)**
    **IRB Study # at Relying Institution:**

    **Principal Investigator at Relying Institution: Kweneshia Price (NCCU employee)**

Signature of Signatory Official (or authorized designee) at Reviewing Institution/IRB:

Date:  08/20/2020
Full Name (Print): Mary Farwell
Institutional Title: Assistant Vice Chancellor and Institutional Official

Signature of Signatory Official (or authorized designee) at Relying Institution:

Date: 08/21/2020
Print Full Name: DeWarren K. Langley, JD, MPA
Institutional Title: Research Compliance Manager & IRB Administrator

**APPENDIX B: ACADEMIC MOTIVATION SCALE: COLLEGE VERSION (AMS-C 28)**

**ACADEMIC MOTIVATION SCALE (AMS-C 28)**

**COLLEGE (CEGEP) VERSION**

*Robert J. Vallerand, Luc G. Pelletier, Marc R. Blais, Nathalie M. Brière,*
*Caroline B. Senécal, Évelyne F. Vallières, 1992-1993*

*Educational and Psychological Measurement, vols. 52 and 53*

**Scale Description**

**This scale assesses the same 7 constructs as the Motivation scale toward College (CEGEP) studies. It contains 28 items assessed on a 7-point scale.**

**References**

**Vallerand, R. J., Blais, M. R., Brière, N. M., & Pelletier, L. G. (1989). Construction et validation de l'Échelle de Motivation en Éducation (EME). Revue canadienne des sciences du comportement, 21, 323-349.**

## WHY DO YOU GO TO COLLEGE (CEGEP)?

*Using the scale below, indicate to what extent each of the following items presently corresponds to one of the reasons why you go to college (CEGEP).*

| Does not correspond at all | Corresponds a little | Corresponds moderately | Corresponds a lot | Corresponds exactly |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

*WHY DO YOU GO TO COLLEGE (CEGEP) ?*

1. Because with only a high-school degree, I would not find a high-paying job later on.    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

2. Because I experience pleasure and satisfaction while learning new things.    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

3. Because I think that a college (CEGEP) education will help me    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

4. For the intense feelings I experience when I am communicating my own ideas to others.    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

5. Honestly, I don't know; I really feel that I am wasting my time in school.    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

6. For the pleasure I experience while surpassing myself in my studies.    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

7. To prove to myself that I am capable of completing my college (CEGEP) degree.    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

8. In order to obtain a more prestigious job later on.    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

9. For the pleasure I experience when I discover new things never seen before.    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

10. Because eventually, it will enable me to enter the job market in a field that I like.    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

11. For the pleasure that I experience when I read interesting authors.    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

12. I once had good reasons for going to college (CEGEP); however, now I wonder whether I should continue.

    1    2    3    4    5    6    7

13. For the pleasure that I experience while I am surpassing myself in one of my personal accomplishments.

    1    2    3    4    5    6    7

14. Because of the fact that when I succeed in college (CEGEP) I feel important.

    1    2    3    4    5    6    7

15. Because I want to have "the good life" later on.

    1    2    3    4    5    6    7

    1    2    3    4    5

| Does Not Correspond at all | Corresponds a little | | Corresponds moderately | Corresponds a lot | | Correspond exactly |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

*WHY DO YOU GO TO COLLEGE (CEGEP)?*

16. For the pleasure that I experience in broadening my knowledg about subjects that appeal to me.

    1    2    3    4    5    6    7

17. Because this will help me make a better choice regarding my career orientation.

    1    2    3    4    5    6    7

18. For the pleasure that I experience when I feel completely absorbed by what certain authors have written.

    1    2    3    4    5    6    7

19. I can't see why I go to college (CEGEP), and frankly, I couldn't care less.

    1    2    3    4    5    6    7

20. For the satisfaction I feel when I am in the process of accomplishing difficult academic activities.

    1    2    3    4    5    6    7

21. To show myself that I am an intelligent person.

    1    2    3    4    5    6    7

22. In order to have a better salary later on.

    1    2    3    4    5    6    7

23. Because my studies allow me to continue to learn about many things that interest me.

    1    2    3    4    5    6    7

24. Because I believe that a few additional years of education will improve my competence as a worker.

    1    2    3    4    5    6    7

25. For the "high" feeling that I experience while reading about various interesting subjects.

    1    2    3    4    5    6    7

26. I don't know; I can't understand what I am doing in school.

    1    2    3    4    5    6    7

27. Because college (CEGEP) allows me to experience personal satisfaction in my quest for excellence in my studies.

    1    2    3    4    5    6    7

28. Because I want to show myself that I can succeed in my studies.

    1    2    3    4    5    6    7

# KEY FOR AMS-28

**# 2, 9, 16, 23   Intrinsic motivation - to know**

**# 6, 13, 20, 27 Intrinsic motivation - toward accomplishment**

**# 4, 11, 18, 25 Intrinsic motivation - to experience stimulation**

**# 3, 10, 17, 24 Extrinsic motivation - identified**

**# 7, 14, 21, 28 Extrinsic motivation - introjected**

**# 1, 8, 15, 22   Extrinsic motivation - external regulation**

**# 5, 12, 19, 26 A-motivation**

Hello!  My name is Kweneshia, and I'm a graduate student from East Carolina University. I'm here to learn about your experiences as a first-generation college student, particularly tied to onboarding and your first semester. Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. The purpose of this interview is to learn about the onboarding process at Hillman University and determine what additional means of support would benefit first-generation students during the process. Onboarding is the application, financial aid, orientation, advising, registration, financial aid, getting your textbooks…everything that leads to your first day of class. I would like you to feel comfortable saying what you really think and how you really feel; this interview will take approximately 45 minutes. Everything you say will remain confidential and be used only for my research purposes, meaning you will not be individually identified and linked to your answers.

If it's OK with you, I will be recording our conversation since it is hard for me to write down everything you say while being attentive to my conversation with you. I may also contact you via e-mail for a few follow-up questions after this interview. Please know I appreciate your help very much.

| Data | Question | Follow-up/prompts |
|---|---|---|
| Personal Demographics | What is your name? | Where are you from? |
| High school programs/interventions | Tell me a little bit about your high school experience (did counselors talk to you about college, programs, etc.) | |
| Motivation Factors | What are your top motivators for college continuation? | |
| Means of support/meanings and beliefs | Tell me about your family. Did they talk to you about college?  Are you the first family member to enroll in college? | What does it mean to you to be a first-generation student? |
| Expectations before attendance | How did you decide to come to NCCU? | What was appealing about it to you? What factored into this decision? |
| Pinpoint frustrations/ highs and lows of the process; pinpoint stage where most support is needed | Walk me through your onboarding process, so from the time you applied to the time you attended your first day of class.  What did you like/learn? | What would have made it smoother for you? (tour, mentor, counselor, activities) |

| Data | Question | Follow-up/prompts |
|---|---|---|
| Summer Bridge Experience | What part did you enjoy the most?<br><br>How has participating in a summer bridge program impacted your college experience? | |
| Experiences during attendance/pinpoint where support is needed | Please describe your experiences during your first semester. How did your expectations match up with your experiences? | Tell me a story about any experiences you had during your transition where you were reminded that you are a first-generation student. |
| Literature states first-gen do not get involved, and this affects retention; pull in support mechanisms/pinpoint future plans (retention) | Are you involved on campus? In what activities are you involved? Why/why not/what would pique your interest?<br>What are your future goals/plans? Do you discuss these with your family or someone on campus? | |
| | If you had one piece of advice for a first-gen student from a rural county about to embark on their journey here, what would it be? | (what do you wish you would have known?) |
| | Is there anything you wish I would have asked but did not ask? | Anything you want to add/clarify? |