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Understanding the Transition Experience of Students Transferring from a Latin American International Branch Campus to Its Us Main Campus

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UNDERSTANDING THE TRANSITION EXPERIENCE OF STUDENTS TRANSFERRING FROM A LATIN AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL BRANCH CAMPUS TO ITS US MAIN CAMPUS

By

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This dissertation is dedicated

to the memory of my father, who could not be with me in my major academic and personal milestone but who lives in everything I do and achieve; his work ethic and resilience were the scaffolding on which I built my life projects, and this dissertation bears evidence of this;

to my sweet mother, who lives far away in physical space but whose warmth and care nurture me every moment, and to my beloved brother, who has always shown me love and admiration;

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ABSTRACT

Students are in constant transition as they move from one academic institution to another, from one academic level to another, from one major to another, or from college to the world of the work (Killam & Degges-White, 2017). While all of those stages of transition have been the focus of numerous studies, the increasing diversity of student mobility requires additional attention to cover non-traditional or international transitions. With a growing attention on the internationalization of education and cross-border education, International Branch Campuses (IBCs) have expanded in number and significance. The transition of students who transfer from a Latin American IBC to its US main campus offers the opportunity to draw attention to a unique group of students. This study used a sequential mixed methods research design in order to explore the transition experience of the students that transfer from a Latin American IBC to its US main campus upon completing their sophomore year. Most feedback about their experience so far has been anecdotal, and there has not been an empirical study to reveal how these students—mostly international--experience the transition and how they handle the changes. Schlossberg's (1981) Transition Theory provides a relevant theoretical framework to delineate the transition from the international branch campus to the main campus, and to capture the developmental stages that the transfer students experience. The results of this study have practical implications for the administrators in both locations. Understanding this transition experience from the vantage point of the students can pave the way for informed changes, additional support mechanisms, and tailored resources.

Key words: student transition, international branch campus, Schlossberg, transition theory, mixed methods.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Overview

Student transitions at the postsecondary level have received significant attention in educational research. These transitions cover a wide spectrum of movement, from one academic level to another, one type of educational institution to another, or one location to another (Kyndt et al., 2017). As students go through transition, they face not only academic challenges but also cultural, social, and psychological challenges. The difficulties associated with student transitions are a concern among college administrators who strive to ensure that students are successful and thrive at all levels of their academic endeavor.

Academic transitions experienced by college students typically involve moving from one academic level to another, including moving from one year to another, e.g., freshman to sophomore and transferring from a community college to a four-year university. Some transitions, however, can also involve large distances and a different culture. This study intended to understand the transition experience of students who attended an International Branch Campus (IBC) of a US university for two years before transferring to the institution's main US campus in order to complete their undergraduate degree. Their transfer process encompassed changes and adjustments that crossed academic levels, geographical locations and cultural spaces.

Opening IBCs has been an attractive venture for many universities that seek to expand their educational presence abroad, but the IBC of this study provides the reverse dynamic of bringing international students from the IBC location to its institutional center in the US. A close look at students who initiate their university education at the IBC in order to later transfer to the parent institution allows faculty and administrators to both explore the challenges of the

transition and to discover new avenues of program improvement. Furthermore, this study can contribute to the research on International Branch Campuses and their potential to enrich the US university campus culture.

An IBC is defined as "a higher education institution that is located in another country from the institution which either originated it or operates it, with some physical presence in the host country, and which awards at least one degree that is accredited in the country of the originating institution" (Crombie-Borgos, 2013, p. 2). While some IBCs have been unable to withstand the managerial and financial challenges and have been forced to close their doors (Healey, 2015), many renowned universities have been successful in maintaining a presence outside their national borders. In fact, IBCs are believed to be beneficial to central institutions in several ways. According to Martin (2014), "the common belief behind these outposts and partnerships is that harvesting ideas from other countries and cultures will accelerate innovation" (p. 206). Other motives include reaching for a new source of income while catering to the needs of an international student body, expanding the prestige and reputation of the central institution, and opening up new research opportunities (Arwari, 2014; Wilkins and Huisman, 2012). From opening new markets to building new research, the phenomenon of IBCs is expected to expand as more and more universities contemplate operations abroad (Bollag, 2006). A review of the existing literature on IBCs reveals that over 200 IBCs operate worldwide, yet very little research exists documenting their effectiveness, success and sustainability.

The IBC of the current study is located in Latin America and displays most of the characteristics and meets most of the conditions of a typical IBC. It is a branch campus of a large, research-intensive state university in the US with operations overseas, awarding five undergraduate degrees as well as one graduate degree. It relies on the brand name of the US main

campus for its academic reputation and prestige and therefore complies with all academic regulations of the US main campus; hence, its existence, operation and development can be understood within the framework of the existing definition of an IBC.

However, one aspect that differentiates the Latin American IBC under examination and other similar IBCs that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s in the region is the high level of student mobility from the IBC to the US main campus. A significant number of students who have enrolled in the Latin American IBC campus have transitioned to the US main campus every year since its inception in the 1950s. Out of a student body of approximately 500 students, an average of 120-130 Latin American IBC students transfer to the US main campus throughout each academic year. This number has risen dramatically over the years, increasing from 45 students to 151 students in the period from 2005-2018. The Latin American IBC students change campuses upon completion of the general education requirements and when they are ready to enter their major of choice, typically at the beginning of their junior year. Currently, when the Latin American IBC students transfer to the US main campus, they are designated "international transfer" status.

The Latin American IBC students are primarily Spanish-speaking and begin their university studies immediately upon graduating from high school. While attending the Latin American IBC, they either live with their families and commute, or they relocate from other Latin American countries and reside in IBC dorms. Therefore, the IBC student transfer experience to the US main campus is inevitably much more than an academic milestone or a simple geographical move; in addition to leaving a small and intimate educational setting, they move away from their families and the close-knit Latin American social and cultural environment.

Statement of the problem

Despite the attention that the internationalization of education has received since the advent of IBCs in the 1980s and 1990s, there has been little to no attention on the student experience, especially when and if they eventually transfer to the parent institution. The literature on branch campuses is rich in examples of central institution concerns about the level of responsibility to be assumed in relation to satellite campuses, and a range of administrative management models and trends exist, from more controlling to less invasive, to ensure the quality demanded by accreditation bodies. However, despite the similarities with their institutional centers, "IBCs operate in unique cultural environments and have diverse student bodies" (Stanfield, 2014, p. 42). There has been no research to date specifically examining the transfer experience of this unique group of students from the IBC environment to parent institutions in the US, the UK or other leading countries in transnational education. This leads to the real possibility that institutions of higher learning that maintain IBCs know less than they should about the student population they intend to serve.

Furthermore, the Latin American IBC of this study, despite its longevity, hardly features in the literature on IBCs. Its sustainability for 60 years could provide important lessons in efforts to open and maintain IBCs. More significantly, the transition experience of students who transfer from this IBC to its US main campus can fill the gaps in knowledge regarding cross-border education and student exchanges and highlight the institutional mechanisms that can best enable those processes and support the students.

As we look closer at the Latin American IBC under investigation, additional gaps appear that I aim to bridge. This transition from the Latin American IBC to the US main campus is a confirmation that the IBC transfers have joined the institutional center of their university, but at

the same time, it is a point of departure from the small, close-knit educational community that has surrounded them for two years. It is a symbolic break described by a former student as a "jump from the fish bowl into the ocean" (Nicholas, I., personal communication, May 2017). As this protective layer of the small campus is removed, the ocean of a big campus opens a new territory of development and growth filled with challenges and adjustments. On the surface, the transfer process is simply an administrative procedure enabled by a standardization of academic policies and regulations between the two campuses. But the transition from the IBC to the US main campus is much more than that: it crosses educational levels, geographical locations and cultural spaces, making it an academic, social, and cultural milestone. This complex experience has not been fully explored, and student adjustment and adaptation experiences remain undocumented and unknown. Consequently, administrators and academic directors on both ends of the transition miss the opportunity to formulate and implement the policies and resources that can best support this unique student group.

The experience of this unique group of IBC students as they transfer to the main campus is also overlooked by the main campus university, since IBC students are typically added to the bigger transfer group which can also include both community college transfers and international transfers from other universities. Community college transfers most often study in a small college within their familiar cultural and social circle and transition to the large US main campus upon completing their sophomore year, while international transfers are most likely moving from one institution to another. Neither is exactly like the unique transition from an overseas branch campus to its US main campus. While IBC students may have the privilege and advantage of studying close to home for two years, when they transfer, they become foreign students or "the other". The transition is an important milestone that carries connotations of advancement and

completion, but it also brings IBC students face to face with the complexities of adapting to a large campus in a foreign country.

Transfer student success has become an increasing concern in educational literature and university policy. The experience of large universities has been that transfer students take longer to complete their degrees and are not as successful as those who begin in the institution as freshman (Santos, 2001). Additionally, most support mechanisms are developed and in place mainly to support freshman students, often the biggest and neediest group. These realities reveal that the unique group of IBC transfer students to US main campuses may be neglected while experiencing a complex process of adjustment and change. A closer study of their transition experience can inform policy on the institutional level and allow the US main campus to reflect on both the system and the culture of receiving transfer students. This study, therefore, offers a unique opportunity to contribute to the educational research on IBCs and IBC transfer student transitions while also offering US main campuses an additional resource for planning their receiving strategies.

Significance of the study

Much of the literature on IBCs has taken a business perspective and viewed higher education abroad programs as multinational operations that explore and capture new markets (Owens and Lane, 2014; Silver, 2015; Lane, 2011; and Shams and Huisman, 2012). This study, however, considered the special context of the Latin American IBC in question and its unique position within cross-border education. The history of the Latin American IBC goes back to the late 1950s when the US Department of Defense sought a university that could provide educational services to US Armed Forces stationed in the host Latin American country (Montoto, 2013, p. 125). Its managerial model could possibly be studied in the light of existing

international business frameworks (Silver, 2015), but the literature on IBCs often neglects focusing on the student experience. While some studies have attempted to measure the quality of the student experience in IBCs (Ahmad, 2015; Montoto, 2013; Wilkins and Balakrishnanb, 2012; Yokoyama, 2011), few of them focus specifically on the transition of students from an IBC to a central institution.

With the growing interest in globalism, the need for cultural awareness and the demand for international exposure, the specific experience of IBC students who transfer to its US main campus becomes even more relevant. Institutional effectiveness mechanisms and measurements, quality assurance components and policies, and close academic oversight may provide useful tools to comply with accreditation procedures, but these tools rarely give voice to the students themselves, the very people served by educational institutions. As an institution whose basic mission is to enable students to transition successfully to the US main campus, the Latin American IBC needs to raise up and attend to the voices of those students whose academic path is determined precisely by the quality of their transition to the US main campus.

A study of the moment of transition has implications for both ends of the transition: the Latin American IBC campus and the US main campus. It is a bridge between two realities that are connected by policy but disconnected by location, context, and cultural surroundings. Students are exposed to both contexts at different times, and the converging point can help determine how close the two contexts have been or how close they need to become. The study of the student transition experience revealed both the need for improvements in the way the IBC prepares students for the transfer process and the way the US main campus receives and integrates the IBC transfers into its campus culture.

Conceptual framework

The transition of students from the Latin American IBC to its large US main campus is an experience that can be captured effectively through theories of transition and adult development. These theories allow an analysis of the experience on multiple levels while at the same time focusing on the process of coping and adapting to the new context. Various studies exploring the adjustment process of international students who attend US universities (McLahlan & Justice, 2009; Spencer, 2016; Zhang, 2016), student athletes or students who change academic paths (Bjorsen & Dinkel; Pellegrino, 2015) focus on the concept of transition. Schlossberg's (1981) Transition Model has been utilized in numerous studies tracing student transition from one educational level to another, such as from high school to college or from community college to the four-year university (Boyenga, 2009; Lazarowicz, 2015; Glennon, 2012), and it is broad enough to encompass not only anticipated events but also unanticipated events and "non-events" (p. 5).

In most cases, the transfer process for students from the Latin American IBC is an anticipated event. From the moment they initiate their studies at the IBC, they work towards reaching the point of departure when they fulfill the requirements that allow their transfer to the US main campus. The transfer process is essentially an administrative mechanism that allows the movement from one campus to another, and despite its standardization, it does not necessarily target or facilitate the transition experience of students.

Transition as defined in Schlossberg's model (1981) is not merely the movement from one point to another but is much more nuanced. According to Schlossberg (1981), authentic transition occurs "if an event or non-event results in a change in assumptions about oneself and the world and thus requires a corresponding change in one's behavior and relationships" (p. 5).

The key action is not physical movement but individual change. In this definition, if a person does not undergo change when an event takes place, he or she is not experiencing "transition." Furthermore, the theory of transition stipulates that transitions be analyzed based on the variables affecting a person's perception of it, the characteristics of the pre and post-transition environments, and the characteristics of the individual (Schlossberg, 1981, p. 5).

Schlossberg (2011) emphasizes that the crucial components of transition are "how much [transition] alters one's roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions". For this reason, "even desired transitions are upsetting" (p. 159). Transition is a process that takes time, and its effects are often unpredictable. In fact, Schlossberg (2011) reminds us that two people going through the same transition will not cope in the same way or within the same time frame. Identifying the common features present in all transitions—regardless of how dissimilar they can be—can help determine how to best help those in transition (Schlossberg, 2011, p. 160). Such a model embraces the differences among individuals who may go through the same event yet respond in diverse ways or not at all.

Schlossberg's (1981) transition model is a fitting model to use for the current study of Latin American IBC transfer students as they move to the US main campus, providing both a structure for understanding their transition process and allowing the student voices to emerge. While all the Latin American IBC transfers belong to a group for practical and administrative purposes, they are unlikely to all experience the same difficulties or challenges, have access to the same resources, or share the same coping strategies. The Latin American IBC transfer students follow the same administrative procedures, but they are unique individuals, perceive the move in diverse ways, have access to a different set of pre and post-transition environments, and ultimately reach adaptation through a different combination of those factors. Although all IBC

transfer students have a common pre-transition departure point (the Latin American IBC) and reach a common post-transition arrival point (the US main campus), differences in their perception of the space in-between and their individual characteristics mean that they may use their respective resources quite differently.

Aside from defining transition, Schlossberg introduces the 4 S's System for coping with transitions, namely *situation*, *self*, *support*, and *strategies* (Schlossberg, 2008 as cited in Schlossberg, 2011, p. 160), referred to as the "potential resources or deficits one brings to the transitions" (p. 160). *Situation* acknowledges that a transition can coincide with an additional change or stressor in an individual's life; for example, a student's transfer to the US main campus may coincide with a death in the family, a new relationship or a health problem. *Self* refers to a person's attitude towards the transition or oneself. Students from the Latin American IBC may transfer as a group every semester, but there is a great deal of diversity in their individual "selves": there are the optimists and pessimists, those who feel confident and those who do not, and those prepared for change and those who dread it. *Supports*, as the word indicates, refers to the support systems individuals have access to or rely upon, and *strategies* refers to the various self-initiated coping mechanisms individuals may employ during the transition.

For the purposes of this study, I focused on the elements of *supports* and *strategies* that the Latin American IBC transfers rely on or choose to employ in order to manage the transition process. Examining these specific supports and strategies can enhance our understanding of the institutional measures and tools that the sending or receiving institution can reinforce to enable or strengthen these strategies.

While Schlossberg (2011) promises that the transition model "can take the mystery—if not the misery—out of change" (p. 161), college administrators applying the model to study student transitions may find that it can indeed reduce some of the misery. Unpacking the layers of the transition from one educational reality to another can reveal the challenges or difficulties the students have faced, the support systems that they found most effective, and the coping strategies they have most relied on in order to manage the transition experience. Ultimately, it can help administrators on both ends of the transfer process establish best practices and contribute to a smoother adaptation process for transfer students. Additional information about the elements of Schlossberg's transition model as applied in this study will be discussed in Chapter 2.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to understand the transition experience of the students from the Latin American IBC as they transfer to the US main campus at the end of their sophomore year. Students transfer from the IBC each semester, with the largest group in the fall semester and the smallest in the summer semester. Since fall 2005, the number of students transferring to the US main campus has steadily increased. In academic year 2005-2006, only 47 students transferred, while in 2017-2018, a total of 151 students transferred from the IBC to the US main campus. The study focused on the group of 151 students who transferred from the Latin American IBC to the US main campus in the 2017-2018 academic year.

This study moved beyond the administrative mechanisms that enable the transition to focus on the way students experienced the transition: the way the transition affected them, changed them, or defined them. The study also examined the new roles they adopted as a result of the transition to the US main campus, the routines they established, and the new ways they

perceived themselves and their relationship to others. The intent of the study was to shed light on the challenges the Latin American IBC transfers faced on an academic, social/cultural and individual level and the tools or strategies they implemented to cope.

Research questions

To understand the transition experience of students who transfer from an International Branch Campus to its US main campus, five research questions guided the inquiry and addressed key aspects of the student transition experience:

1. 1.What were the factors that led rising juniors from the Latin American IBC to transfer to the US main campus for the academic year fall 2017 through summer 2018?
2. 2.What were the Latin American IBC transfers' perceptions about the transition experience and the way it affected their roles and relationships?
3. 3.What types of institutional support from the Latin American IBC and from the main campus did the Latin American IBC transfers employ to manage their transition process?
4. 4.What types of student-initiated coping strategies did the Latin American IBC transfers employ during their transition process?
5. 5.What recommendations do the Latin American IBC transfers suggest for facilitating the transition process and for program improvement?

The open-ended questions allowed a wide range of responses and reactions as students reflected on their transition from one campus to another. Even though the transfer to the US main campus was an anticipated event, it was neither simple nor straightforward. The students who transferred from the Latin American IBC to the US main campus were required to assume several new roles at the same time. Because the transition was an individual, social and academic milestone, the questions attempted to elicit the responses that reveal how the transition impacted

three major areas of their life and development.

Positionality statement

In a small, close-knit campus of 500 students, it is difficult to consider the student body as a whole. Instead, the tendency is to focus on individuals and see the faces, names, personal stories and distinctions rather than the unifying characteristics. This is the experience of professors and administrators in the Latin American IBC of this study, where class size is kept small and the professor-student interaction inside the classroom carries on outside the classroom. Such closeness is probably rare in a big, research-intensive campus of over 40,000 students, which is the case of its US main campus. This is precisely why the US main campus Dean of Students encouraged students at the new student orientation for spring 2016 to build their support groups, a key strategy for life on a big campus (2016). The underlying idea is simply that it is very easy to feel lost in a large crowd.

As we prepare students at the Latin American IBC for their transfer to the US main campus through academic advising, information sessions, and one-on-one counseling sessions, we provide personalized attention that is not easily found at the larger main campus university. Despite these efforts to prepare students for the transfer, the Latin American IBC faculty staff neither witness the transition nor necessarily soften its impact. The study of the IBC student transition experience as they transfer to the US main campus can provide useful and valuable feedback to the Latin American IBC to improve its efforts. Additionally, the results can enable a solid basis for continuing collaboration with the US main campus authorities by identifying concrete areas for improvement and reinforcement of their reception strategies.

In my leadership role at the Latin American IBC, my close involvement and proximity to both the subjects and institution of this study provide a unique and valuable insider angle of

clarity and understanding. I work very closely with the Latin American IBC students and with the US main campus authorities, serving as a go-between for students preparing to transfer; therefore, I have a vested interest in making the process as efficient as possible. Student feedback during casual encounters when I visit the US main campus or when they return to the IBC is full of stories of growth, crisis, detour, success, conflict, confusion and triumph. The stories, rich in detail, reveal a unique, layered and complex experience that no operations manual or performance table can capture; perhaps sharing them can make each new transfer group somewhat wiser than previous ones.

Definition of terms

Definitions help to clarify key terms and draw important distinctions. For example, even though the study participants may have used *transfer* and *transition* interchangeably, the terms refer to two uniquely different concepts:

Transfer process: The administrative process that enables or controls the process of changing postsecondary institutions. This includes vertical transfer (i.e. from a community college to a four-year university), lateral transfer (from one university to another or from one postsecondary institution to a similar one) and reverse transfer (from a four-year college or university to a community college) (Townsend, 2008). For the purposes of this study, 'transfer process' will refer to the administrative set of procedures that allow students who attend an IBC to eventually relocate to its US main campus.

Transition: An event or non-event that forces an individual to change his or her assumptions about him/her self and the world and also requires additional changes in the individual´s roles and relationships (Schlossberg, 1981). The core concept in transition is change, including the individual's perception of change.

International Branch Campus (IBC): An academic institution of higher education "that is located in another country from the institution which either originated it or operates it, with some physical presence in the host country, and which awards at least one degree that is accredited in the country of the originating institution" (Crombie-Borgos, 2013, p. 2).

US main campus: The institutional center of an international branch campus, located in the US, and from which the IBC derives its name and academic credentials. The US main campus of this study is a large state university that operates three branch campuses and several study abroad programs.

Organization of the dissertation

This dissertation comprises five chapters, a reference list and appendices. Chapter 1 introduces the study and its significance, the research questions and the theoretical framework.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the relevant literature and delineates the context within which the study can be understood: International Branch Campuses, the history of the Latin American IBC, literature on international student transition, transfer student transition, and Schlossberg's transition theory.

Chapter 3 describes the investigative approach applied for this study and provides a justification for the use of the sequential mixed methods design in accomplishing the purpose of the study. It contains details on the two stages of the design—quantitative and qualitative—the sampling methods and participant description, data collection and storage, the data analysis process, and ethical considerations.

Chapter 4 unfolds the results of the study with the findings generated by both the IBC Student Transition Survey and the focus group. Chapter 5 comprises the discussion of the findings with implications for practice, limitations, and suggestions for future research

possibilities. Finally, I include all of the materials used in order to conduct this study: the IRB approval memo, institution permission to conduct the study, invitation for the IBC Student Transition Survey and focus group, informed consent forms, the IBC Student Transition Survey and full results, the focus group protocol and a notetaking template, and the focus group codebook.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The purpose of this study was to understand the transition experience of the rising juniors who transferred from a Latin American International Branch Campus Latin American (Latin American IBC) to the main campus in the United States (US main campus) using Schlossberg's transition model (1981). Understanding the transition experience of the Latin American IBC transfers relied on four literature paths that intersect and together frame the study:

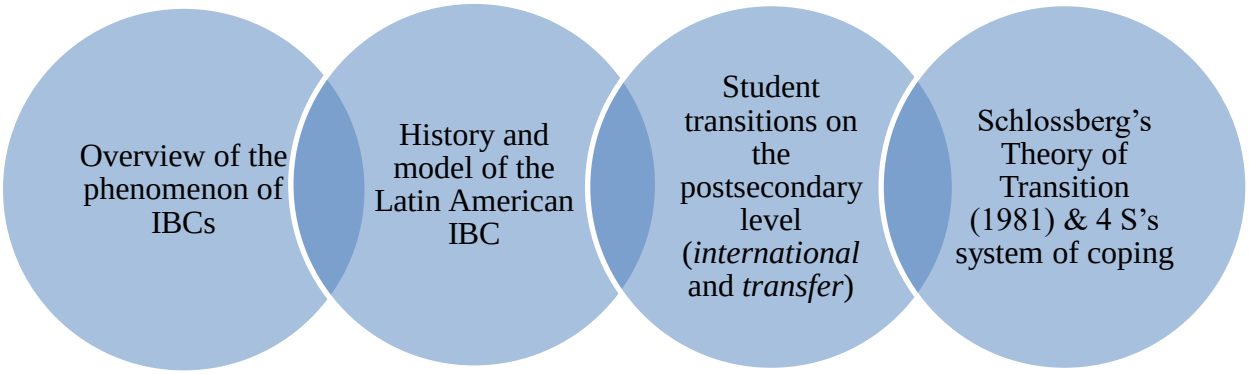

Figure 2.1. The four bodies of knowledge that frame the study.

The literature on International Branch Campuses (IBCs) provides a framework for understanding the Latin American IBC of this study and prepares for a closer view of its uniqueness. Although the Latin American IBC in this study can be understood within the literature on IBCs, such literature has focused extensively on the administrative and managerial complexities of cross/border educational endeavors and has systematically disregarded the student experience. Similarly, the literature on IBCs, despite its usefulness in framing the

existence of the Latin American IBC, does not fully define this specific IBC case, and for this reason, it was important to rely on specific institutional documents that trace its development and current model of operations.

The history and development of the Latin American IBC—its programs, cultural context, and student population—helped me see not only how it is nested within the literature on IBCs but also how it has become a unique educational reality. Institutional documents allow us to understand the Latin American IBC, how it has been maintained for 60 years, and how its mission has been shaped by its position in the region and the US main campus expectations. As a transit hub, the Latin American IBC has become the first stop for international students who aspire to a US style education, with one third of its students typically transferring to the US main campus upon completion of their sophomore year. Its specific context and connection to the US main campus is also part of the context that permits the transition of students from the Latin American IBC to the US main campus. A reference for how this process works and how it resembles other student transitions at the postsecondary level will provide a better understanding of the dynamics and expectations embedded in the process and set the scene for the section of this study focused on student transitions.

Student transitions at the postsecondary level have received considerable attention in educational research, and I consulted the literature on such transitions in order to contextualize the Latin American IBC student transition to the US main campus and reveal the topics of concern for students and administrators. The current study relied specifically on the literature on international student transitions and transfer student transitions because these two categories best describe the Latin American IBC transfers: for the most part, they are international students mainly from Latin America, and they move from one academic reality to another. The literature

on student transitions helped in the preparation of the research tools, such as survey questions or focus group prompts. Additionally, it helped in the data analysis by drawing connections between the findings and prior research.

Finally, Schlossberg's Transition Model (1981) provided the theoretical lens to both frame the student transition from the Latin American IBC campus to the US main campus and to draw connections between what transition implies according to the model and what the student experience entails. A description of Schlossberg's (1981) Transition Model and its subsequent versions helped design the research strategy by focusing on the key elements of what transition implies. The Transition Model (Schlossberg, 1984) illustrated the major components that must be understood in order to help individuals with transition. In its inclusivity, the Transition Model became a fitting strategy as I mapped the major components of the study, from an understanding of the students' perception of the transition to the major recommendations that can help the institution strengthen their coping mechanisms.

International branch campuses: An overview

Understanding the transition experience of juniors who transferred from the Latin American IBC to its US main campus requires a context. This transition involves two locations, but the Latin American IBC merits a deeper definition because it is in some respects a hybrid educational environment and not a clear-cut educational context like a community college in the US or an international university. Positioning the Latin American IBC within the phenomenon of International Branch Campuses helps define its special characteristics. Additionally, it reveals the conditions that surround the transfer students who eventually continue their studies in the US main campus. A review of the literature on IBCs revealed intense research activity on these academic ventures, primarily as meaningful projects for international projection, educational

expansion, and a wider effort to internationalize education (Arwari, 2014; Farrugia and Lane, 2012; Wilkins and Huisman, 2012).

One definition of an IBC is "a higher education institution that is located in another country from the institution which either originated it or operates it, with some physical presence in the host country, and which awards at least one degree that is accredited in the country of the originating institution" (Crombie-Borgos, 2013, p. 2). Yet another definition, provided by the Cross-Border Education Research Team, defines an IBC as "an entity that is owned, at least in part, by a foreign education provider; operated in the name of the foreign education provider; engages in at least some face-to-face teaching; and provides access to an entire academic program that leads to a credential awarded by the foreign education provider" (as cited in Healey, 2015, p. 388). Both definitions clarify that the institutional center commands the academic quality and awarding of degrees but also signal that instruction takes place in the foreign location.

When it comes to purpose, IBCs are often seen as ways in which major universities from the US, UK or Australia can expand to unexplored educational markets and reach out to student populations who cannot travel to these countries "in an effort to reach untapped student demand while simultaneously increasing the institution's global prestige" (Montoto, 2013, p. 25). Additionally, opening an IBC fits into a more generalized discourse on internationalization in higher education, which is often projected as "a positive outcome of globalization with tremendous financial benefits" (Arwari, 2014, p. 133). Yet another motivation behind these international ventures lies in the potential to expand research and exploit new ways to exchange ideas and promote academic innovation: "[T]he common belief behind these outposts and partnerships is that harvesting ideas from other countries and cultures will accelerate innovation"

(Martin, 2014, p. 206).

While the attempt to expand academic operations overseas is a positive and profitable move for many leading universities, the research also speaks of the complex and often complicated management of these academic outposts. From the complexities of managing the personnel and ensuring financial sustainability (Arwari, 2014) to the academic quality assurance demands and challenges (Kisner, 2011; Martin, 2007; Shams & Huisman, 2012; Stanfield, 2014), the literature on IBCs places extensive emphasis on the risks they may pose for their central institutions on multiple fronts.

All in all, the IBCs are seen in their totality as entities or organizations, yet there has been little emphasis on the students they presumably cater to and the quality of the students' academic and social experience. Some research has tried to capture the quality of the experience of students in IBCs, mainly in terms of student satisfaction (Ahmad, 2015; Montoto, 2013; Wilkins & Balakrishnanb, 2012; Yokoyama, 2011). However, since most IBCs export an educational service to international locations, there is hardly any research focusing on the students who relocate from an IBC context to a central campus. Similarly, there is an excessive concern about standardization and alignment between IBCs and their parent institutions (Healey, 2015; Silver, 2015) along with concerns about accreditation parameters and their application to IBCs (Kinser, 2011). Once more, however, the literature on IBCs neglects to see how the efforts of aligning the two educational realities may impact students and to what extent these efforts actually ease the student transition when and if the IBC students relocate to their main campus.

Latin American IBC: History and current model of operation

The Latin American IBC of this study meets most of the conditions and has most of the characteristics of a typical IBC. Therefore, its existence, operation and development can be

understood within the framework of existing definitions. Similarly, an analysis of the challenges in operating an IBC helps place the Latin American IBC alongside other similar endeavors. Questions of legitimacy, quality assurance and balance of authorities, as well as academic autonomy and self-determination are all applicable in this case. At the same time, however, the Latin American IBC has had a history that differentiates it from typical IBCs and from its institutional center, the large US state university main campus.

The Latin American IBC of this study opened operations in the 1950s, long before the concept of IBCs emerged in the 1980s and 1990s. Its principal mission was to provide higher education to the US Armed Forces stationed in the host country, and it soon began to offer four-year degree programs to military personnel, US soldiers and university students, as well as host in-country students. Following an accreditation review in the 1970s, the Latin American IBC received permanent branch status of the US main campus; as a result, its student body grew and diversified by including students from Europe and other Latin American countries.

By the 1990s, the Latin American IBC was serving over 1,000 students, primarily US service men and women and their dependents, who received instruction through the support of the G.I. Bill (Montoto, 2013, p. 126). Upon the reversion of the US territory to the host country in 1999, the departure of the military personnel precipitated a decision to maintain the Latin American IBC by establishing a new legal framework that made it akin to a private educational institution while maintaining its academic adherence to the US main campus. Since then, the Latin American IBC has been serving primarily students from the host country or other international students who are recruited from the Latin American region, the Caribbean, the US, or Europe.

The Latin American IBC offers five undergraduate degree programs, including

Environment and Society, International Affairs, Inter-disciplinary Social Sciences, Latin American and Caribbean Studies, and Computer Science (through distance education). One graduate program is also offered: A Master of Science in International Affairs. The IBC program allows students the opportunity to complete the General Education requirements that can lead to the Associate Degree and to fulfill the major pre-requisites for programs in Business or Engineering on the main campus. Even though undergraduate degrees can be completed in the Latin American IBC campus, most international students use the Latin American IBC to complete their first two years of study before transferring to other universities, and a majority transfer to the US main campus to attain a bachelor's degree. The 2+2 scholarship, modeled after the Latin American and Caribbean Scholarship option, offers students from eligible Latin American and Caribbean countries the opportunity to complete two years in the Latin American IBC and then transfer to the US main campus with the in-state tuition rate.

The Latin American IBC also serves as a study abroad destination for US students who want the international experience while still advancing their academic program. In this way, the Latin American IBC serves the needs of a diverse student population. As Montoto (2013) asserts, the Latin American IBC identity is diverse because it is "a branch campus of a US university, a private [Latin American] university, a study abroad site for US students, and at the same time aspires to be a Latin American regional hub for US higher education" (p. 145).

Despite its long-standing presence for over 60 years, the Latin American IBC does not feature prominently in the literature on IBCs, probably because it had already been under operation for over 20 years by the time the concept of IBCs gained prominence in the 1980s and 1990s, and possibly because its area of operation was a US territory. Montoto (2013) manages to highlight how any attempt to standardize the academic services offered in the Latin American

IBC with the ones in the US main campus will never hide the fact that the Latin American IBC remains a very distinct institution:

> [The US main campus] is a public university, created by and for the people of the [respective state]. [The Latin American IBC] is a private not-for-profit institution initially established to serve the men and women of the US armed forces, their dependents, and civilians living in the [host country]. The institution now serves the people of [the host country], the people of the region, and US students studying abroad. This branch campus and [the US main campus] mission in [the host country] has evolved considerably since 1957" (Montoto, 2013, p. 149).

The literature on branch campuses emphasizes the concerns of central institutions in terms of the level of responsibility they assume in relation to their satellite campuses. Different models and trends range from more controlling to less invasive administrative mechanisms to insure the quality assurance that their accreditation bodies demand. Despite having its own administrative body, the IBC of this study receives close oversight by its US main campus, which is ultimately keen on maintaining its regional accreditation. Such oversight provides the quality assurance mechanism so that the Latin American IBC can sustain its prestige and support its recruitment efforts. Montoto (2013) observes that the Latin American IBC is "a point of access for students, giving them the opportunity to access a U.S, higher education in Latin America" (p. 140).

The Latin American IBC campus is financially self-sufficient and engages in recruitment strategies to maintain or increase its student body. Approximately 500 students from over 30 different countries attend the Latin American IBC. One third of these students transfer every year

to the US main campus upon completing their sophomore year and upon fulfilling general education requirements and pre-requisites for their intended academic programs. Given the alignment of academic standards and regulations, the transfer process from the Latin American IBC campus to the US main campus is fairly smooth on the administrative side, since IBC students become students of the US parent institution upon admission to the IBC. This alignment between the two institutions satisfies the accreditation demands, but as Stanfield (2014) highlights, despite the similarities with their institutional centers, "IBCs operate in unique cultural environments and have diverse student bodies" (p. 42).

The Latin American IBC operates in one four-story building within an educational complex in the host country. Most students typically commute every day to the university, while a minority (less than 10% of the student body) live in a dorm complex within walking distance. Although instruction and administrative procedures take place in English, students are primarily Spanish-speakers and resort to their native tongue in their social activities and outside the classroom. There is a community college atmosphere on the campus according to some professors, mainly due to the small size and the individualized attention in classes (Montoto, 2013, p. 145). Students sense their professors are eager to teach and "not distracted by research agendas" (Montoto, 2013, p. 139). With small class size and a dedicated teaching faculty, students engage in close interaction with their professors, an advantage when students need letters of recommendation or references for graduate work. All in all, as Montoto's (2013) study reveals, the Latin American IBC students feel that they are in a "friendly environment [within] a close-knit community" (p. 142).

Once students from the Latin American IBC transfer to the US main campus, they join the institutional center of their university and leave behind the small, close-knit campus that has

surrounded them for two years. IBC students change campuses when they complete their Associate degree requirements and are ready to enter their major of choice. In this respect, they resemble students who transition from a community college to a four-year university, but they transition from an international branch campus to the US main campus; technically, they have always been students of the parent institution and not a community college. They are designated as international students, but this distinction becomes relevant only upon transferring to the US main campus.

Their transition takes place at the intersection of two types of student transition at the postsecondary level: transfer student transition and international student transition. The literature on these two types of transitions provides useful insights into relevant concerns, adjustment questions, and overall challenges that the students from the Latin American IBC campus may experience upon transferring to the US main campus.

International student transitions

The students who transfer from the Latin American IBC to its US main campus are primarily international students from the Latin American region, dual citizens of the US and Latin America, or US citizens who have grown up outside the US, meaning that the transition is still a novelty, even for US citizens. Even if they have already experienced the transition to a new educational environment by attending the Latin American IBC after high school, they have done so within a familiar social and cultural context. The transition to the US main campus adds the "international" label and coincides with the departure from their cultural and social frameworks. The literature on international student transitions, therefore, becomes a relevant frame of reference in attempting to define their experience.

The transition of international students who relocate in order to attend a university in

another country is featured in numerous studies, books, and articles. The number of international "sojourners" or "cross-cultural travelers" (Zhou, 2008) is growing every year, and in the US only, there were over 1 million international students for the 2016/2017 academic year (Open Doors Report, 2017, n. p.). The influx of international students brings benefits that transcend the obvious impact on the economy: "Intangible rewards include multiple perspectives, intellectual contributions, and innovative ideas" (Hotta & Ting-Toomey, 2013, p. 550). Researchers on international student experiences agree that the students themselves see the prospect of studying in another country as an advantage, a privilege, and a factor that increases their "cultural and symbolic capital" (Prazeres, 2013, p. 812). Undeniably, however, the transition to another country for educational purposes is complex and multi-dimensional (Rienties &Jindal-Snape, 2016), and it can have both positive and negative undertones. At its core, it is a transition signaling opportunities and benefits but can also pose significant challenges for the individual student who must assume the role of "foreigner" while also complying with the demands of a new academic environment.

The literature on international students reveals consensus among researchers that the international student experience needs to be understood in depth so that universities can implement strategies or programs that will best support these students (Arthur, 2017; Ecochard & Fortheringham, 2017; Terrazas-Carrillo et al., 2014). At the same time, understanding their experience implies learning about the instruments the student themselves use to overcome the obstacles and reap the full benefits of their educational journey (Hotta & Ting-Toomey, 2013; Moores & Popadiuk, 2011; Rodricks, 2012; Zhou, Jindal-Snale, and Todman, 2008).

When it comes to challenges, international students must navigate a sea of changes: cultural, social, academic, and psychological. Culture shock is a frequent component in this

experience, defined as “the stimulus for acquisition of culture-specific skills that are required to engage in new social interactions” (Zhou et al., p. 65). A further definition indicates that culture shock is “a realization of the extent of differences between where one comes from and where one now lives and the subsequent loss of all cues on how to behave and orient oneself in daily life situations” (Ecochard & Fotheringham, 2017, p. 101). International students leave behind familiar concepts and practices in order to be introduced to novel and unfamiliar ones. While crossing to a new environment, they separate from family and friends, support systems, and a familiar educational system. Culture shock surfaces as inevitable (Hotta & Ting-Toomey, 2013), and is associated with a series of changes and adjustments. Harris (2003) references changes in the ways international students re-cast their identity or re-negotiate their values in an attempt to feel comfortable and adjust to the new reality. “Identity negotiation” also features in other works and is seen as the process of moving from feeling like an outsider to becoming comfortable with and even feeling part of the new environment (Cemalcicar & Falbo, 2008; Hotta & Ting-Toomey, 2013; Mesidor & Sly, 2016). Prazeres (2013) makes an interesting connection between identity and “place,” suggesting that mobility is bound to affect the sense of self; consequently, international students undergo “profound transformations” and can develop a “global identity” or a revised and even stronger sense of their national identity (p. 813).

Given the value that they already attach to their education abroad, international students feel an increased pressure to succeed academically while negotiating the cultural and emotional adjustments. Mesidor & Sly (2016) define the several academic challenges that international students must confront, such as a different educational system in a new language, new methods of evaluation, or widely different learning styles (pp. 266-268). In Moores & Popadiuk (2011), these challenges become opportunities for “academic growth” as students manage to meet the

demands of the new educational environment (p. 295), but that is not always the case. Zhou et al. (2008) speak of "pedagogical adaptation" as a "subset of culture shock," as it implies being exposed to different assumptions about the role of the educators or the level of student engagement expected in the new educational context (pp. 71-72). Ecochard & Fortheringham (2017) reveal how demanding the new academic environments can be for international students, since "pedagogy [is] context-dependent" (p. 102). Consequently, stress levels are very high, and the extent to which international students can make use of available resources and the kinds of needed resources are also a matter of continuous reflection and study (Wan et al., 1992). After all, academic achievement is "the glue binding together their time abroad" (Ecochard & Fortheringham, 2017, p. 102).

While international students navigate the sea of changes and challenges in the new environment, they are called on to resort to several resources, replace the ones they do not have access to with new ones, and to assume new roles (Harris, 2003). The complexity of this transition for international students is viewed as a must-study phenomenon in order to both support this student population emotionally as well as sustain their academic success (Zhang, 2016). Adjustment and adaptation for international students is as complex as the challenges of their transition, and it is attained not only through an institution's organized resources but also through the coping strategies that students themselves employ. Arthur (2017) emphasizes the responsibility of institutions to do strategic planning, recruit capable staff with a global mind frame, and institute student services and academic support policies (892). Cemarcilar & Falbo (2008) add orientation and support programs, while Ecochard & Fortheringham (2017) emphasize that there is a shared responsibility "between the student and the university" (p. 104). This is a highly significant idea, and while it places an emphasis on the institution's

responsibility to support its international students, it also presents the students as capable of recruiting their own tools. This idea is also shared by Zhou et al. (2008) in their emphasis on the "cultural learning" as opposed to culture shock and the idea that international students are in "cultural transit…proactively responding to and resolving problems stemming from change, rather than being passive victims of trauma stemming from a noxious event" (p. 65).

What coping strategies do international students employ to manage the new and challenging educational context? Hotta & Ting-Toomey (2013) describe a range of responses from gathering with others from their own culture to opening up and making friends from the host country. Terrazas-Carrillo et al. (2014) place great significance on the role of "place" in defining one´s identity, so if the international students have experienced a distancing from their familiar landscapes, building connections with spaces in the new context may be of great help. These include "places that [facilitate] social interaction, places experienced in congruence with the self, and places that [allow] expression of individual emotional experiences" (p. 698). Resorting to leisure activities and establishing social networks emerge as additional strategies that international students employ in their adaptation process (Mesidor and Sly, 2016, p. 266). Ultimately, as Mesidor & Sly (2016) support, the higher a student scores in emotional intelligence, the more capable he or she will be "to recognize, evaluate, manage one's emotions, and interact with others" (p. 265). In other words, finding sources of resilience in their own sense of well-being and self-worth allows international students to connect with others in the new environment, overcome social and cultural barriers, and enhance their academic experience.

The literature on undergraduate international students is mostly focused on first-time-in college students, so in a sense, the Latin American IBC transfers are not the typical cases. They are usually 20 or 21 years old by the time they transfer from the Latin American IBC to the US

main campus, and they have already completed two years of a four-year undergraduate degree. Additionally, they have already been exposed to the US educational system in the international branch and they have used English for their coursework. In that respect, they should have a smoother transition from one academic context to another. Nevertheless, the moment of transfer to the US main campus imposes the "international" label on them, and for many, this is their first time abroad living independently. In this respect, the international student experience as featured in the literature provided concepts that became relevant as I explored the specific transition experience of the Latin American IBC transfer students.

Transfer student transitions

Transfer student experience is also widely researched, and the literature is rich in studies of students who transition from one college environment to another, mainly from community colleges to four-year universities or research-intensive institutions (Barefoot, 2008; Boyenga, 2009; Chrystal et al., 2013; DeWine et al., 2017; Flaga, 2002; Flaga, 2006; Fletcher & Himburg, 1994; Harris, 2017; Mobelini, 2012; Townsend, 2008). The emphasis in these studies has a lot to do with the adjustment that transfer students must undergo as they switch educational contexts from small and teaching-intensive community colleges to large and research-intensive universities. Although the Latin American IBC is not a community college in the traditional sense, its small and close-knit academic environment makes it comparable to the community college context, and in this sense, the student transition to the US main campus has similarities to that of students transitioning from two-year colleges to four-year universities.

The success of transfer students in US universities is a matter of national concern and attention. A systematic shift has occurred in the demand that universities measure the retention and graduation rates of transfer students in addition to the metrics they provide on their freshman

population. A three-day meeting in March 2018 with officials from the enrollment management and registrar offices on the US main campus revealed that the concerns this dissertation expresses regarding transfer students are not unfounded. The director of Enrollment Management emphasized that the US main campus would need to start placing more attention on its transfer student population (Barnhill, 2018). A month after this meeting, the US main campus Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) circulated an email through the Advisors listserv, inviting advisors to recommend transfer students who would be willing to discuss their experience (Burgess, 2018, n. p). The experience of large universities has been that transfer students take longer to complete their degrees and are not as successful as those who begin as freshman, often referred to as "native" students. Additionally, all support mechanisms are in place to support mainly freshman students, the most numerous and seemingly neediest group. Nuñez & Yoshimi (2017) succinctly state that "some research suggests that college administrators at receiving 4-year institutions have limited understanding of transfer students' experiences and needs, resulting in institutional neglect of these students" (p. 174). The topic of transfer student transition, therefore, is an important topic for further research.

Articulation agreements or pathway programs between community colleges and universities attempt to build a mechanism that enables this transition from one context to another. However, aside from the administrative mechanisms, there is a wide array of concerns related to this transition, ranging from academic preparation to college involvement (Flaga, 2006; Laanan, 1996; Nuñez & Yoshimi, 2017). "Transfer shock" appeared as early as 1965 in Hills (1965), a work cited by almost all researchers of transfer experience. Transfer shock is the "severe drop in performance" upon transferring, reflected in a lower GPA (Hills, 1965, p. 202). Numerous studies from the quantitative approach have attempted to articulate this decline in

detail based on gender, socio-economic status, race and other factors, but the consensus reached is that the transfer experience is far more complex and cannot be reduced to a mere numerical representation of a student's experience.

A "transfer receptive" campus, academic environment or "ecosystem" (Stempel, 2013) are terms frequently used in reference to a receiving institution's efforts to enable the success of transfer students and respond to their specific needs and challenges. In order for a university to enable and implement transfer receptive mechanisms, though, it must first articulate the needs of a very diverse student population. For instance, international transfer students, a group that can best describe the Latin American IBC transfers, is a widely neglected sub-group. Zhang (2017) precisely focuses on the international transfer sub-group and highlights that international transfers are "lumped together with other transfer or international student populations in institutional research and evaluation at 4-year universities" (p. 36). Similarly, they are grouped together with other transfers for orientation sessions. In the case of the Latin American IBC transfers, their orientation session upon arrival to the US main campus is the same one reserved for the general transfer population that includes community college transfers or other university transfers, both international and US. Despite their uniqueness, in the eyes of a large institution, they remain part of the big transfer group.

Understanding the transfer student experience as they move to the new academic context implies understanding the complex series of adjustments required on the academic, social, and psychological level (Laanan, 2001). Regardless of whether students come from a community college or another four-year institution, the transition means encountering new demands at the academic level that include anxiety about whether their credits will transfer (Townshend, 2008), the need to connect afresh with faculty and peers, and the increasing demand on performance. In

a sense, they feel like freshman students for the second time (Townshend, 2008). Although the IBC students do not need to feel anxiety about transfer credits, they face the need to connect afresh with new instructors and peers and are being introduced to a higher academic level upon their transfer. Furthermore, they feel the pressure to maintain their academic performance under the conditions of their scholarship.

The anonymity that a large campus entails (Townshend & Wilson, 2006) becomes a challenge for transfer student integration at the social and academic level. Community colleges are believed to be less rigorous in terms of academic content and demand, so the transition entails moving from an easier to a much more demanding academic context. Similarly, community colleges cater to a small group of students who receive much more personalized attention and closer support, enabling them to persist. Once they transfer to the bigger and more rigorous academic environments, they often feel alienated and marginalized and fail to adjust to both academic and social demands, meaning that their academic progress may suffer.

Townshend & Wilson (2006) conducted an in-depth study of transfer students and their perceptions of their post-transfer experience. A few ideas worth contemplating guided me in the study of the Latin American IBC transfers. For instance, the size of the new campus was a consideration that tied to other concerns, such as large lecture halls as opposed to the small classrooms in their previous schools (Townshend & Wilson, 2006, p. 450) and the perception that the professors were not "caring about whether students attended class and [were] disinterested in teaching them" (p. 450). Other concerns related to social integration in the campus community included that transfers felt the university was catering mostly to freshman, native students who had already established friendships and study groups from earlier on (Tobolowsky et al., 2014; Townshend & Wilson, 2006). In summary, the transfer students felt

unaccounted for and largely neglected.

In another study, this time from the perspective of administrators in the receiving institutions, there was reference to incorrect assumptions of transfer students that turn against them: they may assume that policies or procedures remain the same, whereas each institution follows its own rhythm and strategy (Tobolowsky & Cox, 2012, p. 397). Additionally, they pointed out significant first-term issues such as registering late after attending the last orientation and ending up with a less-than-desirable schedule or being faced with time constraints and overworked staff that cannot sufficiently help them. Clearly, first impressions of the new environment can create long-lasting stress and anxiety for transfer students (Tobolowsky & Cox, 2012, p. 399).

IBCs are similar to community colleges in their emphasis on teaching and also in their focus on small student groups. The admissions criteria in community colleges is often less rigorous than the criteria of the central or parent institution, which typically has a narrower selectivity pattern. How well these students perform and if and when they transition to the parent institution is still to be determined, but the academic conditions that surround them during the first two years are very similar to those of a community college. Therefore, the literature on the transfer experience from community college to university becomes useful in defining the transition of the transfers from an IBC to the central institution.

Schlossberg's Transition Model

Although transition can be viewed in terms of mobility—moving from one place to another and from one situation to another—Schlossberg's (1981) transition model is more than a one-step movement from point or situation A to B; it recognizes that "as people move through life they continually experience change and transition, and that these changes often result in new

networks or relationships, new behaviors, and new self-perceptions" (p. 2). As opposed to prior understandings of human development, the transition model does not rest solely on chronological or age-related stages. In fact, "life stage is more important than chronological age" (Schlossberg, 1981, p. 4) and development does not stop at adolescence or adulthood.

The appeal of the Transition Model is evident in its inclusive nature: "Often, the outcome of transition has both positive and negative aspects for the same individual" (p. 6). For that reason, Schlossberg (1981), though indebted to prior theorists, chooses to distance herself from the precursor of transition theory, namely "crisis theory" (p. 6). Crisis has been defined as "a relatively short period of disequilibrium in which a person has to work out new ways of handling a problem" (Moos & Tsu, 1976, p. 13 as cited in Schlossberg, 1981, p. 6). This definition reminds us of the "culture shock" that international students experience in a new educational environment, "the stimulus for acquisition of culture-specific skills that are required to engage in new social interactions" (Zhou et al., p. 65). However, the terms "crisis" and "shock" carry negative connotations, whereas Schlossberg (1981) sought to develop a pattern that encompasses "gains rather than (or as well as) losses" (p. 6).

Transition according to Schlossberg (1981) is thus defined as follows: "A transition can be said to occur if an event or non-event results in a change in assumptions about oneself and the world and thus requires a corresponding change in one´s behavior and relationships" (p. 5). She highlights that "transition is not so much a matter of change as of the individual´s perception of change" (Schlossberg, 1981, p. 7). *Adaptation* is another useful term that Schlossberg (1981) incorporates into her Transition Model, defined as "a process during which an individual moves from being totally preoccupied with the transition to integrating the transition into his or her life" (p. 7). *Transition* encompasses crisis and adjustment, change and worry over the change, the

feeling that the ground is moving beneath one's feet, and a loss of balance. *Adaptation*, however, is absorbing all of that into a new reality and new balance. Subsequently, adaptation is an embedded term that signals "the integration of the transition into [the individual's] life" (p. 7). Despite the attempts of theorists to predict a sequence, reaching adaptation does not follow a set pattern, and even if it does, the speed or ease with which people adapt to transition varies: "Ease of adaptation to a transition depends on one's perceived and/or actual balance of resources to deficits in terms of the transition itself, the pre-post environment, and the individual's sense of competency, well-being, and health" (Schlossberg, 1981, pp. 7-8). The balance between resources and deficits is in constant flux, and whereas at one point the resources outnumber or outweigh the deficits, the opposite may occur at another point.

This understanding or view of adaptation to transition can be very useful when viewing transfer students' transition to a new educational reality and the combination of elements or attitudes that determines their adjustment. Viewing the Latin American IBC transfer students in this framework allows for a richer picture of what works for some and what does not work for others. Adaptation can imply the adjustment to a new way of life; they remain transfer students from a Latin American IBC, but this distinction no longer sets them apart or frustrates them. Ultimately, this can be critical in understanding whether they are successful or not in the individual, social, and academic context.

Schlossberg's early Transition Model (1981) defined three sets of factors that could determine adaptation to transition: "the characteristics of the transition itself, the characteristics of the pre- and post-transition environments, and the characteristics of the individual" (Schlossberg, 1981a, p. 8). Models of adult development are under constant revision, and Schlossberg's (1981) original model has undergone extensive comment and review by other

specialists in addition to revisions and clarifications by Schlossberg herself. What stands out in her clarification of the original model is the emphasis on how it can be used to help us "be a little kinder toward ourselves" by embracing "the fluidity" of change and our adaptation to it (Schlossberg, 1981b, p. 50). In this respect, Schlossberg (1981b) emphasizes that her transition model "can give reassurance that difficulties in dealing with transitions, if not universal, are at least widespread" (p. 49).

Much like the situations that Schlossberg tries to understand, her fluid model has been subsequently recast to incorporate a threefold focus: "(a) understanding transitions, (b) coping with transitions, and (c) applying the model to work life transitions" (Schlossberg, 2011, p. 159). Transition is then re-defined as the events or non-events (anticipated or unanticipated) that force us to change "our roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions" (Schlossberg, 2011, p. 159). The emphasis, therefore, is not necessarily on what happened but on how much it has altered the individual's roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions. The most important revision of the model came with the addition of coping mechanisms, what she terms the 4 S's: situation, self, supports, and strategies. With the addition of the 4 S's, Schlossberg (1984) completed the Transition Framework presented in Figure 2.1, which captures the three stages of understanding transitions: a) Approaching transitions: Transition identification and transition process; b) taking stock of coping resources: The 4 S's System; and c) taking charge: Strengthening resources.

The framework accepts the variability of each individual's transition experience but provides the reliability of a structure. The Transition Framework guides professionals in their exploration and understanding of an individual's transition, from identifying its components and the way it impacts the individual, to the coping resources available, and finally to a consideration

of the action that needs to be taken in order to help the individual assume control.

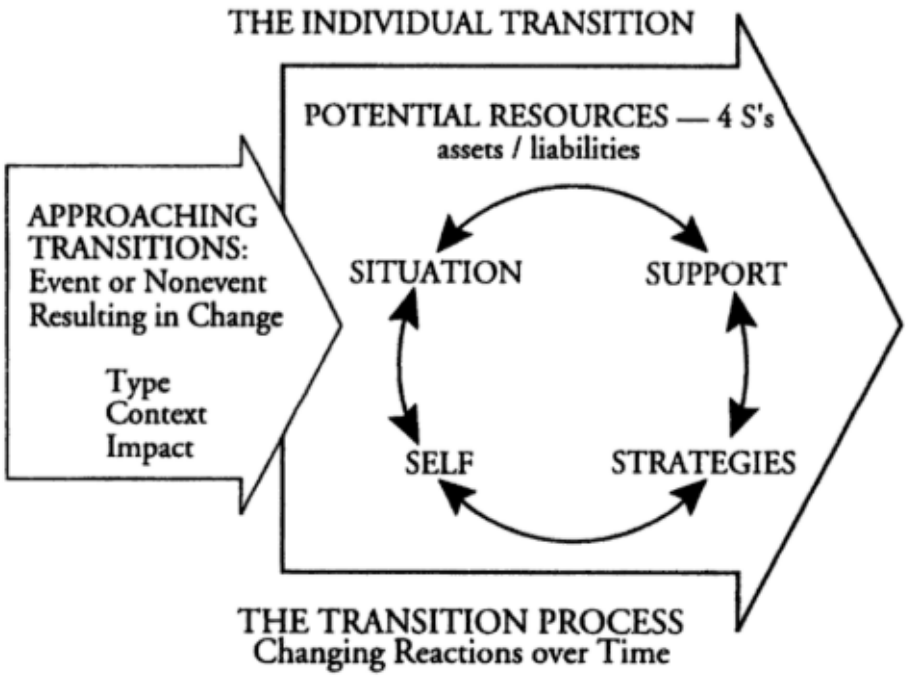

Figure 2.2. Schlossberg's Transition Framework (Schlossberg et al., 1995, p. 27).

This framework proved useful in understanding the transition experience of the IBC students as they transferred to the US main campus, because it allowed me to break down the major components of that experience and eventually reach some conclusions as to the resources that need strengthening in order to better support them.

The 4 S's System for Coping with Transitions was first introduced by Schlossberg in *Counseling Adults in Transition* (1984) but has been revised and clarified in subsequent editions (Schlossberg, 1995; Schlossberg, Waters, and Goodman, 1995) and the most recent edition (Anderson, Goodman, and Schlossberg, 2012). Schlossberg's 4 S's system groups the major factors that determine an individual's ability to cope with transition under *situation*, *self*, *support*, and *strategies*. Going back to her original emphasis on balancing resources and deficits, the 4 S's system is not a system for evaluating mental capabilities but for discovering the "ratio of assets

to liabilities" that different people may employ to handle a transition (Anderson et al., 2012, p. 63). This ratio can shift depending on an individual's situation. The 4 S's System for Coping with Transitions can be viewed in Figure 2.3.

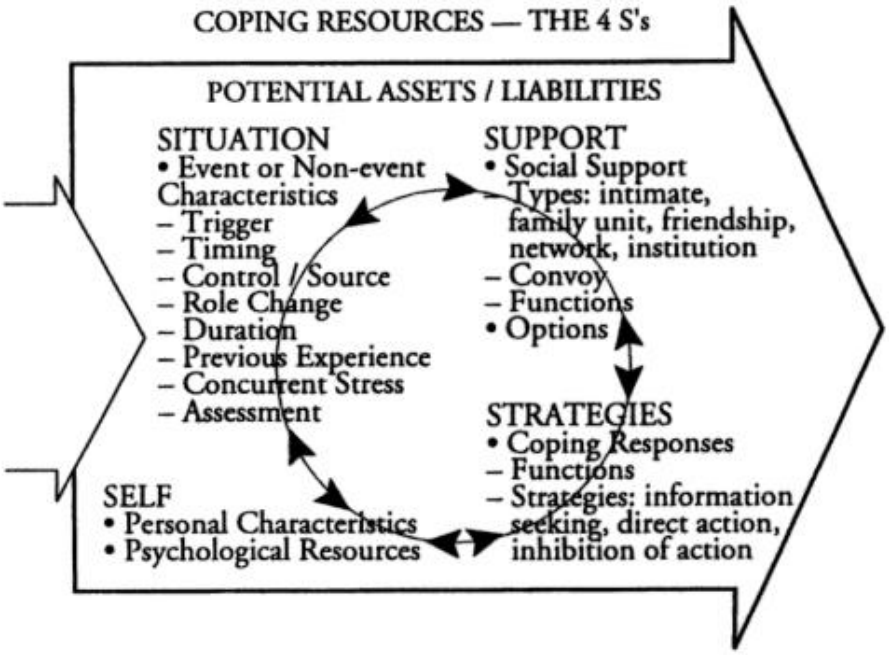

Figure 2.3. Schlossberg's 4 S's System for Coping with Transitions (Schlossberg et al., 1995, p. 48)

An understanding of the *situation* in which the individual finds himself or herself when the transition happens involves a consideration of its specific characteristics: trigger, timing, control, role change, duration, previous experience, concurrent stress, and assessment. As Anderson et al. (2012) emphasize, each person will experience a transition event or non-event in different ways for the simple reason that his or her situation will differ (p. 72).

The factor of *self* is defined as the combination of personal and demographic characteristics and psychological resources. Each individual brings different resources and liabilities to the experience of a transition, so the same event will be experienced differently depending on who each person is and his or her characteristics.

Support refers to the support systems the individuals may have access to or rely upon

through a variety of different sources: family, friends, intimate relationships, and institutional or organization support systems.

Finally, the factor of *strategies* is defined as the set of responses that are initiated by the individual in order to avoid harm. These strategies can aim to change the situation or reframe the situation; in other words, they are strategies employed with the goal of reducing stress.

Applying Schlossberg's model to the Latin American IBC transfers

Applying Schlossberg's Transition Model in the study of the Latin American IBC transfers provided a useful framework for embracing the diversity of student experiences while also helping to build relevant questions, themes of concern, and types of challenges that these students faced while transferring to the US main campus. At the same time, the model proved useful in building the data collection process in an attempt to define categories of changes, perceptions, and coping resources. In its inclusivity—the recognition that transition can trigger both positive and negative changes—it liberated the study from the assumption that a transition is necessarily complicated, or conversely, easy. Furthermore, the application of this model for the study of the Latin American IBC transfer experience tied in with the efforts revealed in the literature on international and transfer student transitions to understand a students' experience in all its dimensions. Only then can institutions think critically about their efforts to develop transfer receptive environments.

In terms of institutional response and a transfer receptive culture, the factors termed "support" and "strategies" are the most useful components to analyze and apply when reviewing the Latin American IBC transfer student transition experience and coping mechanisms. Even if the transition is experienced on an individual level and can vary from one person to another, looking at the support and strategies students resorted to, albeit very diverse, can help institutions

trigger the right mechanisms or enable the institutional resources that best match student needs. Ivis et al. (2017) make precisely this connection between the Transition Model and the resources that receiving universities can enable to support transfer students. Family and friends build important layers of support, but in their absence, students may resort to other networks and social or institutional support groups in the new environment. Ivis at al. (2017) refer to informal and formal supports on the receiving campus (pp. 252-253).

Finally, coping strategies are responses to the transition stemming from the individual; that is, everything "an individual does on his or her own behalf" (Anderson et al. 2012, p. 87). The range of responses can vary depending on whether the situation can be changed or is static, but four coping strategies are identified as the most salient. These include information seeking, direct action, and inhibition of action (Schlossberg et al., 1995, p. 48), and in the most recent version of Schlossberg's Transition Framework, the addition of "intra-psychic behavior" (Anderson et al. 2012, p. 90). The last refers to mind sets that individuals choose to use in order to cope with transition, namely "denial, wishful thinking, and distortion" (Anderson et al., 2012, p. 90). Those components guided me when building the survey questions that addressed the students' coping strategies. The findings led to the subsequent recommendations that can help both the Latin American IBC and its US main campus enable those strategies that best serve the needs of their transfer students.

Summary

When students from the Latin American IBC transfer to the US main campus, they do so in order to achieve a major goal: an undergraduate degree from a US university. This goal is not only one of intellectual recognition but a social and cultural asset. The Latin American IBC transfers are a unique group, and their transition to the US main campus is informed by the

literature on both international and transfer students. Their case is situated where two bodies of knowledge on student transitions intersect and validate each other. Analyzing their point of departure helps define their uniqueness, while the literature on international students and transfer students positions them at the heart of a long-standing concern in institutions of higher learning: how best to support an increasingly diverse student population. Student mobility is a growing phenomenon; as the barriers that inhibit it are reduced, the challenges for students emerge. Schlossberg's (1981) Transition Model provided a systematic method of tracing the Latin American IBC transfer students' academic and cultural accomplishments in all their complexity and developing recommendations for institutional response.

CHAPTER 3

INVESTIGATIVE APPROACH

Introduction

The primary interest of this research lay in understanding the transition experience of students who transferred from a small Latin American International Branch Campus (IBC) to its US main campus, a large and research-intensive state university, in the academic year 2017-2018. The administrative procedures that have been set in place to enable this transfer process are designed to bring them closer to their new status as US main campus students: they are admitted and coded into their intended majors; their location code changes from the Latin American IBC to the US main campus; and their student group is no longer the Latin American IBC. As soon as the Latin American IBC transfer students arrive on their new campus, they go through transfer student orientation and move on to enroll for classes and begin a new stage as upper division students. As a result, they join the larger US main campus student population. This process is standardized and enabled through administrative mechanisms established by both the sending and receiving institutions. The students' perception of this transition process, however, has not been explored in depth, and everything known about the challenges or changes they encounter is merely anecdotal. To address this gap in knowledge and understanding of an important and continuous student transition, this study used a research methodology that helped unpack not only the layers of their transition but also the support and coping mechanisms they found most helpful.

The following questions guided the inquiry on the IBC transfer students' transition experience:

1. What were the factors that led rising juniors from the Latin American IBC to transfer to the US main campus for the academic year fall 2017 through summer 2018?

2. What were the Latin American IBC transfers' perceptions about the transition experience and the way it affected their roles and relationships?
3. What types of institutional support from the Latin American IBC and from the main campus did the Latin American IBC transfers employ to manage their transition process?
4. What types of student-initiated coping strategies did the Latin American IBC transfers employ during their transition process?
5. What recommendations do the Latin American IBC transfers suggest for facilitating the transition process and for program improvement?

The Latin American IBC transfers are a unique transfer group. Their transition to the US main campus is situated at the intersection of the transfer and the international student experience, and it coincides with several milestones simultaneously: individual, social, and academic. The Latin American IBC transfer students move up academically as they enter their junior year in the major of their choice, but they also move out of their comfort zone and their social and cultural context. Their experience exceeds the limitations of previous studies that capture only the transfer student or international student experience.

Research design

The research design employed in this study was a sequential, mixed methods design, with an online survey followed by a focus group. The study did not have a hypothesis to prove; rather, it was exploratory in nature, attempting to unpack the transition experience of the Latin American IBC students as they transfer to the US main campus. It fell under the tradition of action research, with an emphasis on not only understanding the educational experience but also enabling transformation and improvement for both the context and its participants. Additionally, it was framed by a constructivist paradigm, which recognizes that "individuals form their own realities"

and invites the researcher "to get as close as possible to participants" (Creswell, 2016, p. 42).

The mixed methods design allowed the quantitative portion of the online IBC Student Transition Survey (see Appendix H for the full survey) to reveal important themes, which were then magnified and deepened through the qualitative portion of the focus group. Johnson & Christensen (2014) highlight that mixed methods can fulfill one or a combination of the following purposes: "(1) triangulation, (2) complementarity, (3) development, (4) initiation, and (5) expansion" (p. 502). The choice of mixed methods for carrying out this study was based on a combination of complementarity, development, and expansion. For example, the qualitative phase complemented the quantitative one by offering "elaboration, illustration, and clarification of the results" generated by the quantitative stage. Similarly, the results of the qualitative stage helped "inform the other method", and finally, helped "expand the breadth and range of inquiry" (Johnson & Christensen, 2014, p. 502). Important reflections and issues related to action research and mixed methods are addressed below.

Action research as a research tradition

The current study fits into the framework of action research, research that responds to the context in which educational issues develop. This is a complex and problematic context because support is not readily accessible and time to address pressing problems is scarce (Sagor, 2011, p. 4). Therefore, action research responds to on-the-job problems of educators and educational practitioners and allows them to address those problems in order to improve "future actions" (Sagor, 2011, p. 5). Motivation for action research springs from the context, receives support and analysis through existing theories, and returns to its context for implementation and improvement. Action research allows an approach to an observable issue that affects an educational context and invites analysis and intervention. Sappington et al. (2010) reflect further

on the virtues of action research in that it "invites participants to become actively involved in studying their immediate social settings and reflecting on the meaning of their findings for the benefit of their own continuing participation in the group" (p. 253). Sappington et al. (2010) highlight the "rigor" and "depth" of action research as well as the possibility for participants to assume new roles and become researchers in addition to their conventional roles of educators or administrators (p. 253). Therefore, a study that follows the action research tradition is characterized by transformation, not only because it enables change in a context but because it allows and encourages participant change as well. Burgess (2006) concludes that as lengthy as action research can be, in the end, it bears "tangible results" and throughout the process, the participants "gain a stronger sense of self" (p. 431).

The results of a mixed methods study on the Latin American IBC students' transition to the US main campus can have practical implications for the administrators of both locations. On both ends of this transition, administrators and academic directors formulate and implement stages in an already established process, but at no point does this effort consider the in-depth experience of the students. Understanding this experience from the vantage point of the students can pave the way for informed changes, additional support mechanisms, and guided resources. The intention of the study was primarily exploratory, to expose the student experience and follow with advocacy and advisory services. For practitioners in this context, including the present researcher, the results can enable informed decisions about new practices or revisions of current policies.

Mixed methods methodology

The sequential mixed methods design used for the study of the IBC students´ transition experience as they transferred to the US main campus consisted of an online survey followed by

a focus group. The online IBC Student Transition Survey was launched in order to collect the most prominent ideas that connected with the research questions and the frequency that certain topics of interest featured in the students' experiences. The focus group used these ideas as discussion prompts to provide details, vivid anecdotes, and relevant vignettes that capture the voices of the students and reveal the depth of their experience. The quantitative aspect of the research design was, therefore, complemented with the qualitative stage.

Mixed methods research designs have been gaining prominence in educational research because they allow the researcher to follow the needs evident in the research questions rather than adhere to a pre-established canon (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). An additional advantage of mixed methods methodology is the possibility for "the results of one method [to] help develop or inform the other method" (Greene, Carecelli & Graham, 1989, as cited in Creswell, 2003, p. 16). In sequential mixed methods approaches, the researcher "seeks to elaborate on or expand the findings of one method with another method" (Creswell, 2003, p. 16).

These observations on the value of mixed methods designs are relevant in the study of Latin American IBC student transition experience. The quantitative stage generated findings that were not only confirmed and triangulated through the qualitative stage but also made more meaningful and richer through the "detailed exploration" of the participants' responses in the focus group (Creswell, 2003, p. 16). Furthermore, given how complex the transition experience of the IBC transfer students can be, the quantitative stage helped draw attention to those aspects of the experience and those coping mechanisms that showed the highest relevance and frequency. Therefore, the quantitative stage became a pre-selection process for the focus group prompts. While the IBC Student Transition Survey collected many responses to determine the prominence of relevant topics, the focus group allowed those topics to be explored in depth

through the participants' voices and specific language. As Creswell (2003) highlights, mixed methods can "capture the best of both quantitative and qualitative approaches" in order to best understand the research problem and questions (Creswell, 2003, p. 22). For instance, there is value in knowing how many of the IBC transfers relied on the institutional support systems in order to handle their transition, and this can be answered through the quantitative portion. However, *how* or *why* they resorted to those support systems or their personal experience of using them could only be explored through the qualitative stage of the research design.

Participants

The process of transferring from the Latin American IBC to its US main campus is a standard one that takes place every semester in every academic year, and it has been ongoing since the early 80s. This study, however, focused on the IBC transfer cohort for the academic year 2017-2018, which comprised three semesters: Fall 2017, Spring 2018, and Summer 2018. The 2017-2018 transfer cohort has been the biggest transfer group from the Latin American IBC campus to the US main campus in the history of the institution, and for that reason, it also provided ample opportunity to explore the transition of the IBC transfers. The online IBC Student Transition Survey was released early in the Fall 2018 semester. The respondents had spent at least one full semester on the US main campus, and they were on the US main campus for both the survey and the focus group session.

The interest group consisted of 151 juniors who transferred from the Latin American IBC campus to the US main campus in the semesters of Fall 2017, Spring 2018, and Summer 2018. They were mostly international students from Latin America who had completed their freshman and sophomore years at the Latin American IBC campus while meeting their General Education requirements and the pre-requisites for their intended majors, and subsequently transferred to the

US main campus in order to complete their undergraduate degrees. Table 3.1 displays the characteristics of the interest group:

Table 3.1. Demographic characteristics of the transfer group for 2017-2018 (N=151)

	n	**%**
Gender		
Male	78	51.7%
Female	73	48.3%
Age		
21	67	44.4%
20	47	31.1%
22	22	14.6%
19	6	4%
23	5	3.3%
24	3	2%
25	1	0.7%
Race/Ethnicity		
Hispanic or Latino/a	136	90%
White (non-Hispanic)	9	5.7%
Asian	6	4%
Academic Area		
Business	46	30.5%
Arts and Sciences	39	25.8%
Engineering	32	21.2%
Social Sciences and Public Policy	15	9.9%
Communication	5	3.3%
Human Sciences	4	2.6%
Visual/Fine Arts	3	2%
Criminology	2	1.3%
Entrepreneurship	2	1.3%
Hospitality	2	1.3%
Education	1	0.7%
GPA		
3.0-3.4	68	45%
3.5-4.0	59	39%
2.5-2.9	18	11.9%
2.0-2.4	6	4%

A closer look at their characteristics revealed that most of them were already 20 years of age or over when they transferred, and there was an almost even representation of male and

female students in the group. These were academically strong students with GPAs ranging between 3.0 to 4.0 (on a scale of 4.0), and with academic interests that fell primarily within three major colleges: Arts and Sciences, Business, and Engineering.

The interest group is representative of the Latin American IBC student population, because the IBC serves primarily students from the Latin American region who eventually transfer to the US main campus or other universities in the US or Europe. The study used a "nested sequential" sampling design (Johnson & Christensen, 2014, p. 272); the participants of the focus group, as explained below, were a subgroup of the participants who completed the IBC Student Transition Survey, and those in turn were a subgroup of the overall interest group of IBC transfers for the academic year 2017-2018.

Data collection instruments

The sequential mixed methods design for this study comprised two stages: the online IBC Student Transition survey and a subsequent focus group. The data collection process was designed with an online anonymous survey that allowed participants to volunteer for the focus group session. This design ensured that the focus group participants had already completed the online IBC Student Transition Survey (see Appendix H) and therefore had preliminary contact with the content and purpose of the study.

The IBC Student Transition Survey

The IBC Student Transition Survey was sent to all students who transferred in Fall 2017, Spring 2018, and Summer 2018 (a total of 151 students) from the Latin American IBC to the US main campus. After securing permission from the director of the Latin American IBC (see Appendix B for approval email), I compiled the list of transfer students through the database used for the process, and their institutional emails were used to circulate the IBC Student

Transition Survey. The invitation to the survey explaining the project and its conditions can be found in Appendix C. Upon completing the IBC Student Transition Survey, participants had the option of volunteering for the subsequent focus group session. Part of the incentive for the focus group activity was a raffle for three $15 vouchers from amazon.com offered to the first eight volunteers. Only when they volunteered for the focus group were participants asked for their names and contact information.

The IBC Student Transition Survey was an original survey designed for the purposes of this study, developed and maintained through the Qualtrics® survey tool. It was designed to ensure anonymity and prevent participants from taking it twice. It was a mixed questionnaire consisting of closed-ended questions, questions with checklists, and open-ended questions. Closed-ended questions that measured frequency or extent of a given feeling, service or action contained a 5-Likert scale. The IBC Student Transition Survey also used checklists to allow multiple responses and open-ended questions where respondents could offer additional thoughts and suggestions. Each research question was addressed through a different set of survey items to facilitate the data collection. Overall, the IBC Student Transition Survey connected to the research questions, the literature review, and particularly the *supports* and *strategies* from the 4 S's System for Coping with Transitions (Schlossberg, 1984).

The IBC Student Transition Survey consisted of seven sections: A. The factors that led to transfer, B. The students' perception of the transition, C. Changes in roles and relationships, D. Support systems, E. Coping strategies, F. Overall feedback, and G. Background information. Each section contained questions that addressed key ideas or aspects of the research questions, in this way facilitated the collection of information. Table 3.2 illustrates how the survey sections connect to the research questions:

Table 3.2. Research questions with corresponding survey sections

Research Question	IBC Student Transition Survey Section
Q1. What were the factors that led rising juniors from the Latin American IBC to transfer to the US main campus for the academic year fall 2017 through summer 2018?	A. The factors that led to transfer
Q2. What were the Latin American IBC transfers' perceptions about the transition experience and the way it affected their roles and relationships?	B. The students´ perception of the transition C. Changes in roles and relationships
Q3. What types of institutional support from the Latin American IBC and from the main campus did the Latin American IBC transfers employ to manage their transition process?	D. Support systems
Q4. What types of student-initiated coping strategies did the Latin American IBC transfers employ during their transition process?	E. Coping strategies
Q5. What recommendations do the Latin American IBC transfers suggest for facilitating the transition process and for program improvement?	F. Overall feedback

Below, a section-by-section explanation of the IBC Student Transition Survey is provided.

A. <u>The factors that led to transfer</u>

This section consisted of two questions to determine the reasons leading to the IBC students' decision to transfer to the US main campus. The first question provided a list of possible responses and permitted multiple selections. The list of possible responses captured the assumed reasons that may have led students to transfer, such as familiarity with the university system of the main campus, the reputation of the main campus, the academic program that the student was pursuing, the fact that friends were also transferring, the recommendation of friends of family, or the 2+2 scholarship opportunity. The list included an "other" category, offering the possibility for an additional reason. The second question asked whether the participants may have considered transferring to other universities and measured their responses on a 5-Likert scale: a) not at all, b)

very little, c) somewhat, d) quite a bit, and e) a great deal.

B. The students' perception of the transition

This section measured the emotional impact that the transfer process had on the participants, the way they perceived the transition, the challenges they associated with it, and their level of preparedness. The questions were developed in accordance with the relevant literature on transfer student and international student experiences. The section on students' perception consisted of 13 questions measuring level of excitement, sense of achievement, freedom, confusion and fear, anxiety, homesickness, and feeling of being lost. A 5-Likert scale was used for these questions: a) not at all, b) very little, c) somewhat, d) quite a bit, and e) a great deal.

This section also addressed their level of preparedness for the transfer and the tools they may have used for this preparation. Typically, students who relocate for their studies rely on electronic resources (the institutional website) and live sources (advisors and friends or peers in the transfer group). In the question addressing the tools they used to prepare for the transfer, participants were asked to select multiple responses or add their own. The last two items in this section intended to determine how challenging the transition may have been for the participants and identify the aspects that may have been the most challenging, such as academic difficulty, increased responsibility, new language, new social context, distance from home and family, or any additional responses the participants wished to add.

C. Changes in roles and relationships

Part of Schlossberg's (1981) definition of transition is the changes that it brings in people's roles and relationships on a personal, family, or social level. This section tried to determine the extent to which the IBC transfers experienced changes in their roles and

relationships as a result of the transfer process. Role and relationship changes are defined in three ways: the adoption of new roles upon transferring, the abandonment of old roles, and the assignment of new roles. The last item in this section addressed the extent to which participants found that their relationships to others were affected as a result of the transfer to the US main campus. Responses to all questions are on a 5-Likert scale: a) not at all, b) very little, c) somewhat, d) quite a bit, and e) a great deal.

D. Support systems

The section on support systems aimed to discover the formal or informal support systems that students may have employed in order to manage the transition process. Since their transition from the Latin American IBC to the US main campus is a connector of two educational contexts, both settings are critical for their preparation and adjustment. Two items in this section address formal support systems: formal support systems provided by the Latin American IBC (advisors, Dean's office, Admissions office, and Professors) and formal support systems provided by the US main campus (orientation, International Student Center, Counseling Center, Health Center, etc.). A third item delved into the informal support systems that the student may have employed during their transition, i.e. support systems that were not implemented or sustained by either of the two educational contexts. Informal support system options included peers from the transfer group, other main campus students, faculty members, members of the dorm community, friends from home, family members or others.

E. Coping strategies

Coping strategies are defined as the student-initiated actions or reactions that the participants may have resorted to in efforts to manage the transition. Schlossberg (1984) indicates that strategies are actions individuals take on their own behalf, including information

seeking, direct action and inhibition of action. A series of closed-ended questions asked participants to use a 5-Likert scale in revealing how much they resorted to defined coping strategies: stopping to think about how best to cope; making a plan of action; reaching out to friends and family; discussing feelings with others; pretending [the transition] is not happening; getting upset but keeping it to yourself; getting upset and letting your emotions out: skipping class; and giving up on the effort to cope. An open-ended question allowed participants to list additional coping strategies that they found helpful, and it generated a rich list of activities, actions, and mind sets that could be used to draw conclusions about the preferred strategies used by the IBC transfers.

F. Overall feedback

The overall feedback section consisted only of open-ended questions that allowed participants to expand on the transition experience. This section was specifically tied to research question 5 that hoped to discover participants' recommendations or suggestions about the transfer process and program improvement. The five questions in this section offered a unique opportunity to explore the transfer students' overall evaluation of the transfer process and the way it has been handled on the institutional side, while also providing them with the capacity to bring about change and improvement.

G. Background information

The background section collected participant information on age, gender, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, as well as academic concentration and academic performance. Out of the interest group of 151 students, 51 began the online IBC Student Transition Survey and 38 completed all survey questions. The group of respondents reflected the above characteristics of the overall IBC transfer group very closely. Table 3.3 displays the characteristics of the IBC

Student Transition Survey respondents:

Table 3.3. Demographic characteristics of the respondent group (N=38)

	n	%
Gender		
Female	21	58.3%
Male	17	41.6%
Age		
20 or 21	37	95.8%
19	1	4.2%
Race/Ethnicity		
Hispanic or Latino/a	28	73.6%
Two or more	6	15.8%
White (non-Hispanic)	2	5.2%
Asian	2	5.2%
Academic Area		
Engineering	12	31.5%
Arts and Sciences	10	26.3%
Business	8	21.0%
Social Sciences and Public Policy	3	7.9%
Communication	2	5.3%
Education	1	2.6%
Entrepreneurship	1	2.6%
Hospitality	1	2.6%
GPA		
3.5-4.0	19	50%
3.0-3.4	16	42.1%
2.5-2.9	3	7.9%

This was a representative group of the IBC transfers for the academic year 2017-2018, with the majority 20 or 21 years of age, an even gender representation, and students who were mostly Hispanic or Latino/a. Their academic interests reflected the three major academic colleges preferred by the overall interest group (Arts & Sciences, Business, and Engineering), and their GPAs also fell in the range of 3.0-4.0 found in the interest group. Although the group of respondents was a relatively small group, they matched the major identifying characteristics of a typical transfer group from the Latin American IBC to the US main campus and thus added to the reliability of the study.

Focus group

The second instrument used for this inquiry was a focus group that expanded on the most salient concepts and topics that arose from the IBC Student Transition Survey. Additionally, focus group data provided vivid examples to illustrate and clarify, offered rich vignettes, added in-depth discussion of the issues and topics of transition, and finally allowed for clarification through student perceptions and voices. It became a fitting complement to the IBC Student Transition Survey by providing the "*hows* and *whys* behind things observed or mentioned in casual interactions" (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2013, p. 40), and in this case, in the responses collected. The protocol for the focus group can be found in Appendix J.

The focus group data collection method is a useful and practical method, allowing the collection of important information in only one session (Johnson & Christensen, 2014; Remler & Van Ryzin, 2011). Additionally, it has many other advantages. Since all students in the group were members of the same transfer cohort, it is possible that they have had similar experiences; in a focus group, however, with all participants present, repetition can be kept at a minimum. Remler & Van Ryzin (2011) identify additional advantages in the focus group dynamic, in that "The within-group cuing and prompting can spark an animated discussion and help uncover important issues" (p.70). In this respect, the focus group is not merely a means to validate the results of the IBC Student Transition Survey but to fill in any gaps it may have missed and to complement the information. The focus group dynamic can also help detect "widely shared views versus views that are more idiosyncratic" and thus reveal which topics can be generalizable (Remler & Van Ryzin, 2011, p. 70). Furthermore, the focus group dynamic reinforces the idea that many aspects of our social life are "influenced by group processes or how others around us view and discuss the matter" (Remler & Van Ryzin, 2011, p. 70). Within this

framework, the Latin American IBC transfers could see themselves as part of a group and reflect on how this group influenced their view of the process of transition.

An additional advantage that plays a key role in the context of the IBC transfers and the researcher´s role is that focus groups balance out the power of the researcher and make it difficult "for the researcher to impose his or her own agenda in the group context" because control is actually "placed in the hands of the participants rather than the researcher" (Wilkinson, 1998, p. 190). Therefore, a focus group provides a safe space to explore their experiences and choices (Liamputtong, 2015, p. 6). This was an attractive aspect of the focus group method precisely because the researcher in this study works in the IBC and has an elevated position, which could intimidate participants. As Kamberelis & Dimitriadis (2013) aptly point out, focus groups can "mitigate or inhibit the authority of the researcher, allowing participants to 'take over' or 'own' the interview space" (p. 6).

All these characteristics of a focus group made it a fitting method for the second and in-depth exploration of the IBC transition experience. The IBC transfers are a unique group, and they transfer as such, so their experience is very much part and parcel of the group experience. Additionally, my close connection to the IBC administration and the whole transfer process could have potentially intimidated individual interviewees, whereas the focus group dynamic mitigated my leadership role and provided participants with a safe space where they could be in control.

I guided the focus group through the following questions:

1. Can you elaborate on the reasons that led you to transfer from the Latin American IBC to the US main campus?
2. Think of your transition from the Latin American Campus to the US Main Campus. What did you expect from this transition? And what did it mean to you?

3. How did that transition affect you? And how did you feel? (Follow up question: Did you feel some pressure? Is this pressure related to your situation?)
4. What demands or challenges did the transfer process place on you? (Follow up question:
5. How did you prepare for that transition while in the Latin American IBC?
6. Did you rely on any support systems in preparation for the transfer process and then afterwards? Formal or informal support systems.
7. Can you think of coping strategies, i.e. actions that were initiated from you? (Follow up questions: How often do you resort to physical representations of your culture or home? Any other examples of things you do or resort to in order to cope?)
8. What recommendations would you give to students that are about to take the leap that you took from the IBC campus to the US main campus?
9. What else would you like us to know about the transition experience from your home program to the main campus?
10. Would you like to add something else that we have not addressed related to the transition experience?

Focus group participants

I facilitated the focus group with five students who volunteered to participate after completing the IBC Student Transition Survey. The email to those that volunteered to participate can be found in Appendix D. Originally, ten students had agreed to participate, and as the time approached, they were contacted with possible meeting times. After they selected their preferred time slot, I then selected the time slot of highest preference, a decision that inevitably left some students out. A total of six students promised to arrive, and of those six, five remained for the entire two-hour focus group session. The location selected was a classroom on the US main

campus that was easily accessible to all. Directions were provided through email.

The focus group consisted of four males and one female. Four of them had already spent three consecutive semesters on the US main campus, and one of them had only spent one semester by the time the focus group took place. Table 3.4 displays the characteristics of the focus group participants:

Table 3.4. Characteristics of the focus group (N=5)

Name	Age	Race/Ethnicity	Academic college
Tom	21	Hispanic/Latino	Social Sciences
Suzy	21	Hispanic/Latina	Engineering
Pete	22	Hispanic/Latino	Engineering
Jim	22	Hispanic/Latino	Arts & Sciences
Paco	21	Hispanic/Latino	Engineering

Their names are pseudonyms selected to protect their identity. Below I provide additional distinguishing characteristics for each participant.

Tom is a 21-year-old student in the college of Social Sciences. He was one of the most active participants during the session and provided lengthy descriptions of his experiences during the transition process. He also provided several of the key ideas the emerged during the session and rich details about what it meant to change campuses and undergo important adjustments. Suzy is a 21-year-old female student in the college of Engineering. She seemed timid and reserved, but her responses were brief, concise, and succinct. Pete is a 22-year-old male student in the college of Engineering. He had only spent one semester on the US main campus by the time the focus group took place, so the transition was still very fresh for him. He referred to himself as a "low social skills" person, and yet he was active and enthusiastic about sharing his view of the transition. Jim is a 22-year-old male student studying Psychology in the college of Arts and Sciences, and he used his knowledge of psychology to provide an analysis of his experience and connect the content of our discussion with specific terminology in his field. He

was lively, very active during the session, and truly funny when describing his experiences. Finally, Paco is a 21-year-old male student, also in the College of Engineering. Paco stood out from the group in outspokenness, vibrancy, and in colorful renditions of his experience. It was obvious that Paco and Jim had been friends and shared common interests: both frequented the same martial arts club and visited the same Mexican restaurant when feeling nostalgic about their homes and culture.

These participants did not disappoint me. They were as enthusiastic as I hoped they would be, and I had to draw the session to a close a little past the two-hour timeframe. They were talkative, lively, and for the most part effusive and ready to respond. None of them expressed hesitation, doubt, or fear. Some were more outspoken than others and some shyer than others, but they were all given an opportunity to express their ideas, present their individual cases, and carry the discussion forward. Although the focus group protocol had originally listed 14 questions, during the session, I found myself surrendering the control of the scripted list in exchange for their rich discussion. The order of ideas was somewhat altered to allow for the free and spontaneous flow of ideas; in the end, the major components of the study were answered and some of the preliminary findings from the IBC Student Transition Survey were clarified and gained depth.

The focus group was conducted in English, but the conversation contained portions in Spanish, their native tongue. Similarly, the conversation was sprinkled with many cultural references to their home countries, shared cultural elements and memories of their IBC experience. The shared experiences triggered laughter and side notes that contributed to the warm and comfortable atmosphere. Also, as Creswell (2016) highlights, "[c]ontext or setting is very important in qualitative research" (p. 6), and their many references to either the IBC context

or their home and culture provided a useful framework of their experience. The focus group participants were a delight to talk to, and although they had known me in advance in my administrative capacity in the IBC, they were still comfortable around me and revealed important layers of their university experience.

Data collection and storage

The process of data collection and storage for each stage of the study is described below.

IBC Student Transition Survey data

Upon IRB approval, the survey items were prepared and incorporated in the Qualtrics® survey tool that was distributed among the Latin American IBC transfer cohort for 2017-2018. Prior to distribution, the IBC Student Transition Survey was piloted at the Latin American IBC campus in order to determine feasibility and comprehension and to verify the10-15-minute completion timeframe. The IBC Student Transition Survey launched on 6 September 2018 and closed on 22 September 2018. Participants received three follow up emails reinforcing the usefulness of the survey and overall study.

The survey questions were grouped to match the research questions and thus enable data collection at that stage. Results were transferred to an Excel spreadsheet for efficient handling, grouping and coding, and detailed tables were built to display the results. A detailed display of the IBC Student Transition Survey results can be found in Appendix I. The results of the survey were stored in a cloud storage component in addition to a password-protected computer and a memory stick.

The IBC Student Transition Survey results led to some preliminary findings about the most prominent themes related to the IBC students' transition experience. While planning and coordinating the details for the focus group, I engaged in a systematic process of journaling and

reflection based on the preliminary findings drawn from the survey.

Focus group data

The subsequent focus group, which took place on the US main campus, was designed to enrich the findings of the IBC Student Transition Survey. I gave the participants an overview of my study, briefly defined the way I use the term *transition,* and reassured them that the purpose of the study was purely academic and none of the information they gave would be associated with their names. The consent forms had been sent to them via email in order to familiarize them with the content and to elicit any questions. I provided them with hard copies of the consent form to sign before the focus group was initiated. The recording devices were tested in advance, and the session started as soon as consent forms had been signed.

Two recording devices were used simultaneously: a "smart" phone and a tablet. The audio file through the mobile phone was uploaded to a cloud storage component and was then processed for transcription through a recording & transcribing application (Otter©). The audio file with the tablet was processed through an application that both records and transcribes (Just Press Record).

Upon completion of the focus group, the audio file was stored in a cloud component, with a back-up copy saved in a password-protected laptop. The audio file of the focus group was transcribed using free-access software that generated a close transcription of the original recording. The original transcribed file was verified and corrected by listening to the audio file. While listening to the audio file afresh, I complemented the transcription with parenthetical notes, a description of the context and reactions of the participants, and other relevant details that supported the analysis. Such process allowed an in-depth exploration and analysis of the experiences described by the participants and helped draw some preliminary topics and patterns.

Focus group notetaking support

For support during the focus group, I recruited a former IBC student who had gone through the same transfer process previously but did not belong to the 2017-2018 cohort. Her support consisted of helping with the room set up, ordering and receiving pizza, and conducting some notetaking during the session. Specifically, she was asked to either note down emerging topics or significant phrases or remarks that were particularly vivid or meaningful. Those were used to flesh out the participants' reactions and provide depth during the analysis. Additionally, her support and notetaking allowed me to concentrate fully on the interaction, maintain eye contact, provide thoughtful follow up questions, and moderate the participation. It was easier to tune into their reactions, body language and overall dynamic if I did not have to also take notes or check on the recording devices. The notetaking template used for this component is included in Appendix K.

Data analysis

Data analysis for this study was sequential, with the quantitative data collected and displayed prior to the focus group session. A preliminary analysis of the quantitative data was generated before advancing with the qualitative set. In the synthesis stage, each research question was addressed and answered with the support of both quantitative and qualitative data. Johnson & Christensen (2014) emphasize that the goal of mixed methods research design is to integrate the data from both the quantitative and qualitative phases and ultimately generate "meta-inferences" (p. 505).

Figure 3.1 represents the combination of quantitative and qualitative portions in order to generate the results of the study and eventually analysis. As Tashakkori & Teddlie (2010) highlight, in the use of mixed methods, the level of analysis becomes "a combination of

measurement and interpretation" (n.p.). Below is a description of the analysis process for each stage of the inquiry.

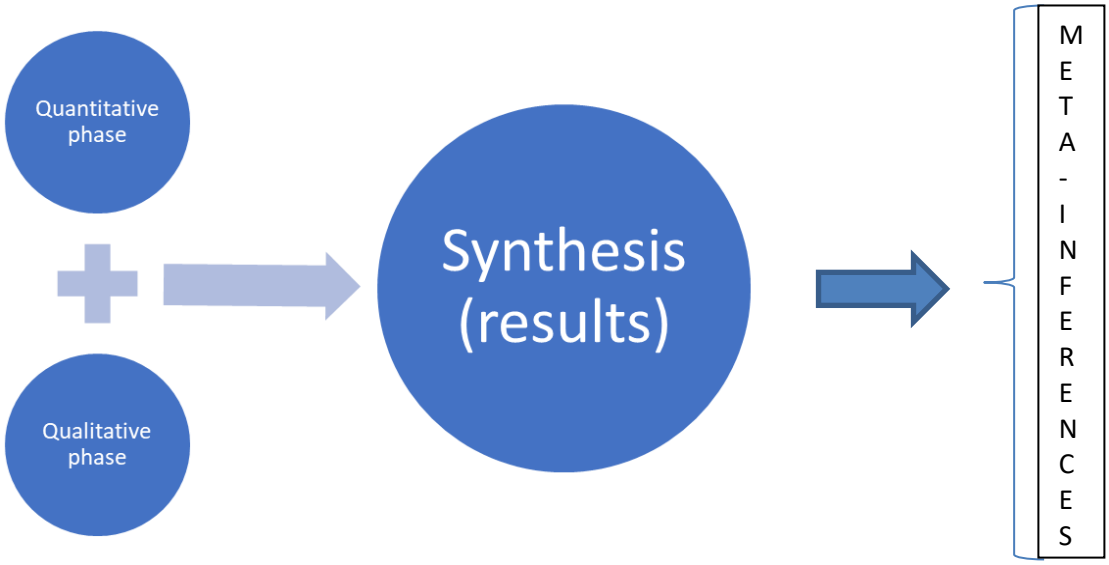

Figure 3.1. Overall data analysis

Analysis of IBC Student Transition Survey data

Upon completion of the IBC Student Transition Survey, the results were collected in an Excel spreadsheet for visualization and processing. Subsequently, through descriptive statistics, there was a detailed visualization of the data sets by survey question in order to reveal frequency, intensity, or preference. Basic frequency distribution tables were generated in order to provide a detailed display of the data collected with number of responses and percentages. The first stage was simply a display of results by question and by item in each question. In a subsequent stage of the survey data analysis, the frequencies were arranged in descending order to reveal the tendencies and maximum/minimum representations. Table 3.5 presents an example:

Table 3.5. Racial or ethnic background of the IBC survey participants (N=38)

Racial/Ethnic Background	***n***	**%**
Hispanic or Latino/a	28	73.7%
Racial/Ethnic Background	***n***	**%**
Two or more	6	15.8%
White (non-Hispanic)	2	5.2%
Asian	2	5.2%

Such arrangements revealed tendencies and made emergent themes easier to detect for the synthesis stage. For instance, the section that grouped the students' positive perceptions about the transfer process was first displayed in the order in which responses were arranged in the IBC Student Transition Survey following the 5-Likert scale: 1) not at all, 2) very little, 3) somewhat, 4) quite a bit, and 5) a great deal. Table 3.6 provides an example of the first stage of collecting the data from this section:

Table 3.6. Students' positive perceptions about the transfer process (N= 49)

	n	**%**
Q3. To what extent were you excited about transferring to the US main campus?		
Not at all	1	2.0%
Very little	2	4.08%
Somewhat	5	10.2%
Quite a bit	16	32.65
A great deal	25	51%

A subsequent processing of the results included in the findings section led to what is often called "qualitizing" or "converting quantitative data into narrative representations that can be analyzed qualitatively (Johnson & Christensen, 2014 p. 504). For instance, options were merged to mean a negative or positive response (e.g. in the question of how excited they felt about the transfer process, 1-2 were merged to imply they were *not* excited and options 3-5 were merged to imply that they *were*). The combined percentages were arranged in a descending order in order to highlight the tendencies as illustrated in Table 3.7:

Table 3.7. Students' positive perceptions about the transfer process revised (N= 49)

	n	**%**	**Combined %**
Q3. To what extent were you excited about transferring to the US main campus?			
A great deal	25	51%	94.0%
Quite a bit	16	32.7	
Somewhat	5	10.2%	
Very little	2	4.1%	6.0%
Not at all	1	2.0%	

Such display presents the same question but with the combined percentages that reveal

the tendency of students to feel excitement about their transfer. A similar process was used for all IBC Student Transition Survey questions that contained such closed-ended questions based on a 5-Likert scale.

Every stage of revisiting the IBC Student Transition Survey data was followed by journaling and reflection in a process. This was not a mere conversion of responses into numbers but contained a preliminary level of analysis and interpretation. Figure 3.2 represents the sequence followed in the quantitative phase.

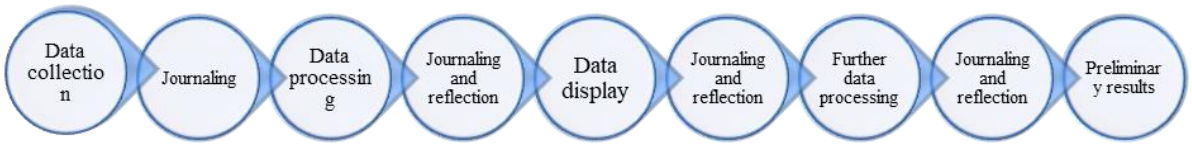

Figure 3.2 A representation of the quantitative phase.

A similar process for all the collected data from the IBC Student Transition Survey led to a preliminary narrative that contained not only some preliminary results but also points of ambiguity and incompleteness that the subsequent phase could complement. For instance, the survey reflected that the IBC transfers changed roles and relationships as part of the transition process; however, only the subsequent phase of the focus group could shed light on the qualitative aspect of these new roles or relationships. My reflection process on the preliminary IBC Student Transition Survey results pinpointed those spaces in the data that would benefit from the focus group and determined my strategy during the session or coding process.

Analysis of focus group data

Analysis of the focus group data began with the first journal as soon as the session was completed. Journaling was an effort to retain the first impressions of the overall process of conducting the focus group that no recording can faithfully capture. The first journal contained references to the participants´ body language, the atmosphere, the researcher´s reactions, and topics that seemed prominent and generated rich responses. This first journal became the backbone of analysis because it contained the immediate impressions from the field.

The next stage comprised the extensive write-up of the recorded focus group session. This was not simply the transcription of the raw data. As Miles et al. (2014) remind us, "a formal write-up usually will add back some of the missing content because the raw field notes, when reviewed, stimulate the field-worker to remember things that happened at that time that are not in the notes" (p. 71). Aside from carefully transcribing the recorded session so that questions and answers are easily identified, and participants' responses clearly marked, the write-up was complemented with parenthetical notes, annotations, and observations. The following passage is an example of the write-up, which includes not only spoken words but also parenthetical notes in boldface that add depth to the moment the response was given and the connection among the participants. While explaining a coping strategy that had to do with setting priorities and checklists, Jim referred to his high school routine back home:

> (**Me: But is that a frame of mind you established for coming up here?)**
>
> JIM: No, that I had that from before it, but for different things. It was like in school like, okay, maybe we're gonna make it there in so much time. Okay, then do this. Or, like Carlos mentioned, our bus came by super early. And I'm like, okay, did I wake up on time? Perfect! Did I wake up too late and the bus

is going to get here in 10 minutes? Okay? What's most important to me? Okay. Dress up with the uniform (**ME: and shower**). And no shower! (**more mirth and giggling all around—his tone of voice is pompous but hilariously so—like a certain authority and arrogance but still super humorous because of the references)** After that. After that. What's most important? Check your bag to see that you have this done for that day. Good. Anything else expendable. I don't need food. I don't need water. I don't need the rest I just need to get there, and I will die at school. But I made it. **(Everyone was literally rolling with laughter**)

Through such extensive write-ups, the focus group was captured in its depth and complexity. The interaction dynamic among the participants was a critical aspect for making the session productive and rich, and it was essential to capture those instances where the interaction seemed to flow. The transfer process of the IBC students takes place in a group dynamic—they always transfer from the IBC to the US main campus as part of a cohort—so their group interaction in fleshing out the transition experience was an important component of the qualitative phase of this inquiry.

Research memos were kept alongside the data collection and analysis in order to trace the development of ideas and the shaping of themes. The constant comparative method from grounded theory was used to sort the data collected through the focus group. Constant comparative method "involves constant interplay among the researcher, the data, and the developing theory" (Johnson and Christensen, 2014, p. 460). Although Schlossberg's (1981) Transition Model is used in this study as a theoretical vantage point, the goal of this study is in establishing theory based on the collected data rather than in proving a theory. The Latin

American IBC transfer students are a unique group, and their transition to the US main campus is the meeting point of a multi-layered student transition. Previous research on relevant student transitions, such as transfer student and international student transition, served as a guiding principle but not as a point to prove through this study. Patton (2015) reminds us that the constant comparative method involves "systematically examining and refining the variations in emergent and grounded concepts" (p. 290).

I returned to the focus group write-up numerous times before using qualitative data analysis software. Through several iterations, I connected the data from the focus group to the research questions, the IBC Student Transition Survey preliminary results, and the literature on transfer and international students. Journal keeping helped generate some preliminary observations that were added later to the data analysis and coding process.

Figure 3.3 provides a visual representation of how the qualitative phase developed in similar connected circles of activities:

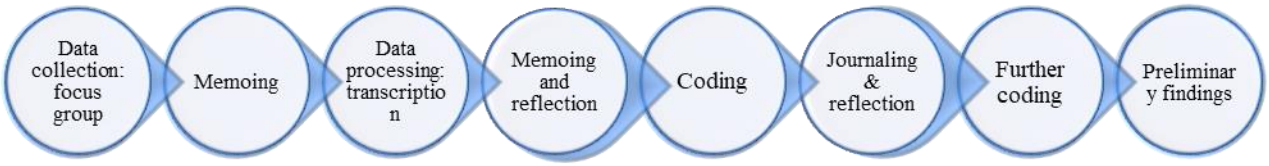

Figure 3.3 A representation of the qualitative phase.

Coding process for the qualitative stage. For the coding process, I utilized NVivo 12 software and entered all the data collected through the focus group, including the write-up and the journals generated to that point. The software enabled me to gather all the relevant material in one place and code in a faster and more efficient manner. Assigning codes is a means of ascribing meaning to a portion of data, and as Miles and Huberman (2014) highlight, "coding *is*

analysis" (p. 72). Furthermore, coding is not only applying pre-defined meaning to the data but a process of discovering meaning, what Miles and Huberman (2014) call "heuristic" (p. 72). In that light, coding the focus group data was guided by all the previous stages of this inquiry (from research questions, to literature review and the IBC Student Transition Survey), but also added layers of meaning to the students' transition experience that were not necessarily expected or pre-defined.

Coding structure. The coding process started with a basic deductive structure based on the research questions and the IBC Student Transition Survey. That was particularly the case with parent codes such as EMOTIONAL REACTIONS to transition and CHALLENGES. These matched specific items in the survey and reflected the major concerns of the research project. Those preliminary codes were entered in NVivo 12 before coding the focus group session. However, as I engaged with the coding of the focus group material, I added parent codes and developed child codes to accompany and unpack parent codes. In this way, I developed some inductive coding that did not simply recreate the IBC Student Transition Survey results but allowed the focus group material to complement and enrich the conclusions. The final coding pattern that was established before the synthesis of the quantitative and qualitative phases can be found in Appendix L.

Ethical considerations

This study adhered strictly to the ethical principles for the protection of human subjects during research: respect, beneficence, and justice (IRB, 2016). At all times, participation in the IBS Student Transition Survey and/focus group were voluntary, and the participants were given the opportunity to provide informed consent for both the survey and focus group stages of the study. Participants were free from any form of coercion, and the study contemplated only a small

incentive for those who volunteered to participate in the focus group session. Additionally, no harm was involved during the two stages of data collection process, and participants could interrupt their participation at any moment.

The identities of the participants were always protected: the IBC Student Transition Survey was designed to prevent links between responses and the respondents, and the focus group participants were given pseudonyms to protect their identities. Additionally, the researcher took all the necessary precautions to protect the collected information. Finally, there was no pre-selection process for participants; all students in the 2017-2018 Latin American IBC transfer cohort were given the opportunity to participate in the survey. Those who participated in the IBC Student Transition Survey were given the opportunity, on a volunteer basis, to participate in the focus group.

Institutional Research Board application

An application for the Institutional Research Board (IRB) was submitted on 21 June 2018 and approval was received 21 August 2018, well before the IBC Student Transition Survey launched on 6 September 2018. The application qualified as *Exempt* for the following reasons:

1. The research was conducted in already established educational settings (Latin American IBC and/ US main campus) and involved normal educational practices;
2. The research did not involve vulnerable populations (all participants were adults who could provide informed consent before participation in the survey and focus group);
3. The research involved only the use of interview, survey or public observation procedures, with no vulnerable population; whenever needed, the established university approved measures were used to protect sensitive information; the research posed no risk for the individuals involved.

The approval memorandum for the Use of Human Subjects in Research can be found in Appendix A.

Researcher positionality and trustworthiness

The Latin American IBC has been my place of work for the last 25 years. I am an administrator and instructor, and I remain a point of contact for many campus issues, ranging from academic matters to student life or transfer options. Therefore, I am well-positioned within the context of the study, and I am passionate about my work and my interaction with students. The transfer process from the Latin American IBC to the US main campus is one that I supervise and monitor, semester after semester. Additionally, I act as an advocate for the Latin American IBC transfers when they are on the US main campus and encounter difficulties or misunderstandings. In many cases, I have provided additional information to advisors and administrators, since not everyone on the US main campus understands the Latin American IBC structure and branch-campus identity. For the Latin American IBC transfers, I am a familiar face, and this enabled the communication and sharing so critical for this study.

My involvement and proximity are sources of subjectivity, but while this study is of great interest to me, neither my position nor that of the Latin American IBC depends on the study and its results. There is no financial gain involved and no professional aspiration tied to the study. The level of trust I have cultivated through the years with the groups of participants stems from my active engagement in my job and my continuous effort to improve practices. Additionally, this is a study that ties with US main campus overall concerns about transfer student success and retention and the extent to which the institution builds an effective transfer-receptive culture. In this sense, the information that a researcher can collect through empirical research will contribute to the improvement of campus practices and resources.

Finally, at the time this inquiry was launched, all participants had already transferred to the US main campus and did not depend on my level of authority or influence. The focus group took place on the US main campus, outside the physical environment that defines my level of authority and control. Therefore, my role during that process was strictly that of a researcher. My prior knowledge of the transfer process and the IBC context became assets as I analyzed the data through this inquiry, and my familiarity with the IBC transfers´ cultural and social contexts helped me connect with their personal stories and understand the references.

Summary

The transition experience of the students who transfer from a Latin American IBC to its US main campus is a unique, multi-layered experience that required a combination of research instruments. Although I have been involved in this transfer process as a facilitator on the IBC side, I have never had the opportunity to explore the depth of student transition as students themselves perceive and manage it. Through a sequential mixed methods research design, this study revealed the layers of the IBC students' transition experience and the ways in which the students themselves adjust to its demands and challenges. An initial Student transition Survey distributed among the entire IBC transfer cohort group for the 2017-2018 academic year (151 students) connected theory on student transitions with this special group's experience and generated the initial data that were subsequently used to conduct a focus group with five participants from the initial group. Through the focus group, this study complemented the quantitative aspect of the design with the qualitative depth and vividness that only the participants themselves could provide.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

This study attempted to understand the transition experience of students who transfer from a Latin American International Branch Campus (IBC) to its US main campus. Students from the Latin American IBC initiate their university studies in that location and transfer to the US campus upon completing their sophomore year. The transfer process is a standard administrative procedure that connects the two campuses enabled by an alignment of the academic policies and regulations between the two academic contexts. However, for the IBC transfer students, the transition process crosses educational levels as well as geographical locations and cultural spaces, and for that reason, it becomes a milestone on several levels: academic, social, and cultural. This complex experience has not been fully explored, and the transfer students' adjustment and adaptation experiences remain undocumented and unknown. Consequently, administrators and academic directors on both ends of the transition miss the opportunity to formulate and implement the policies and resources that can best support this unique student group.

The transition experience of the IBC students was explored through the lens of Schlossberg´s (1981) Theory of Transition that views transition as a process that occurs "if an event or non-event results in a change in assumptions about oneself and the world and thus requires a corresponding change in one's behavior and relationships" (p. 5). Schlossberg's Theory of Transition was a fitting model to use for the current study of Latin American IBC transfer students as they move to the US main campus because it provided a structure for

understanding their transition process yet allowed the voices of the students and their individual cases to emerge.

To complete the study, I focused on the group of students who changed campuses in the academic year 2017-2018, the biggest transfer group from the IBC to the US main campus. The interest group consisted of 151 students mostly from the Latin American region who changed campuses in the academic year 2017-2018 (fall 2017, spring 2018, and summer 2018). The methodology used was a sequential mixed methods design, using an online survey followed by a focus group. The purpose of the IBC Student Transition Survey was to capture the most prominent ideas that connect with the research questions, which were later explored in depth during the focus group. The IBC Student Transition Survey was sent to all the students who transferred from the Latin American IBC to the US main campus during the academic year 2017-2018. Out of the 151 students reached, 51 students began the survey (33.78% response rate for some questions), and 38 completed all survey items. Even when repeated efforts were made to encourage more respondents, the overall response rate was 25%.

Through a combination of close-ended and free response questions, the survey addressed all research questions and collected important topics of interest that helped structure the focus group discussion. The focus group participants (N=5) were part of the survey collection process and had already completed the IBC Student Transition Survey. Their participation enriched the interpretation of survey results. Not only did the focus group provide in-depth understanding of the transition experience, but it added layers of meaning to the survey results through details about their experiences, first-hand accounts of the impact of transition on their daily lives, and information about the types of coping mechanisms employed to address these challenges.

Organization of the chapter

The IBC transfer students' transition experience from the Latin American IBC to the US main campus unfolds through a combination of both survey and focus group data. For every research question, the analysis references the survey results which are subsequently developed or expanded through the focus group data. The five sections in this chapter correspond to the five research questions of the study.

The first section, addressing research question 1, explores the reasons that led the IBC transfer students of this study to change campuses in the academic year 2017-2018. The IBC Student Transition Survey responses are then refined by the focus group data, providing in-depth reasons for the transfer decision and revealing its level of importance for the students' advancement and future. Although this is the briefest of sections, it is crucial in determining the IBC transfer students' level of pressure or commitment at the moment of transferring.

The second section, addressing research question 2, uncovers IBC transfer student perceptions of the transition experience and the ways it affected their roles and relationships. The perception of the transition experience is defined through both survey and focus group data, as positive or negative perceptions and challenges of the transition first surface through the survey and are later confirmed and complemented by the focus group. Similarly, the extent to which the transition process affected their roles and relationships is first revealed through the IBC Student Transition Survey and then enriched through the focus group responses that add depth and detail to those changes.

The third section, addressing research question 3, defines the institutional support systems that the IBC transfer students employed to manage their transition experience. Both campuses—IBC and US main campus—facilitate formal support systems that transfer students

can rely on in their preparation for or during the transition. In this case, the focus group not only confirmed the results of the IBC Student Transition Survey but complemented it with additional data.

The fourth section, addressing research question 4, reveals the student-initiated coping strategies used for the transition process from the IBC to the US main campus, adding a new layer of support to the formal support systems. These are the coping strategies that IBC transfer students retrieve or activate from their own pool of resources in order to handle the challenges associated with their transition and to overcome obstacles. Again, survey results are analyzed first and then complemented with focus group responses and shared experiences.

The last section, addressing research question 5, collects the recommendations that the IBC transfer student participants offer to their campuses and to other students transferring from the IBC to the US main campus. Their recommendations are based on their final and comprehensive perception of the overall transition experience, including knowledge that they wished they had before transferring, aspects of the transfer process that they had prepared for in advance, and strategies that helped them the most. The analysis of these responses is presented in sub-sections to better address the patterns that arise through the IBC Student Transition Survey, classified into those for the IBC, those for the US main campus, and advice to future IBC transfer students.

Overall, the findings discussed through this section are the results of an analysis of both survey and focus group data, and they fully unpack the transition experience of students who transferred from the IBC to the US main campus in the academic year 2017-2018.

Research Question 1:
What were the factors that led rising juniors from the Latin American IBC to transfer to the US main campus for the academic year of fall 2017 through summer 2018?

The transfer process from the Latin American IBC to the US main campus is an established and long-standing process that connects the two campuses. As a branch campus of the US main campus, the Latin American IBC acts as a gateway for students who aspire to study in the US, but it is not mandatory for all students to transfer to the main campus. However, because the Latin American IBC of this study does not provide a full range of academic programs, and certainly not a full program in either Business or Engineering—two of the most preferred academic paths chosen by these students—the process of transferring to another university offering these options is almost a necessity for IBC students pursuing these fields of study.

Still, students attending the Latin American IBC have other options for completing their undergraduate degrees, either in their country or in another university in the US or Europe. Therefore, it was important to establish the reasons that led the 2017-2018 IBC student group to transfer to the US main campus and to determine whether they were committed to making the change in to the US campus location. This exploration could help interpret their perceptions of the transition experience and their level of preparation before transferring. The IBC Student Transition Survey results were expanded and clarified through the focus group session.

The IBC Student Transition Survey addressed research question 1 through two items that sought to determine the strongest reason that led these students to change campuses and the extent to which they contemplated other options. Table 4.1 reflects their responses, which have been arranged in a descending order to reveal the most representative trends.

Table 4.1. The factors that determined the decision to transfer to the US main campus and the extent to which other options were considered (N=50)

	n	***%***
Q1. What are the reasons that made you transfer from the IBC in Latin America to the US main campus? (check all that apply)		
The scholarship opportunity that offered in-state tuition	41	80%
The academic program that I wanted to pursue	33	66%
The reputation of the US main campus	22	44%
It was recommended by friends or family	10	20%
Friends were also transferring	7	14%
Familiarity with the main campus university system	3	6%
Other (specify)	1	2%
Q2. To what extent did you consider other schools for your transfer process?		
Not at all	15	30%
Somewhat	13	26%
Very little	12	24%
Quite a bit	7	14%
A great deal	3	6%

The findings reveal the scholarship opportunity—allowing them to pay in-state tuition upon transfer to the main campus—as the main motivation for IBC students to transfer to the US main campus. The second most cited motivation was "The academic program that I wanted to pursue." When asked whether they had considered other schools for continuing their education after attending the Latin American IBC, the majority had either not considered other options (30%), had given very little consideration to other options (24%), or had given some consideration to other schools (26%). All in all, the IBC transfer students revealed a high level of commitment to going to the US main campus. Such commitment could have enabled the transition or permitted earlier preparation for the transfer. A further point of exploration is whether the move was perceived as "obligatory"; in other words, whether attending the Latin American IBC for two years led, in their minds, to an inevitable transition to the US main campus.

The focus group expanded on these responses, especially exploring the reasons behind the IBC student's decision to transfer. For instance, some mentioned that the transfer was inevitable in order to complete their majors, and the scholarship opportunity that the IBC offered made the option of studying in the US "affordable" (Jim, October 26, 2018). Additionally, as one participant emphasized, his home country's universities "aren't respected" in his field, and he knew from the start that to complete his degree, he "needed to study abroad" (Paco, October 26, 2018). Another participant added that he had family living in the same state as the US main campus, which provided his parents with the "safety of knowing that I had family members close by" (Tom, October 26, 2018).

In sum, the focus group revealed the major reasons that led IBC students to transfer to the main US campus to be affordability, access to their chosen majors, the prestige that comes with a US degree, and a safety net of family support nearby. Attending the Latin American IBC offers them the possibility to pay in-state tuition upon transferring to the US main campus, an opportunity that allows them to afford study in the US. Additionally, given the limited options that the Latin American IBC offers, students in the most preferred academic programs must inevitably transfer to the US main campus in order to graduate. Further reasons for transferring to the US main campus were the privilege and prestige that the students associate with studying abroad and their parents' reassurance that they embark on studying abroad after having already spent two years in university, highlighting the elements of safety and the student maturation process before going abroad.

Research Question 2:
What were the Latin American IBC transfer students' perceptions about the transition process and the way it affected their roles and relationships?

The IBC students' experience as they transferred from the Latin American IBC to the US main campus was not merely an academic transition; it coincided with other milestones such as

departing from a close-knit family environment and a familiar cultural context. Research question 2 attempted to explore the complexity of this experience through the IBC Student Transition Survey and the subsequent focus group.

Two sections in the IBC Student Transition Survey addressed this question: B. Students' perceptions about the transfer process; and C. The changes students experienced in roles and relationships upon transferring. The former addressed the participants' positive perceptions of the transfer moment to the US main campus, their concerns, the specific challenges they faced, their level of preparedness, and the strategies they used to prepare for the transfer. Section C collected data about the changes in the transfer students' roles within their respective networks or social circles, the new roles they chose to adopt or those they were forced to assume. Additionally, Section C addressed the changes in the ways the IBC transfer students interacted within their family or social networks. The focus group used a series of prompts that clarified and expanded on the results of the IBC Student Transition Survey, provided additional layers of meaning to the transition experience, and enriched the understanding of this important stage in the IBC transfers student's development by capturing their voices and words.

Students' Perceptions about the transfer process

A review of the relevant literature on international and transfer student transitions helped build into the survey the possible perceptions that the IBC transfer students could hold in relation to the transition experience. The IBC Student Transition Survey provided closed-ended questions to capture the intensity of those anticipated responses, both positive perceptions and concerns.

IBC Student Transition Survey questions 3-12 sought to identify the IBC transfer students' perspectives about their transition experience in moving to a new academic context to complete their undergraduate degree. During the focus group, we had the opportunity to discuss

these reactions to the transfer process, retrieve additional ones, and discover the aspects of the process and transition that affected them emotionally. Their new living conditions and the difference in the classroom culture between the Latin American IBC and the US main campus emerged as prominent sources of uncertainty, discomfort, or stress. Overall, however, that initial period of discomfort or anxiety was characterized as brief, and the IBC transfer students soon found themselves enjoying this new stage of their educational journey.

Positive perceptions. Table 4.2 describes the IBC transfer student's positive perceptions about the transfer process.

Table 4.2. Students' positive perceptions about the transfer process (N= 49)

	n	**%**	**Combined %**
Q3. To what extent were you excited about transferring to the US main campus?			
A great deal	25	51%	94.0%
Quite a bit	16	32.7	
Somewhat	5	10.2%	
Very little	2	4.1%	6.0%
Not at all	1	2.0%	
Q4. To what extent did transferring to the US main campus give you a sense of achievement?			
A great deal	21	42.8%	92.0%
Quite a bit	14	28.5%	
Somewhat	10	20.4%	
Very little	4	8.1%	8.0%
Not at all	0	0.00	
Q5. To what extent did transferring to the US main campus give you a sense of freedom?			
A great deal	22	44.9%	90%
Quite a bit	16	32.6%	
Somewhat	6	12.2%	
Not at all	3	6.1%	10%
Very little	2	4.1%	

Upon transferring to the US main campus, the majority of Latin American IBC transfer students experienced a sense of excitement, achievement, and freedom.

The IBC transfer students who participated in the focus group shared experiences of stress and discomfort, but they were also quick to emphasize that they felt positively about their

transition, either because they were accompanied by familiar faces or because they had already explored the location. Additionally, they experienced a sense of pride as they gained new skills and immersed themselves in life on a large campus.

Tom had transferred with other people from the Latin American IBC, and he was comfortable sharing a house with people he knew: “I think because I knew my roommates and I was comfortable with them, I was able to transition in a much faster rate. I felt comfortable in my own home. . . because I knew who was sleeping next door”

Paco added that because he had lived in the US for a period, transferring felt like “coming back home,” and thanks to his upbringing, he had already learned to be “proactive.” As a result, he felt that “if there was a period of transition, it [was] very small and I can’t remember it right now because to me everything was so smooth. . . it just felt like I went from my family’s house back to my house, as odd as it may sound.” Paco may not be the typical case among the IBC transfer students, but his reaction becomes significant in exploring the conditions that can ease the transition for these students, in other words, familiarity with the US culture or location before the actual transfer.

Pete admitted that he is a person with “low social skills” and typically “avoids people,” but after choosing to live in the university dorms—not a typical housing preference among the IBC transfer students—he experienced “more social impact.” He was very enthusiastic about his dorm experience and stressed that for him and his three roommates, “it’s been a hell of a good time.”

Tom also emphasized the freedom that he gained on the new US campus to enjoy the many activities that take place and the opportunities to actively organize his life: “For me there’s kind of a sort of liberty. Now I can wake up early, go to class, and then I have all this time that I

can go to places and do things that I wasn't able to …[do] before." The variety of activities and events in the big campus can keep "you on your toes."

The IBC transfer students in the focus group shared their stressful moments, but overall, they were enthusiastic and excited about the lifestyles they had adopted on the new US campus, the people they had met, and the freedom they had been afforded.

Student Concerns. The IBC Student Transition Survey incorporated items that sought to explore the students' concerns as they changed campuses. Specifically, the respondents were asked to rate their level of fear, anxiety, homesickness, loss, and confusion. The majority admitted they had experienced these negative emotions, as reflected in their responses in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3. Student concerns in relation to the transfer process (N= 49)

	n	**%**	**Combined %**
Q6. To what extent did transferring to the US main campus give you a sense of fear?			
Somewhat	16	32.7%	71.4%
Quite a bit	11	22.4%	
A great deal	8	16.3	
Very little	9	18.4%	28.6%
Not at all	5	10.2%	
Q7. To what extent did transferring to the US main campus give you a sense of anxiety?			
Somewhat	9	18.8	71.0%
Quite a bit	13	27.1%	
A great deal	12	25%	
Not at all	7	14.6%	29.0%
Very little	7	14.6%	
Q8. To what extent did you experience homesickness upon transferring?			
Somewhat	12	24.5%	61.0%
Quite a bit	10	20.5%	
A great deal	8	16.3	
Not at all	5	10.2%	39.0%
Very little	14	28.6%	
Q9. To what extent did you feel lost upon your transfer to the US main campus?			
Somewhat	9	18.4%	47.0%
Quite a bit	9	18.4%	

Table 4.3 continued

	n	%	Combined %
A great deal	5	10.2%	
Very little	15	30.6%	53.0%
Not at all	11	22.4%	
Q10. To what extent did you feel confused upon your transfer to the US main campus?			
Somewhat	10	20.4%	43%
Quite a bit	6	12.2%	
A great deal	5	10.2%	
Very little	15	30.6%	57%
Not at all	13	26.5%	

As the results of the survey reveal, students experienced fear, anxiety, and homesickness at a high rate (71.4%, 71.0%, and 61.0% respectively), whereas they experienced loss and confusion at a significantly lower rate (47.0% and 43.0% respectively).

During the focus group, the participants shared their concerns of the transfer process and elaborated on the aspects of the experience that generated these concerns. The focus group participants indicated that they experienced uncertainty at the initial stage of the transfer process, mostly related to the traveling portion, the initial set up of their living space, and the practical aspects of their everyday life. Tom, for instance, mentioned that "the uncertainty of traveling" and the flight delays that caused additional complications in his arrival time were "the first thing that made me uncomfortable about coming here." Added to this initial uncertainty came the immediate demands of settling in: "[T]hen afterwards you have to set up everything for like … being an adult. You have to set up a bank account, buy your own food and stuff like that." And of course, once this round of activity was completed, he experienced the "uncomfortable uncomfortability" of being alone and away from the family, which "felt kind of weird."

Jim, another focus group participant, added that he was "well prepared" for the transfer to the US main campus, and since his family helped him set up, "it was not particularly uncomfortable." Nevertheless, sharing his living space with someone from a different cultural

background was stressful: “I was raised in a house that taught me that you should clean your house often, and this person doesn’t seem to come from that cultural background. So, that was a huge stress.” Additionally, coming from a house full of people and ending up in a new student apartment with a housemate who was hardly present made him uncomfortable:

> [W]hat was really uncomfortable for me more than anything, because I did have insomnia for the first few weeks while I was here [on the main campus], and it was a silence. Like, in my house back home, I could hear the echo of people talking, I could hear the footsteps; so even though I didn't have to… interact with anybody in the entire day [and] I could spend the whole day in my room, I didn't feel alone and it didn't feel like I was isolated because I could hear [people] or I could interact with people even from a distance.

Another source of discomfort that the focus group participants emphasized and revisited repeatedly was the obvious differences between the Latin American IBC classroom culture and that of the US main campus. Jim clarified this element as “the change in approach between what it was to enter a classroom in [the Latin American IBC] and what it was to enter a classroom [on the US main campus], not because of how the class was conducted, but because of the attitude people have here.” His observation stirred up an animated conversation as the participants shared their experiences of witnessing how peers on the US main campus “leave the room as soon as the class is over.” They agreed that most of their peers in the Latin American IBC would stay behind after class to socialize and would be “candid” and “warm,” whereas the US main campus peers “do not recognize you” outside the class. For Jim, this attitude “was a real shocker.”

The element of nostalgia emerged during the focus group connected to the idea of “homesickness” as a reaction to the transition. The focus group participants came from the Latin

American region, and their conversation was sprinkled with cultural references from their homes and their cultures, including foods they liked, such as *arroz con pollo* (rice with chicken), *arepas* (corn patties typical of Venezuela) and *tacos*. Jim stressed the idea that American food "is just not as flavorful" because there is "that thing, that spice that is missing," and there are times that he and his friends, including Paco, resorted to a typical Mexican restaurant to find "a little space in which you can forget that you are in the States." In this way, they sought to not only recreate a piece of their homes but also seek solace in an environment that was as close as possible to their cultural background.

Preparedness for transition to the US campus

For the Latin American IBC transfer students, the transition to the US main campus was an anticipated event; in other words, they knew it was going to happen because it was part of their educational goals and plans. IBC Student Transition Survey question 11 aimed to determine their degree of preparedness or degree of effort they took to prepare for their transition to the new campus in the US.

Responses about their degree of preparedness upon transferring may be key in understanding why loss and confusion did not feature prominently in the survey question examining emotional responses. As Table 4.4 reveals, most of the Latin American IBC transfer students felt prepared for their transition to the US main campus.

Table 4.4. The level of preparedness of the IBC transfers (N= 49)

	n	**%**	**Combined %**
Q11. How prepared did you feel about the transition to the US main campus?			
Somewhat	17	34.7%	73.5%
Quite a bit	14	28.6%	
A great deal	5	10.2%	
Very little	11	22.4%	26.5%
Not at all	2	4.1%	

The findings reveal that, for the most part, the Latin American IBC transfer students felt prepared for the transfer to the US main campus. This is an important element in understanding their transition experience, and for this reason, the survey and the subsequent focus group delved deeper into the tools or preparation techniques they employed before transferring.

The IBC Student Transition Survey asked respondents to ponder the tools they used to prepare for the transition from the Latin American IBC to the US main campus. The participants were given the opportunity to select various options among the following: internet, main campus website, blogs by other students, IBC advisors, friends who were already on the main campus, or friends and peers who were in the same transfer group. Table 4.5 displays the different tools and the level of preference.

Table 4.5. The tools that the IBC students used to prepare for the transfer process (N=48)

	n	**%**
Q13. What tools did you use to prepare for the transfer process from the IBC to the US main campus? (select all that apply)		
Friends who were already in the main campus	39	81.3%
Internet	35	73%
Friends or peers that were in the same transfer group	34	70.8%
Main campus website	21	43.8%
The IBC advisors	6	12.5%
Blogs by other students	3	6.3%
Other (specify)	3	6.3%

Relying on others—both friends and peers who had transferred previously or who were in the same transfer group—surfaces as a significant tool of preparation, followed by the internet and the main campus website. Relying on others as a preparation tool or resource was also emphasized during the focus group session.

Student groups as sources of information. The focus group participants relied on fellow Latin American IBC transfer students and friends who had transferred before them, and

they insisted that the information provided through this established network helped them quickly receive information and easily adapt.

Suzy mentioned the transfer group to which she belonged as a source of information for the transfer process. This group of IBC transfer students created a chat group to share information and give tips: “We used to talk if we had doubts [about] something. We would discuss there [in the chat group] and ask everyone, so if you couldn’t help, then they all tried to.” Tom added that this chat group became “a mechanism” they relied on prior to transferring, especially if they all had the same question:

> [S]ometimes, we had the same question at the same time. And then someone would ask it and then someone would answer and then you wouldn’t have to ask it yourself because it was already there; [you could] search in the chat… and people were supporting each other with the information that they had.

Jim added that despite his initial intention to separate from the Latin American IBC transfer group and expand his social circle on the US main campus, he soon realized that his most valuable resource for preparation was actually his friends who had previously transferred, because “whatever logistical question I would have, I would ask them, and within two days, they would give me the information I needed to prepare for transferring.”

But what did they prepare for? What aspects of the transfer process and their transition did they anticipate?

Preparation strategies

The IBC Student Transition Survey included a section with open-ended questions, and the first question, number 45, asked them to list the situations for which they had prepared. The survey generated 24 different responses that could be classified under four categories: academic

preparation, living independently, practical logistics, and anticipatory feelings. The focus group participants highlighted similar aspects of their preparation strategies and provided additional ones, such as preparing others for their departure and preparing for their new level of independence.

Academic preparation. The academic side of the transition became the center of attention for their preparation process, revealing their deep concern for performance and advancement. Four of the participants mentioned "classes" when asked what they had prepared for, and other participants added "academics," "higher academic level," "more academic work," "new classes," "study," and "school."

Living independently. For most of the Latin American IBC transfer students, the transition involved living on their own and away from their families for the first time, so this aspect of the transition was anticipated. Five of the respondents listed responses that can be classified under the living independently category: "loneliness," "dealing with loneliness," "living on my own," "living alone," and "being independent."

The preparation for living independently emerged as a central theme in the focus group as well. When asked about how they prepared prior to the transfer, Pete shared that he had to learn how to cook. In fact, his father urged his mother to "let him make his own food," knowing fully well that "[he] could be so lazy [about cooking] that [he] could actually starve." Concerns about cooking and taking care of daily tasks were prominent among all focus group participants. Pete confessed that the academic aspect of the transition, namely the increased academic difficulty, was a challenge that they had anticipated and knew they had to assume, but "[t]he issue actually [for me] was living on my own."

Paco, a third focus group participant added that his preparation consisted of assuming more responsibility while getting closer to the moment of transferring. He actually tested his freedom before his departure and expected his parents to give him support and flexibility: “It was mostly [that] my parents just let me make my own mistakes and live my life as if they weren’t there. So, I was constantly saying ‘no, let me do this. Let me do that. Let me actually get my hands on the ball. Let me use a little bit of elbow grease and get that experience as needed. So that now that I'm here, I don't really need to ask many questions.”

Practical logistics. Another category of preparation that emerged from the responses was comprised of the practical logistics of the transfer process and life in a new context. From the immigration paperwork to transportation to meeting new people, the transfer students had prepared for a series of practical decisions necessary for the transfer process. These included “migratory things,” “buying stuff for the apartment,” “general requirements,” “going to different locations on campus,” “moving through campus,” “where to go when sick,” and “social situations.”

Anticipatory feelings. Two of the survey respondents pointed out preparing for emotional aspects of the transition. One mentioned preparing for the “fear of being [on] such a big campus” and another added that he or she prepared “to enjoy this phase of my life.”

Preparing others. The idea of preparing for the transition by preparing others emerged through the focus group. When the focus group participants were asked what they prepared for, they pointed out that preparation included preparing others, such as parents who had not travelled to the US before, did not understand English, or did not know what to expect from the new academic context. Tom emphasized that he had to master the whole transfer process and then explain it to his parents to ease their anxiety: “So, I had to tell them what was going on. I

did my own paperwork for the embassy, all this stuff that we had to transfer…the vaccines, all the vaccinations, all those things. I did them by myself. The thing was telling my parents what was going on. So, I had to know everything so that I could tell them what was exactly going on."

Their responses reveal that they were aware of the demands that the transition involved, especially the emphasis on the academic aspect, life on their own, and several practical aspects of moving to a new and much larger place.

Aside from confirming the IBC Student Transition Survey finding that relying on others was the most important preparation tool before transferring, the focus group participants expanded on the ways they prepared for and anticipated the change of campus and the aspects of their lives that would be most affected.

In conclusion, the IBC transfer students relied on others as a significant stepping stone in their preparation for the transfer to the US main campus, and they focused a lot of their preparation attention on the demands of daily life once they would be on their own.

Challenges that the IBC transfer students faced upon transferring

The Latin American IBC transfer students' transition to the US main campus was a milestone in three dimensions—academic, social, and personal—which were considered when designing the IBC Student Transition Survey and the focus group session. The IBC Student Transition Survey confirmed the expectation that the IBC transfer students faced challenges and also identified the most daunting challenges of the transition. While the focus group reinforced some of the survey findings, such as the challenging aspects of living away from home and adjusting to a new social context, it also contradicted the emphasis placed by the survey respondents on academic difficulty.

As Table 4.6 reveals, most of the participants experienced challenges in the new academic environment.

Table 4.6. The extent to which IBC students experienced challenges upon transfer (N=49)

	n	***%***	**Combined %**
Q12. To what extent did you experience challenges in your new academic environment?			
Somewhat	15	30.6%	76.0%
Quite a bit	14	28.6%	
A great deal	8	16.3%	
Very little	11	22.4%	27.0%
Not at all	1	2.0%	

Despite their level of preparation, 76.0% of the Latin American IBC transfer students admitted to experiencing challenges upon transferring to the US main campus.

The challenges selected for inclusion in the IBC Student Transition Survey were based on the academic, social and personal dimensions of their transition. For instance, their transition from the Latin American IBC to the US main campus was a step up in academic level (from sophomore to junior) and acceptance into their intended major, both implying an increased academic demand. Socially and personally, the transition meant moving away from their families and familiar social and cultural environments. For international transfer students, this can also mean that they started using a new language, and while the language of instruction had always been English for the Latin American IBC transfer students, the predominant language in their social context had been Spanish. For this reason, language was included as a potential challenge. Aside from the closed list, respondents were given the possibility to add challenges that were not included in the survey but which they had faced.

Table 4.7 reveals the most challenging aspects of the transition that the Latin American IBC transfer student respondents identified, arranged in descending order from the most prominent to the least.

Table 4.7. The most challenging aspects of the transfer to the US main campus (N= 47)

	n	**%**
Q14. What were the most challenging aspects of the transfer to the US main campus? (select all that apply)		
The increased academic difficulty	29	61.7%
The new social context	27	57.4%
The distance from home and family	24	51.0%
The increased responsibility	24	51.0%
The new language	8	17.0%
Other (specify)		
No laundry and kitchen service	1	2.1%
Another culture and speaking English 24/7	1	2.1%
More students per class, hence less teacher-student interaction	1	2.1%

The demographic details of the Latin American IBC transfer students (see Appendix G) reveal that the IBC transfer students for the 2017-2018 academic year (N=151) were academically strong. In fact, 84% (N=127) had a grade point average of 3.0-4.0 at the moment of transferring, and almost half in that range had 3.5 and above. Of the 38 respondents who completed the IBC Student Transition Survey, a similar pattern is revealed: 35 (92%) had grade point averages within the 3.0-4.0 range, with 19 (50%) 3.5 and above.

Despite their strong academic profile, survey respondents still selected “the increased academic difficulty” as the most challenging aspect of their transition experience, selected by 29 respondents (61.7%).

The challenge of the new social context scored high in the IBC Student Transition Survey, selected by 27 respondents (57.4%), along with the challenge of increased responsibility and distance from home and family, each selected 24 times (51.0%). These were international students who had spent two years attending a US branch campus close to their homes, families and cultural ties. Their transfer process coincided with a series of changes not only on the academic level but also on a social, and cultural level.

The potential challenge of a new language was selected by only eight respondents. The Latin American IBC uses English as the language of instruction, so on the academic side, the transition did not involve using a new language. However, while attending the Latin American IBC, the students overwhelmingly switched to their native language, predominantly Spanish, outside the classroom. As the Latin American IBC students transferred to the US main campus, they may have been expected to use English in their social interactions, an assumption supported by one respondent, who added the challenge of "another culture and speaking English 24/7."

Additionally, in the open-ended question section, question 46 asked IBC transfer students to list situations that took them by surprise. A notable aspect of this question was the emphasis on large class size and the large amount of people on campus, both cited as barriers to getting to know people. There were also references to the weather ("spring is too cold"; "the bipolar weather") and to the practical aspects of life on their own ("cleaning," "cooking is hard," and "house chores").

The focus group session captured aspects of the transition experience that took them by surprise and expanded on the most challenging ones in their transfer from the Latin American IBC to the US main campus. There was considerable emphasis on challenges navigating the social context and challenges faced in the day-to-day tasks and activities that defined their lives. Follow-up questions were used to flesh out their perceptions of the new academic environment and enable this researcher to see the experience of entering a large classroom on the new campus through their eyes.

Increased responsibility. The reality of the day-to-day challenges dominated a good part of the focus group session as the participants reflected on what it meant to live on their own: "When I used to live with my parents, I came home and food was cooked, and now I need to

make sure what I'm going to cook when I come home and then have enough time to do homework." This comment was contributed by Suzy, a female student in the college of engineering, who seemed quiet and timid but gave precise and succinct responses. Time management, she indicated, is key to these daily challenges, and she was seconded by the other participants who asserted that setting reminders for the simplest daily tasks—"taking the chicken out of the freezer," for instance—became critical for organizing their lives.

Added to the concept of increased responsibility is the element of student "accountability." Paco explained that on the Latin American IBC campus, "there was much more demanded of you; you were demanded to know more; you were demanded to study more." In contrast, he found that on the US main campus, "all the information is available and it's up to you to decide if you want to use it or not." Students can decide whether to attend class or not, and if they do not have the maturity to hold themselves accountable, then they may face failure and disappointment: "As a matter of fact," Paco added, "last semester…has been by far my worst semester in my entire university career, and it's simply because I took it too easy and I didn't hold myself accountable for whatever mistakes I made, and I paid the price." The US main campus expected that the students would hold themselves accountable. The fine line between accountability and responsible freedom took them a while to understand and apply.

Distance from home and family. Being away from their home and their families was an additional challenge for the Latin American IBC transfer students. Suzy emphasized that "the major thing that impacts us is not being with family." Since they would usually attend the Latin American IBC while commuting from their homes daily, the transition to the US main campus was, in many cases, the first time these students left their homes and became independent.

"[A]ny form of help," highlights Paco, "is five countries away," and inevitably they must face even the most mundane of demands away from home:

> [B]asically you have to learn how to live by yourself because no one is there. None of your family is there to help you like it used to be in high school…when you had somewhere to go back to after school or university. Now you have to be actually like 'Oh, I have to remember that I have to buy this, or buy that, and I have to organize this' and you have to manage your time correctly.

Additionally, food and food preparation became reminders of family life. The focus group participants made frequent references to typical dishes from their countries such as *arroz con pollo* (rice with chicken) or *arepas* (corn patties typical of Venezuela). Paco said that he makes a big pot of *arroz con pollo* when nostalgia becomes overwhelming:

> [T]he other day I just had it: 'You know what, I don't care, I'm just [going to] buy the expensive ingredients I need to make arroz con pollo and I am going to cook it myself.' And I made a massive pot because I'm used to making a massive pot for five people.

Arroz con pollo, a rather complex Panamanian dish that requires extensive preparation, is typically offered on special occasions to feed a crowd. Despite living on his own in a college dorm, Paco sounded eager to make it as a way to recreate the atmosphere of his home.

Jim, a Venezuelan student, had a different take concerning familiar food. He claimed that he refuses to make *arepas* even when he is offered the ingredients, because in his household, *arepas* are prepared when "all the family sits down and we're going to have a family dinner. So,

every time I'm going to make *arepas,* I am reminded that I am alone and that I don't have my family here."

To both responses, the focus group participants nodded in understanding as they experienced a moment of poignant connection in their identification with the cultural references and the sentiment of homesickness.

The new social context. The Latin American IBC transfer students must navigate a new social context that may follow a different rhythm and dynamic. Large classes were intimidating, and making new friends required effort.

All the focus group participants agreed that meeting people at the US main campus was much more difficult than at the Latin American IBC, where people lingered after class longer either because they knew each other or, as Tom highlighted, "because we actually couldn't leave because of the traffic . . . if you're stuck in a place you might as well talk to someone." More obviously, the IBC transfer students came from an educational context where small classes enabled the connection among students. Entering classrooms of 40, 50, 60 or more people upon their transfer to the US main campus was a daunting experience at the beginning. Pete expressed that first impression: "[W]hen you come from a place that has classrooms of …[fewer] people, like 20-25, then you come here and you find that there [are] 40 people in your classroom, you're like, 'whoa, what do I do?'" (expression of confusion or puzzlement).

Connecting with peers on the US main campus, a university of approximately 40,000 students, may take longer or require more effort on their part. Pete explained that "it is easier in a smaller classroom to connect to each other and then do something as a whole. In bigger classrooms, that becomes almost impossible to do because it's harder to control more people…" Pete was quick to add that bigger classrooms are not necessarily "a bad thing or anything, but

you have to change a bit." Bigger classes forced the Latin American IBC transfer students into a change of attitude.

Tom summarized the social experience of the Latin American IBC transfer students upon transferring to the US main campus: "[W]e don't know a lot of people here. There are 40,000 students [on the main campus]. So, we don't know everyone. But we used to know everyone." This is the reality for students transferring from a campus of roughly 500 students to a campus of over 40,000. While there may be some familiar faces, such as other Latin American IBC transfer students, most of the focus group participants agreed with Tom that "it's easy to *not* see familiar faces" (emphasis mine).

The new academic context. Although the IBC Student Transition Survey highlighted the increased academic difficulty as the biggest challenge Latin American IBC transfer students faced, the focus group participants, in contrast, did not emphasize academic difficulty as a concern. They made frequent comparisons between the Latin American IBC and US main campus educational contexts and highlighted the differences, but they did not express concern about performance or their capacity to navigate the academic demands.

Jim indicated that two professors at the Latin American IBC prepared him well for the new academic context of the US main campus by setting high standards and by placing the responsibility of the outcome on his effort:

> I feel there were two professors at the [IBC] campus that prepared us for the scenario [we would] …face. First of all was Professor F., who set the standards for how the work should be [done] and also [had] the attitude that the professor will help you if you put in your own effort. And second was Professor M., who gave the idea that the more effort you put in class, the more… you get, and

> [these characteristics are reflected in] probably my favorite professor… so far [on the main campus].

Paco added that despite the big classes on the US main campus, the professors were aware of who was consistently missing class and tried "to make sure their students either focus or at least try and come back and keep up with their classes."

In fact, the perception of the focus group participants was that the professors at the US main campus were supportive and provided all the necessary tools. Tom made this very clear:

> Professors make it really easy here to be on top of your game, like really be learning what you're supposed to be learning. Most of the professors follow the syllabus to the T, and they post up their power points. Sometimes, if you ask them, they will give you extra study material, so really, like academically you've a lot more freedom than what I was used to.

While they felt prepared to cope with the increased academic demands of the US main campus and saw the professors there as supportive, they were very surprised by the US main campus classroom culture, which they felt could easily result in a misperception or misunderstanding about the level of responsibility that IBC transfer students need to exercise.

The element of "freedom" in the new academic context translated into a classroom culture that took the IBC transfer students by surprise, especially when they saw peers on the US main campus leaving class early or consistently missing classes. This topic became another point of consensus in the focus group, with all participants noting that attendance is neither observed nor regulated as is the practice at the Latin American IBC campus: "… they have this policy here [on the US main campus] that you can be in the classroom if you want or not" (Pete, 26 October 2018).

They were surprised that students on the US main campus tended to miss many classes and only show up for graded assignments or quizzes. Paco clarified this experience: "I've had some classmates who had the idea that since they are not forced to be in class, they only show up for exams and for quizzes. And they show up, they turn in their exam, and then they're gone out the door. Or they finish the quiz and leave, and you don't see them for the rest of the week" (Paco, 2018). Tom, in turn, shared that he has had peers who have never showed up to class: "I'll ask them why they never show up to class and they're like, 'he doesn't take attendance, so I only have to turn in the homework that [is] in the syllabus and then show up for the test and the final, and that's it.'"

What struck them as very unusual was the way their peers on the US main campus would leave the classroom as soon as the professor stopped talking or even before: "I think most people just get to class almost right [at] the exact time that the class begins, and then as soon as the class ends, they leave. I don't remember if this happened in the [IBC] campus" (Suzy, 2018). Socializing after class was clearly not enabled on the US main campus, especially if students had to run to their next class across campus.

The pressure to succeed. The Latin American IBC transfer students felt the pressure to perform since they had come a long way and their families had made a considerable investment. Paco expressed this idea: "[F]or all of us here in the room, we're already used to the fact that we're not living at home… and you've got to learn to be efficient and it's a process that can be forced upon us. So, we value that a lot more and that …[is] why we are used to being more on campus, staying in class, talking to people after class and stuff like that."

Tom indicated that exactly his mother's sacrifice and effort to enable him to study in the US "compelled" him to somehow go against the flow of the classroom culture:

> I feel grateful that my mom's putting in an effort to pay for this. So, I go to class … I ask the professor some questions…I've had negative…what's the word for it, like negative reactions to questions by other students consistently, like in the higher level courses, because the students just want the professor to give the lecture so that they can leave, but sometimes you have to ask a question, or if the professor says something you don't understand, . . . I just want him to clear [it] up.

Going against the classroom culture was not always easy, and it could be tricky to navigate an academic environment that seemed to provide a lot of freedom and support but also demanded a high level of self-control. Tom tried to explain how the university did not exercise a strict level of control because it expected students to hold themselves accountable:

> [T]he thing that really caught me off guard was the fact that everything was so available to me at the time that there's sometimes—I'm not going to say no need to go to class…obviously, I have to go to class—but say that that day you're sick, and you have to go to the Wellness Center. You're not too worried about the fact that 'Oh, I'm going to miss this class. I'm not going to understand.' But you tell the professor 'professor, I couldn't go to class for X or Y reason.' Even if it's a stupid reason. Like you overslept, right? Professors are so willing here to help you out because you admit to your mistake like 'oh, I overslept'. . . professors even take that little bit of your admitting to a mistake and they're so willing to help you out. And that really caught me off guard because… most of … my… [previous teachers and professors] were either on top of you, telling you like, 'Why haven't you turned this in?' or they wouldn't

say anything at all. *So, like it takes away [your] accountability. But it also gives you the opportunity to hold yourself accountable because no one else will* (emphasis mine).

Paco also shared that there was the possibility of assuming that if there is no close monitoring "like the office back home," then there are no consequences. In other words, going from a campus that controls attendance and performance more closely to one that offers the freedom to choose how to act may make the latter falsely appear as lacking in accountability.

The Latin American IBC transfer students had anticipated the transition, and they had taken measures to prepare for the upcoming changes and adjustments. Nevertheless, as both the survey and the focus group revealed, they still experienced a series of challenges related to the increased academic difficulty, the new social context, the distance from home and family, and the pressure they felt to succeed and fulfill their families' expectations.

Changes in roles and relationships after the transfer

Section C in the IBC Student Transition Survey addressed the changes in roles and relationships that students experienced as part of the transition, or in other words the impact that transition had on them. Schlossberg (1981) highlighted that most transitions "involve role change," either "role gains" or "role losses" (p. 8). For instance, a woman that marries assumes the role of wife, or the soldier that completes his active duty cycle becomes a veteran. At the same time, changes in roles are not merely changing one hat for another but becoming conscious of the expectations that a role or set of roles entail. Schlossberg (1995) uses role in the sense of "the behavioral enacting of the patterned expectations attributed to a position" (55), and transition involves the individual's perception that there has been a change in those expectations. Similarly, transition entails the perception of changes in the way individuals connect and interact

with others in their already existing networks or in the new ones. The two concepts are very much connected in Schlossberg´s definition and understanding of transition because the changes in one role "may spill into another," and what starts as a personal change can inevitably affect the relationships with family, significant other, colleagues, peers and others (Schlossberg, 1995, p. 35).

Questions 15-18 measured the impact of the transition on the IBC students' roles and relationships. Table 4.8 details the responses.

Table 4.8. The changes in roles and relationships after transfer (N= 49)

	n	**%**	**Combined %**
Q15. To what extent did you find yourself asume new roles (family, social, personal) as part of the transition process?			
Somewhat	15	30.6%	76.0%
Quite a bit	12	24.5%	
A great deal	10	20.4%	
Not at all	6	12.2%	24%
Very little	6	12.2%	
Q16. To what extent did you find yourself abandoning old roles (family, social, personal) as part of the transition process?			
Somewhat	11	22.4%	57.1%
Quite a bit	10	20.4%	
A great deal	7	14.3%	
Not at all	9	18.4%	42.9%
Very little	12	24.5%	
Q17. To what extent did you find that you were assigned new roles (family, social, personal) as part of the transition process?			
Somewhat	19	38.8%	65.3%
Quite a bit	8	16.3%	
A great deal	5	10.2%	
Not at all	10	20.4%	34.7%
Very little	7	14.3%	
Q18. To what extent were your relationships to others affected by your transfer to the US main campus?			
Somewhat	12	24.5%	71.5%
Quite a bit	16	32.7%	
A great deal	7	14.3%	
Not at all	2	4.1%	28.5%
Very little	12	24.5%	

A 5-Likert scale was used for this purpose: 1) not at all, 2) very little, 3) somewhat, 4) quite a bit, and 5) a great deal. After compiling the results of this question, Likert scale responses 1-2 were grouped together to equal a negative response (no: did not assume new roles) and 3-5 were grouped together to equal a positive response (yes: did assume new roles). As Table 4.8 illustrates, the IBC transfers for the most part experienced changes in their roles and relationships to others, either because they adopted new roles or because they abandoned some of the old roles.

Through the focus group, the changes in roles and relationships were amplified and clarified by participant examples of their daily habits, the new responsibilities they assumed, the ways they connected with their families and their peers, the ways they were perceived by others in their social and family networks, and the initiatives they took.

Assuming new roles and abandoning old ones. Even though the focus group participants were already 20-22 years old by the time they transferred to the US main campus, so the transfer did not coincide with their coming of age, they associated the transfer process with being and acting as 'adults.' For them, taking on the new role of being an adult included the tasks of organizing their daily lives, setting up bank accounts, shopping for groceries, cooking, cleaning, and taking responsibility for their actions. Jim referred to the day he dedicated to cleaning and tidying up as the "adulting day": "I call it the adulting day, which is Sunday. On Sunday, you do laundry, [clean] the apartment…all the fun stuff."

Tom shared that he had to take on the new role of mastering "the process of transferring" and "telling [his parents] what was going on." Pete shared the new role he took on in comforting his mother at his departure: "The transition wasn't that hard, I mean apart from the fact that my mother actually felt really sad and I was like, 'Don't worry. I will be back, so don't worry.'" In

both cases, the students had to assume an 'adult' role in order to prepare others for their departure and claim a sense of balance.

In living away from friends and family, the IBC transfer students could no longer wait for others to cater to their needs or make decisions on their behalf. Tom defined this new level of independence and the new roles it required as follows:

> [O]nce you transition, by transition I mean setting everything up, you go ahead into the period of stability, you already know how stuff work, but then you have to apply it, so when you set up your bank account you know the difference between a checking and a savings account, and you know then you have to think about taking out your own chicken from the freezer, so you have be on top of yourself.

Aside from assuming new roles, the IBC transfer students must also balance roles, such as being students and housekeepers at the same time. Suzy shared that back home, she would just return from school or university and the food was cooked, but now she "need[s] to …[know] what to cook when [she] comes home and then have enough time to do homework."

Additionally, the participants shared that they became more aware of how important bonding with others can be in managing the transition, so they became caregivers to their peers or offered support when they prepared for an exam or were late for class. Tom summed it up as a moment of "growth" triggered by the whole set of new roles they were called to adopt:

> With my friends—like my roommates—they are my family now. We call each other, we wake each other up if [we're] late. We know each other's schedules, so if someone doesn't wake up, we wake them up. We ask each other how our days have been, like, 'good luck on your test, good luck on your presentation.'

> I'm the only one in the house [who] knows how to tie a tie, so I'm the one [who] does it… there's…growth [and] people really don't expect … to grow when they move.

Part of the growth was also to take initiatives, handle the transfer process and its bureaucratic aspects, as well as gather the courage to socialize outside their small circle of friends. Pete admitted that he had low social skills, yet he chose to live in the university dorms with a large group of strangers:

> I tend to avoid people in general, but once you get [into] the [on]-campus housing, especially those … [with] several roommates…, you tend to form more social impact. You tend to talk to more people and then to know more people, and for me and my three roommates, it's been a hell of a good time talking to them, being in the apartment and doing whatever we want.

All in all, the transition process demanded that they assume a new set of roles as responsible adults, housekeepers, cooks, and caregivers. Additionally, it forced them to step outside their comfort zones and meet new people.

Relationships to others. These new roles helped them re-visit and adjust their relationships to others: family members, friends and peers, their professors, and the whole IBC transfer group.

For instance, their families gave them more space and accepted that the students were in command of this new stage in their lives. Jim described the typical interaction with his family over the phone:

> I don't call my family; my family calls me, and I am the one [who] is nagging, like, 'I'm fine" and if they even considered to say 'oh we miss you' I am

> ‘yeah, yeah, fine, I’m not dying, I’ll call you if I am dying.’” (This caused robust laughter from everyone in the room.) “[With my] dad, [it was] the same thing. He complains that I don’t talk to him, but when he calls me, he is like ‘Are you ok? Do you need anything from me? No? Okay, see ya.’ So, I am like, ‘why did you even bother me?

Tom admitted that there were moments his parents doubted his understanding of the different aspects of the transfer paperwork, but he had to stand firm and assert that he was “sure because I did the thing.” As a result, after the transfer, he no longer called them to ask for advice but rather “to just talk to them.”

Similarly, their families developed a level of trust that did not previously exist. These students now knew things their families did not, and there was recognition of that. Tom made clear that he was receiving that recognition:

> They just…understand more now. My parents right now…kind of know like, who I am, that I’ve grown up, which is way better for our relationship because then they know [that] I don't like it when they say this in this way because they're approaching it in a way that is not helpful to me…I don’t fight with them as much anymore, which is good because they understand that they just can’t nag me to do stuff because I will do it because I have to do it.

As the participants shared their experiences of growth, maturity and responsibility, they also expressed pride, confidence, and self-worth. They indicated that being at the US main campus was a “privilege” and they felt the pressure to be “efficient,” go to class regularly, ask questions, and overall, make the most of their experience on the big campus. This growth and

maturity allowed them to reflect on the effort their parents made to allow them to study in the US and to appreciate the opportunity. Tom clarified that sentiment:

> I feel compelled by my parents to follow [through]; it's sort of like an informal thing. My mom, she doesn't really mind where I graduate from as long as I do it, but I feel like since we're paying an amount of money that's way more than what we would be paying in our own countries. . . then there is this invisible investment in us. And … yes, I feel grateful that my mom is putting in an effort to pay for this. So, I go to class. I do! I ask the professor[s]…questions.

This effort, motivated and strengthened by their sense of obligation to parents, helped them connect better to their US main campus professors. Despite the big classes on the US main campus, they managed to stand out from the crowd, build a close rapport with their professors, and even secure assistantships. Pete remembered that they were advised at orientation to be proactive, visit the professors during office hours, and engage in conversation with them: "Because that way, if you need a recommendation for something, then you can actually go to the professor and tell them, 'hey, can you give me a recommendation for this?' and he will say, 'Yeah, I know you, we have been talking a lot; here's the recommendation.'" Paco followed up by sharing precisely this experience: "I will piggyback on this one because in my case— my job at the engineering lab—I got it through going to class. Funny enough, my professor during the summer semester ended up becoming my boss. I talked to him so often and we shared a love for the same topics…[and] he introduced me to the lab where I work now."

Furthermore, in this new stage of their lives, the focus group participants re-evaluated their connection to the rest of the IBC transfer group. Paco highlighted that the IBC group "isn't like any other I've seen here [on the main campus] entirely, because it's people that you have

barely ever seen before, and yet they'll still try and help you and talk to you and stuff like that because you came from the same campus." Similarly, Jim stressed that upon transferring, he thought that the IBC group would be like a "crutch" and relying on them would be "too comfortable." Therefore, he tried to stay away from the IBC group and gain new connections, but he "kept hitting [his] head against the wall." Only when he "reluctantly" retreated to the familiar group of IBC transfers was he able to appreciate what they offered: "[T]hat was the first time I actually felt happy in terms of social communication … they were kinda like a bridge in between."

This appreciation for the presence of a close-knit group was also manifested in the ways they bonded and helped one another. The members of the IBC group felt they had to rely on one another more than ever before. Tom expressed this new level of bonding with his IBC peers:

> Now we go grocery shopping with one another. One of my roommates was sick three weeks ago. I gave him his vitamin C and told him [to] drink water every day, stuff like that. Like we take care of each other. Right? And that stuff you don't get without growing. Because before in [our country], would you ask someone else about their health? Like very seriously? Like, I don't think that I would have. Because they have their parents. So, we don't have our parents here, so we have each other, and it is a sort of like a good relationship dynamic.

This awareness that they were alone and away from family led them to invest in the relationship with their peers from the IBC and to develop the care and attention that was previously not as necessary or critical.

Change is a key component of transition. In fact, transition contains the expectation that an event or non-event will lead an individual to change his or her self-perception as well as modify "roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions" (Schlossberg, 2011, p. 159). The IBC transfer students relocated to a new educational, cultural, and social context, and as they did so, they re-defined or changed the roles the played within their families, peer groups, or academic location. Similarly, the transfer process triggered changes in the ways they related to others. The IBC transfer students came to demand more appreciation from their families while also gaining an appreciation for their families' sacrifices and efforts. The transfer process itself changed the ways they related to the professors and to the IBC peer group.

A summary of findings for research question 2

Overall, IBC transfer students identified the transition process as multi-faceted, bringing them a sense of accomplishment as well as new challenges to overcome.

IBC transfer students felt excitement, a sense of achievement, and a sense of freedom as they transferred to the US main campus, but they also admitted to feeling fear, anxiety, and homesickness. Their emotional reactions indicate the significance of the transfer process and what it means for their academic advancement and personal growth in a new location on a much larger campus surrounded by strangers. In addition, they experienced discomfort and uncertainty as they ventured on their own, away from their families and their familiar environment.

Their anticipation of the transfer process led them to utilize a series of tools and social networks to help prepare themselves. The majority of IBC transfer students relied on friends from the same transfer cohort, previous IBC transfer students, and others to provide advice and information on what to expect. In most cases, IBC transfer students felt prepared for the

transition by practicing the day-to-day demands of living on their own or gathering important information.

The third finding related to the challenges they faced. Despite feeling excited and having prepared in advance, they also admitted that the transition to the new campus involved challenges. The increased academic difficulty emerged as the most important challenge, but the new social context and the new class culture in the US main campus emerge as similarly challenging. Being away from family and home, the demands of living on their own and assuming a higher level of responsibility were also challenging aspects of the transition.

The fourth finding in this section revealed the changes in the IBC transfer student's roles and relationships. Transition implies that an individual will be forced to experience these changes, and this inquiry helped determine the extent to which this was true for the IBC transfer students. In sum, the roles that they assumed centered on the increased responsibility in managing their own affairs while separated from their home and family. For many, this was a new role, and they relied on peer support to manage this process. Inevitably, changes in their roles brought adjustments to the established relationships with parents, peers, and others. The IBC transfer students noted an increased importance and reliance on IBC peers and less guidance from parents. Overall, the students reported that they gained confidence and felt more mature, became active learners, and were ready to take full advantage of their academic journey.

Research Question 3:
What types of institutional support from the Latin American IBC and from the main campus did the Latin American IBC transfer students employ to manage their transition process?

The transfer process from the Latin American IBC to the US main campus connects two ends of an institution, the international campus departure point and the US main campus destination. Both campuses offer formal support systems or services for students, but it was

important to explore those support systems that the IBC transfer students resorted to in order to manage the transition process. The IBC Student Transition Survey included questions that listed the formal support systems in each campus, whereas the focus group opened the discussion to any types of support systems that students may have employed. As a result, the focus group expanded the IBC Student Transition Survey results to also include informal support systems that were spontaneously formed or were integral to the IBC reality and the transition process.

The IBC Student Transition Survey addressed the extent to which students used the institutional support systems in each campus through Section D. The institutional support systems students used when dealing with the transition. One set of questions (19-22) listed the institutional support systems provided by the Latin American IBC, and another set of questions (23-32) listed the institutional support systems offered by the US main campus. Students were asked to define the extent to which they used each of them through a 5-Likert scale: 1) not at all, 2) very little, 3) somewhat, 4) quite a bit, and 5) a great deal. After compiling the results, Likert scale responses 1-2 were grouped as negative responses (no: did not use supports) and 3-5 were grouped as positive responses (yes: did use supports).

The IBC support systems

The responses were consistent in relation to the support systems on the IBC end. IBC transfer student reliance on student support systems offered by the IBC was particularly low, with only 28% using IBC advisor support and 32% using each of the other institutional support systems such as the Dean's Office, the Admissions Office, or their IBC professors. In fact, 72% of the IBC transfer students chose not to rely on the IBC advisors, and 68% of them did not use any of the other institutional support systems, such as the Dean's Office, Admissions Office or professors.

Table 4.9 reflects the extent to which the students relied on the formal IBC support systems for the transition process.

Table 4.9. Reliance on IBC student support systems (N=47)

	n	***%***	**Combined %**
Q19. To what extent did you seek support from the IBC advisors?			
Not at all	22	46.8%	72.0%
Very little	12	25.5%	
Somewhat	8	17.0%	28.0%
Quite a bit	4	8.5%	
A great deal	1	21.1%	
Q20. To what extent did you seek support from the Dean's Office at the IBC?			
Not at all	19	40.4%	68.0%
Very little	13	27.7%	
Somewhat	5	10.6%	32.0%
Quite a bit	4	8.5%	
A great deal	6	12.8%	
Q21. To what extent did you seek support from the Admissions Office at IBC?			
Not at all	15	31.9%	68.0%
Very little	17	36.2%	
Somewhat	11	23.4%	32.0%
Quite a bit	3	6.4%	
A great deal	1	2.1	
Q22. To what extent did you seek support from the professors at the IBC?			
Not at all	23	48.9%	68.0%
Very little	9	19.15	
Somewhat	9	19.1%	32.0%
Quite a bit	2	4.3%	
A great deal	4	8.5%	

The US main campus support systems

The US main campus, in contrast, was the new reality where this transition became tangible. Therefore, the next set of questions in the IBC Student Transition Survey listed the formal support systems that have been designed to cater to student needs. Since the US main campus is a large comprehensive institution with over 40,000 students, the list of formal support services is also proportionally larger than the IBC services. Table 4.10 reflects the extent to

which the IBC transfer students relied on the most commonly available student support systems on the US main campus.

As table 4.11 shows, only two of the formal support systems offered on the US main campus were significantly utilized by the IBC transfer students in order to deal with the transition process: New Student Orientation (72.0%) and academic advisors (70.2%). This is not a surprising finding. The New Student Orientation is mandatory for transfer students and is also a formal introduction to the new campus and the new reality it represents; and since the students' transition to the US campus coincided with their junior status and acceptance into their academic majors, their academic advisors also became significant resources. The third most frequently used support system was the International Student Center (59.6%), another fairly predictable finding; nearly all the IBC transfer students became international students on F-1 student visas as soon as they changed campuses, and they inevitably relied on the services provided by that office.

Notably, hardly any students relied on the Greek Life groups (2.1%) and only a small fraction of them resorted to the Student Disability Resource Center (4.3%). Although their advisors were important resources, the Dean's Office did not represent a significant resource as they went through the transition process (15.3%).

Table 4.10. Reliance on the US main campus support systems (N= 47)

	n	**%**	**Combined %**
Q23. To what extent did you rely on the US main campus New Student Orientation?			
Not at all	2	4.3%	28.0%
Very little	11	23.4%	
Somewhat	15	31.9%	72.0%
Quite a bit	11	23.4%	
A great deal	8	23.4%	
Q24. To what extent did you rely on the US main campus International Student Center?			
Not at all	10	21.2%	40.4%

Table 4.10 continued

	n	%	Combined %
Very little	9	19.1%	
Somewhat	15	31.95	59.6
Quite a bit	9	19.1%	
A great deal	4	8.5%	
Q25. To what extent did you rely on the US main campus Counseling Center?			
Not at all	23	48.9%	68.0%
Very little	9	19.4%	
Somewhat	8	17.0%	32.0%
Quite a bit	4	8.5%	
A great deal	3	6.4%	
Q26. To what extent did you rely on the US main campus Health Center?			
Not at all	18	38.2%	61.7%
Very little	11	23.4%	
Somewhat	6	12.8%	38.3%
Quite a bit	4	8.5%	
A great deal	8	17.0%	
Q27. To what extent did you rely on the US main campus Dean's Office?			
Not at all	27	57.4%	84.7%
Very little	12	25.5%	
Somewhat	3	6.4%	15.3%
Quite a bit	3	6.4%	
A great deal	1	2.1%	
Q28. To what extent did you rely on the US main campus academic advisors?			
Not at all	8	17.0%	29.8%
Very little	6	12.8%	
Somewhat	12	25.5%	70.2%
Quite a bit	9	19.1%	
A great deal	12	25.5%	
Q29. To what extent did you rely on the US main campus Student Disability Resource Center?			
Not at all	40	85.1%	95.7%
Very little	5	10.6%	
Somewhat	0	0.0%	4.3%
Quite a bit	2	4.3%	
A great deal	0	0.05	
Q30. To what extent did you rely on the US main campus Recreational & Athletic Center?			
Not at all	20	42.5%	59.6%
Very little	8	17.0%	

Table 4.10 continued

	n	%	Combined %
Somewhat	7	14.9%	40.4%
Quite a bit	7	14.9%	
A great deal	5	10.6%	
Q31. To what extent did you rely on the US main campus student organizations?			
Not at all	19	40.4%	57.4%
Very little	13	17.1%	
Somewhat	8	27.7%	42.6%
Quite a bit	4	6.4%	
A great deal	3	8.5%	
Q32. To what extent did you rely on the US main campus Greek Life groups?			
Not at all	44	93.6%	97.9%
Very little	2	4.3%	
Somewhat	0	0.0%	2.1%
Quite a bit	0	0.05	
A great deal	1	2.1%	

The focus group results yielded similar results. The focus group participants made hardly any reference to the support systems provided by the Latin American IBC aside from isolated comments about consulting with the Dean's Office or advisors. Once on the US main campus, the focus group participants indicated relying on some of the formal support systems, the most emphasized being advisors, the Counseling Center, and student clubs.

Academic advisors as support systems. Sam stressed that her advisor was a key person in providing not only academic advising but also a sense of comfort. In fact, she was advised by a friend—a former IBC transfer student—to see her advisor immediately upon transferring:

> I think one of the most important persons that helped me when I got here is my advisor for my career. So, a friend that had transferred before me told me 'As soon as you get there, go and talk to him. He will write out all your classes until you graduate. So, go there, be his friend.' And that was what happened.

> He's really nice. And he helped me on that, but mainly in the classes. And he made me feel comfortable.

The Counseling Center. Tom shared his experience with the Counseling Center, which he visited because of a crisis. He felt the counselors paid extra attention: "When I told them I was a transfer student, the psychologist immediately understood that I wasn't in my element." He admitted that the visit helped him figure out his feelings, and he felt special appreciation for the response of the counselor: "[T]hey don't really get a lot of international students. . . that's what the counselor that I had said, so that they don't get excited, like it's a positive thing, but they're more interested in you as a person because you're way different than all the other people." So, even if the survey did not reflect that the IBC transfer students relied on the Counseling Center to a great extent, Tom's personal experience reveals that it could be an accessible and meaningful resource for international students because he resorted to that service when in need of support.

Student clubs. Student clubs also emerged as an important support system during the focus group. Both Jim and Paco are members of a martial arts club and highlighted that the student clubs can replace the small campus environment that they have lost upon transferring. Jim highlighted this idea: "I feel that's where you'll find people to be the most friendly and amiable to you in spite of not feeling the warmth … in the classrooms." The student clubs became important support systems, not so much because of the topic of interest or activity, but for the small circle of friends they build and the connection they provide among the members.

Overall, the IBC transfer students used the student support systems offered to them very selectively. They relied very little on the IBC systems for support through the transition process, whereas on the US main campus, they showed preference for three resources: The New Student

Orientation sessions, academic advisors, and the International Student Center. The Counseling Center and student clubs also emerge as potential support systems.

Informal support systems. While the IBC Student Transition Survey focused on IBC transfer students' use of different formal or institutional support systems, the focus group participants identified informal support systems that helped them navigate their transition to the main campus, namely their IBC transfer cohort and the other IBC students on the US main campus. The focus group session enhanced the question on informal supports with additional responses and details about how these informal supports were used or what support they provided. What surfaced as an interesting and somewhat surprising response was their reliance on the transfer group chat application before the transfer process. The chat group was used to circulate information, alert one another about important announcements, or clarify questions. Although this could also lead to some "misinformation" as one participant emphasized, overall, they all referred to it as an important support tool as they prepared for the transition.

As an extension of this response, the focus group participants emphasized the importance of their IBC group not only as they were preparing for the change of campus but also once they were settled into the US main campus. They all agreed that people from the IBC they knew before or had transferred with them were the most reliable and strongest source of support. As Paco emphasized even if the IBC transfer students were not necessarily friends before transferring, "they'll still try and help you and talk to you and stuff like that, all because you came from the same [IBC] campus." There is no formal structure in the way the IBC group is organized, but there is a uniqueness in the way 30-40 students transfer to the US main campus at the same time from the same Latin American IBC. In the words of another student, the IBC group were "kinda of like my bridge in between," and he relied on students from the IBC who

had transferred before him "because whatever logistical question I would have, I would ask them, and within two days, they would give me the information I needed to prepare."

All in all, the IBC transfer students developed a strong reliance on one another, not only with students in their specific transfer group but with any students who once attended the Latin American IBC. This group dynamic and interconnectedness was a significant support system for the IBC transfer students both before and after the transfer process.

An overview of the support systems

Discovering the support systems that the IBC transfer students relied on during their transition can be an important component in the university's efforts to provide a transfer-friendly environment. The findings of this section revealed the extent to which the existing university support systems were helpful and also allowed us to discover the ways the IBC transfer students used them. Additionally, new support resources emerged as the IBC transfer students shared their experiences.

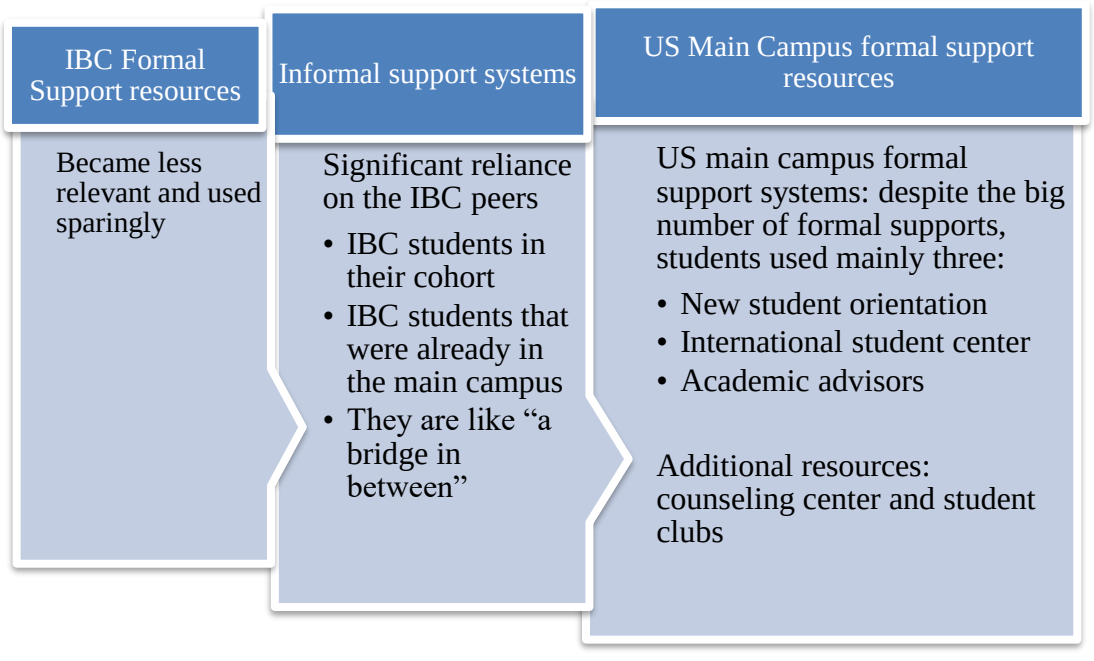

Figure 4.1 The support systems that students relied on.

The informal support systems of IBC peers appear nested between the IBC institutional supports and the US main campus institutional supports in order to emphasize their role as "a bridge" between the two educational contexts: The IBC and the US main campus.

Research Question 4:
What types of student-initiated coping strategies did the Latin American IBC transfer students employ during their transition process?

Outside the formal support systems that are established to cater to student needs, individuals going through a transition stage may also implement their own strategies. The literature on how transfer and international students may handle the transition process helped to build into the IBC Student Transition Survey a series of potential student-initiated strategies that the IBC transfer students may have also utilized. The respondents acknowledged the challenges that came with the transition and considered how best to cope. The overwhelming majority reached out to friends and family or opened up about their feelings to others as coping strategies and never gave up trying to cope with challenges.

Coping strategies

The IBC Student Transition Survey addressed the coping strategies through section E. Coping strategies. This section contained three parts: questions 33-41 addressed the extent to which students used certain coping strategies; question 42 was an open-ended question allowing participants to enter their own coping strategies; and question 43 asked them to select from a list of actions as many as they might have taken to cope with the challenges associated with the transition process.

Questions 33-41 used a 5-Likert scale to measure the extent to which students used each coping strategy in the list: 1) not at all, 2) very little, 3) somewhat, 4) quite a bit, and 5) a great deal. Responses 1-2 were combined to reflect a negative response to the questions, and responses

3-5 were combined to reflect a positive response to the questions. Table 4.11 displays the responses of the participants to the closed list of coping strategies.

This was possibly the richest component of the study. It captured the ways IBC transfer students coped with the changes that the transition entailed and helped determine areas of improvement or support for future IBC student transfers. Reaching out to others—friends or family—was the most used coping strategy for the IBC transfer students (91.1%), followed by making a plan of action (77.8%), discussing their feelings with others (75.6%), or stopping to think how best to handle the transition (75.6%). Overall, the majority employed some type of coping mechanism, with only 20% of the respondents indicating that they gave up on their efforts to cope.

Table 4.11. The coping strategies used by the IBC transfers (N= 45)

	n	***%***	**Combined %**
Q33. To what extent did you stop to think about how best to handle the transition process?			
Not at all	4	8.9%	24.4%
Very little	7	15.6%	
Somewhat	17	37.8%	75.6%
Quite a bit	12	26.7%	
A great deal	5	11.1%	
Q34. To what extent did you make a plan of action?			
Not at all	2	4.4%	22.2%
Very little	8	17.8%	
Somewhat	**19**	**42.2%**	77.8%
Quite a bit	6	13.3%	
A great deal	10	22.2%	
Q35. To what extent did you reach out to friends and family?			
Not at all	1	2.3%	8.9%
Very little	3	6.7%	
Somewhat	10	23.3%	91.1%
Quite a bit	16	37.2%	
A great deal	15	34.9%	
Q36. To what extent did you discuss your feelings with others?			
Not at all	5	11.1%	24.4%
Very little	6	13.3%	
Somewhat	10	22.2%	75.6%
Quite a bit	14	31.1%	

Table 4.11 continued

	n	*%*	**Combined %**
A great deal	10	22.2	
Q37. To what extent did you pretend it was not happening?			
Not at all	20	44.4%	60%
Very little	7	15.6%	
Somewhat	10	22.2%	40%
Quite a bit	5	11.1%	
A great deal	3	6.7%	
Q38. To what extent did you get upset but kept it to yourself?			
Not at all	15	33.3%	62.2%
Very little	13	28.9%	
Somewhat	7	15.6%	37.8%
Quite a bit	4	8.9%	
A great deal	6	13.3%	
Q39. To what extent did you get upset and let your emotions out?			
Not at all	12	26.7%	51.1%
Very little	11	24.4%	
Somewhat	11	24.4%	48.9%
Quite a bit	6	13.3%	
A great deal	5	11.1%	
Q40. To what extent did you skip class?			
Not at all	19	42.2%	71.1%
Very little	13	28.9%	
Somewhat	9	20.0%	28.9%
Quite a bit	3	6.7%	
A great deal	1	2.2%	
Q41. To what extent did you give up trying to cope?			
Not at all	27	60.0%	80%
Very little	9	20.0%	
Somewhat	4	8.9%	20%
Quite a bit	3	6.7%	
A great deal	2	4.4%	

Coping strategies tend to initiate from the individual, and they can vary greatly from one participant to another. For that reason, an open-ended question was incorporated in the IBC Student Transfer Survey to gather additional responses from the participants that were not included in the close-ended questions of the survey.

Question 42 “What other strategies did you use to cope with the transition process?” generated a list of 30 responses provided by 28 survey respondents. Those strategies were

classified into three major categories: reaching out to others, adopting helpful habits, and establishing helpful mind sets. Similar responses were given by the focus group participants.

Reaching out to others. The most prominent category of coping strategies was clearly reaching out to people, mostly family and friends, but also peers, roommates, and even professors or advisors. Three responses mentioned family: "spending time with family," "calling family," and "relied on calling my mother every day to let out all my emotions" Five responses made some reference to friends old and new: "making friends," "friends," "hanging out with friends," and "talking with friends outside the transfer process, asking them some tips and advice," "make new friends." Reaching out to former transfers or other students in general was also mentioned four times: "ask students who already transferred," "talking with other people," "ask other people for help if you need," and "my roommates were a really big help, especially because they are from the States." Two of the respondents mentioned reaching out to professors and advisors: "creating relationships with professors here" and "close relationship with advisor." One of the respondents provided a significant response that seems to summarize the concept of reaching out to others: "going with the pack is safer than alone."

Reaching out to IBC group peers. The focus group participants highlighted from the start that being a member of a specific group carried advantages in mitigating feelings of being alone on the new campus. Sam indicated that talking to friends who had transferred with her from the IBC helped her feel accompanied, "like [Petra, my roommate] would tell me, 'We are in this together, so you know I'll be there for you.'" Additionally, the IBC transfer students systematically connected their attending the IBC with being part of a close-knit educational and social context. They repeatedly referenced how they would linger to socialize while at the IBC or how they would "hang out" with their peers in the IBC hallways. Attending the IBC, therefore,

was linked to social ties and interaction that followed them as they transferred to the new and much larger US main campus.

Those connections with the IBC group were utilized on the US main campus in order to create a sense of stability and home. Paco admitted that he is a reserved student and did not make many friends back at the IBC, but mere acquaintances back home became a reliable social group on the US main campus: "I may not have spoken to you more than [three times during] two years back home, and yet, I know you and I say 'hi' to you and I talk to you for five to ten minutes, and it would be like that with anybody from the [IBC]…You didn't even have to talk to them a lot and they will still be there and take the time of the day to talk to you."

Tom highlighted the special connection with the IBC group by sharing how he and his IBC friends met often and reminisced about their activities back in their home country, the places they visited, and the activities they participated in. Seeking comfort in a familiar group was a way to handle the novelty and not become lost in the crowd:

> We don't know a lot of the people here … like there's 40,000 students at [the US main campus]. So …we don't know everyone. But we used to know everyone. Right? How many students are from [the IBC] … 500 kids? Right. Yeah. And …we see each other bi-weekly, in classes or tailgates or parties. We see each other walking down the road; we say hello to each other. So, it's nice because you see a familiar face. Maybe sometimes you don't want to see a familiar face. But then it's easy to *not* see familiar faces, right?

The group of students who transfer from the Latin American IBC to the US main campus is unique. The sense of a close-knit community that they built back at the IBC sustains them

when they transfer to the US main campus, and it becomes a reference point and a familiar point of contact.

Adopting helpful habits. The second category that emerged (n= 11) referred to actions or habits that helped them cope with the transition, such as using some form of time management, organizing their space, finding useful information, or even engaging in their favorite hobbies. Time management and organization were mentioned twice: "time organization," and "time management was a key." They also mentioned organization of their space and adoption of habits that created a sense of well-being: "making my home as comfortable as possible so as to have a place to study and organize myself," "creating daily habits that were healthy and made me happy, acknowledging that I am building my adult self through those habits," "keep working as if I never left home," and "focus more on school work." Practical information-seeking was also mentioned as a coping strategy: "online guidance through the process," and "study the bus maps and apps before the first day of class." Finally, engaging in some hobby was included in the coping strategies: "read," "video games," and "watching anime."

The role of routines. The focus group enriched this portion of coping strategies by emphasizing the role of routines. Setting up a routine was the first coping strategy that the focus group participants identified. For some, their routines on the US main campus recreated the routines they had maintained back home, but for others, the transition opened the ground to set new routines. In any case, the concept of following a routine was strongly emphasized.

As soon as the question of coping strategies was posed, Paco was quick to respond: "I don't know if it makes a lot of sense, but my routine is a lot of what kept me going." In his case, it helped to return to a routine he had kept when he was attending high school and would wake

up at 4am to prepare for the long commute to school: “I didn’t need it for two years at [the IBC] because I could pick my schedule to make it a lot easier, but here, there are a lot more morning classes, so I really need to get back into that [routine].” He also insisted that once you establish a routine, “you stick to it,” because when you follow a routine closely, “there should be nothing that goes wrong.” Paco added with conviction that “[i]f something goes wrong, it’s because you messed something in the routine.”

The role of routines as a coping strategy was emphasized by the other participants as well. Tom did not change his already-established routine when he transferred to the new campus. As a commuter student at the IBC, he commuted to campus with his mother as early as 7:30am even if his classes did not start before 10:30am: “So, right now I wake up every day Monday through Sunday at 7:30am. It’s just something that happens, like I don’t even need an alarm anymore.” As a result, he can take advantage of the early hours before class to catch up on homework, watch Netflix, have breakfast, and then reach his first class “completely awake.” Additionally, his old and reliable routine of waking up early opened up new pockets of time to enjoy all that is happening on the new campus: “For me, there’s this kind of liberty now; I can wake up early, go to class, and then have all this time that I can go places, do things that I did not do before, and I can add stuff that I wasn’t able to do before.”

Pete added that routines must be selected with care because if “you create the wrong one, you are going to have a really, really hard time adapting to it.” One of the first challenges he faced was a schedule that did not match his already-established habits, “and that is something that [he has had] to fix on the run.” He seconded Paco in asserting that routines must be set and maintained: “So, it’s better to come up with a routine and stick to it and know that you have to

do it." "But what happens if you don't?" I challenged. His response was not only immediate, but also packed with meaning:

> If you have to go outside the routine, there is no problem, but try to do it on a special basis. Like, 'ok, the only [one] class… is outside the routine, the others stay the same,' or things like that. Because if you break it too much…you [get] arrhythmia, you become like a heartbeat on an ECM scan (everyone joined in laughter). Then you start getting problems because you are having peaks and downs and peaks and downs. And there is no human on earth [who] can actually withstand that for a long period of time. At some point, you will break.

Overall, for the IBC transfer students, establishing a new routine and keeping up with it was key to managing the daily activities that seemed challenging.

Connected to the idea of routines was the concept of priorities and schedules. Jim was adamant about ordering his priorities and making sacrifices based on this order:

> On the topic of morning, also read checklists, because like everyone else in this room, there has been that one day that you just overslept, and you're not going to make it. So, within my routine in the morning, to make it to class early, I have priorities. And I'm like, okay, I woke up late. How late have I woken up? I usually wake up at 8, so if I woke up at nine, okay, I know what to sacrifice. If I woke up at 9:30, I know what to sacrifice on the way, and we'll go past [that] class. Don't care. I skipped my class. I don't need to worry now. Move on to the following item in the sequence like one of those trucks. If you do this, go there.

These were students who came from structured environments and followed a certain routine. The transition broke those routines, so one way of coping was the process of establishing a new routine and maintaining it. This idea was emphasized by at least three of the focus group participants, and even if they ended up with different routines, the very idea of choosing one and adhering to it no matter what quite possibly provided stability in the middle of so much change.

Establishing helpful mind sets. Mind sets have to do with a frame of mind that allowed the IBC transfer students to handle the challenges and build a positive attitude, and include building motivation, focusing on the positive aspects of the experience, or trying to not "overthink the situation." Two coping strategies overlap as both actions and mindsets: "creating daily habits that were healthy and made me happy, acknowledging that I am building my adult self through those habits" and "making my home as comfortable as possible so as to have a place to study and organize myself." Additional ones include "having an open mind before the transition allowed me to enjoy more life in the US," "motivation," "trying to see it as a more positive experience than negative," and "just don't over think the situation."

Cultural connections. The focus group added a unique coping strategy to this category, namely maintaining their cultural connections. Cultural connections are all those instances of connection to a cultural background that become reminders of one's roots, upbringing, and identity. The focus group participants used cultural connections as a coping strategy.

Jim referred to the "adulting" day as the day he did laundry or cleaned his room, but this was also the day he used to recreate the atmosphere of his home or culture:

> So, during adulting day what I do is… put on music from when I was a kid like when I would [listen] at home, or not even music I would [listen to] but the music that my parents would [listen to], so I would feel more like I was doing

> it at my house than in an apartment. And I feel like the stereotype of …the maid …in *la telenovela* (soap opera).

A *telenovela* is a cultural reference that all participants connected to immediately. They exclaimed "Awwww, so sad" when he mentioned his attempt to recreate the atmosphere of his home, and they roared with laughter at the mention of the soap opera and its stock character of "the maid." The importance of connecting to their cultural background surfaced not only by what they said, but also through food, music, or places. When I asked how often they resorted to "physical representations or artifacts that connected them to their homes or home country," Paco stressed "Every day!" and his peers nodded in agreement.

Paco shared his own favorite activity for connecting to his home and culture through revisiting the particular cultural flavors or sounds:

> To me, it varies but every day, there's something that that helps me get [through] my day, and it's mostly something that comes from a kind of nostalgia of when I was a kid and stuff. So, for example, the other day I just had it: 'You know what, I don't care. I'm just gonna buy the expensive ingredients, I need to make *arroz con pollo* and I'm going to cook it myself.' And I made a massive pot because I'm used to making a massive pot for five people . . . Or I can call my parents, or let's say I have to do work around the house, so I play *bachata* or *salsa* … it's not necessarily the same thing every day, but at some point during the day, there's going to be something that has to do with being Latino and with being Panamanian and going back to my culture.

Such an attitude became a coping strategy because it was a conscious effort to handle the distance and assert their identity. Paco expressed it as follows: "[R]replicating the dishes of my culture is something I take a lot of pride in…So, when I have the chance to represent it and express it in some way, I'll take it."

Tom shared a similar experience. As a Venezuelan, he reflected on the conscious effort of all Venezuelans he knows—including himself—to find something that defines them: "[We are looking for] this thing that … you can't get here, or that you have to go to, like [another city because] someone makes it there, or your parents brought you something. And then there's stuff from our culture that we bring back." Once more, food surfaces as an important cultural element that they seek: "A year ago, there was this Venezuelan girl [who] made *arepas* and sold them, and then she delivered them to you, and…for $8 dollars, you get someone delivering stuff that … defines your childhood… and then you would eat it and be like, 'Oh my gosh, this is exactly the thing that I wanted.'"

Jim and Paco also introduced the idea of a "pocket space," a place that represents their culture or a space where they feel at home. For them, it was a specific Mexican restaurant where the food was "made [by] a Latin American person [for] another Latin American person." They could engage in friendly conversation with the restaurant staff using their native language (Spanish) and forget they were in the US. Paco explained how that impression was created: "So it's a little space in which you can forget that you are in the States. When we are in the restaurant, it looks like I am in a restaurant in [a Latin American town] and [it feels like] 'No, I'm outside the States.'"

Resorting to the flavors, sounds, and memories of their home countries became a coping strategy for the IBC transfer students of the focus group, a way to keep nurturing the connections with their cultural identity and a means to soothe their nostalgia.

Additional coping actions. The IBC Student Transition Survey also included a question about "additional actions" they took to manage the challenges associated with the transfer process, and participants could choose "all that apply." Their preferences (see Table 4.12) connected with the coping strategies previously mentioned but also highlighted their efforts to collect information in advance so as to be more prepared for the challenges.

Table 4.12. Additional actions that the IBC transfers used to cope (N=37)

	n	**%**
Q43. What actions did you take to manage the challenges associated with the transfer process? (choose all that apply)		
I asked my peers from the same transfer group	30	81.0%
I tried to find more information from main campus resources	29	78.0%
I tried to find more information from the local program	10	27.0%
I asked others not associated with either program	7	19.0%
Other (specify)	3	8.1%
My own experiences of having previously lived in the US helped me	1	2.7%

Most of the IBC transfer students chose "I asked my peers from the same transfer group" (30 times), whereas the second most preferred action was "I tried to find information from main campus resources" (29 times). Consistent with the section on support systems, the IBC transfer students consciously sought support and guidance from their peer group, particularly the IBC group.

An overview of the coping strategies

Coping strategies are the result of personal choice and individual preference, and they are activated in order to deal with the challenges posed by the transition. It is a plan for action or a means by which the individual in transition "takes charge" (Schlossberg, 1988, p. 60). This

section provided findings that can help design better transfer processes for the IBC transfer students and reinforce those mechanisms that students identify as productive and valuable. Figure 4.2 illustrates the findings of this section in the order of importance that the study highlighted:

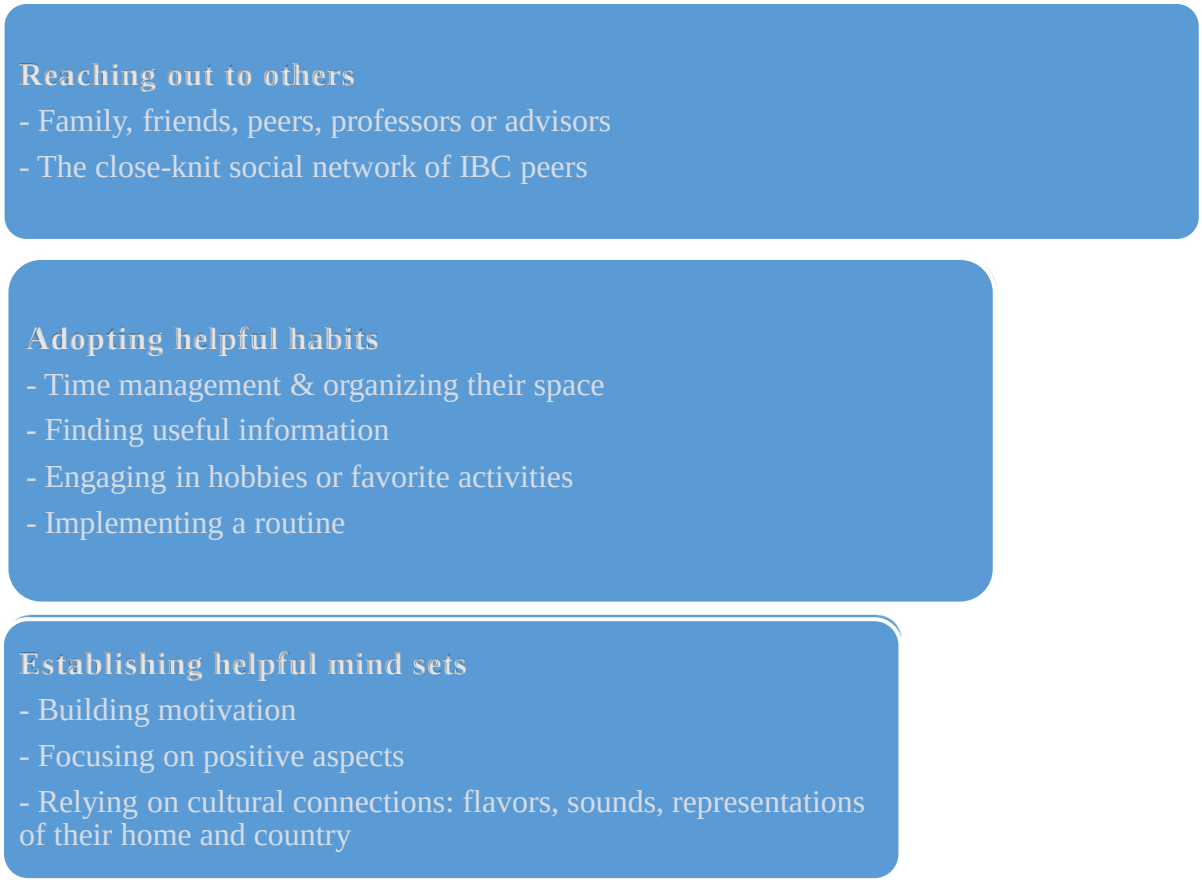

Figure 4.2. The coping strategies that the IBC transfers employed during the transition.

The first important finding identified that reaching out to others was the most preferable coping strategy for IBC transfer students; seeking advice, comfort, or simply connecting with others became a way to deal with the challenges associated with their transition. Family, friends, peers, or even advisors or professors were sought out to handle the transition. Once more, the IBC group emerged as an important component in their coping efforts, and the connection with

members of that community became a way to reconnect with the familiar elements in their life and ease the anxiety associated with the unfamiliar elements.

The second finding regarding coping strategies revealed that the IBC transfer students took action and established habits in order to cope. Hobbies or favorite activities, daily habits that established a pattern, and practical efforts to feel comfortable on the new campus were listed as coping strategies. Similarly, they adopted helpful mind sets to offset the anxiety that the transition generated.

The third finding identified the role of routines as a coping mechanism. Regardless of whether they maintained their former routines or adopted new ones upon transferring, the very concept of setting routines and adhering to them emerged as an important strategy that offered them a sense of stability and structure. Additionally, establishing routines allowed them to fully explore the variety of activities on the new campus and thus remain engaged.

The last finding in this section established the importance of maintaining a connection with their cultural background and asserting their Latin American identity. For the IBC transfer students, evoking the flavors, sounds, and cultural artifacts of their countries gave them reassurance and stability.

Again, the majority of IBC transfer students never stopped trying to cope and activated all personal resources to deal with transition.

Research Question 5:
What recommendations do the Latin American IBC transfer students suggest for facilitating the transition process and for program improvement?

The respondents of the IBC Student Transition Survey and the focus group participants had already experienced the transition of transferring from the IBC to the US main campus. Additionally, they had spent at least one semester at the US main campus when this study was

launched, so they had acquired enough experience and knowledge to address the last research question. Participants were asked to provide their recommendations in order to improve the transfer process on the institutional level and facilitate student adjustment. The IBC Student Transition Survey addressed prior knowledge, helpful aspects, recommendations for the two campuses, and recommendations for future IBC transfer students. The focus group participants, however, were not prompted to address recommendations for the two campuses; the prompt was eliminated in the focus group due to a concern that my administrative role in the IBC would inhibit them from addressing this particular topic.

The findings are organized in the following order: recommendations for the IBC campus, recommendations for the US main campus, additional knowledge to prepare for the transition, and advice for new IBC transfer students. The IBC Student Transition Survey included an entire section of open-ended questions addressing these topics in section F Overall Feedback.

Recommendations for institutional supports

Recommendations addressed both academic contexts of the IBC campus and the US main campus, and IBC transfer students offered both recommendations that their home program could use to improve the transfer process and recommendations that the US campus could implement to support the IBC transfers upon their arrival. These recommendations came not only from direct questions asking for suggestions (48-49), but also from questions that asked for additional feedback (50).

Recommendations for the IBC. The survey opened the ground for suggestions for additional steps that IBC campus should take to help in the transfer process. Of the 38 respondents who completed the IBC Student Transition Survey, 22 answered question 48 “What additional step should your home program take to help students in the transfer process?” Their

responses and recommendations ranged from the brief ("none") to the detailed and strong-worded: "be upfront and honest with timeliness" or "they need to be more involved with the departments here." Some of their responses reveal expectations of their home campus and provide recommendations for improvement.

Strengthening academic advising. Strengthening academic advising surfaced as a strong recommendation in the following responses to question 48: "better advising," "better and more focused advising programs," "they need to be more involved with the departments here," "help contact the majors' advisors," "know more about the requirements for each major, so we can plan better our 2 years here." The increased academic demand upon transferring was highlighted as a major challenge in the transition process; therefore, the emphasis on better and more efficient academic advising at the IBC is a valid response.

Academic advising surfaced once more as a concern in the additional feedback section (50), where participants wished that the advisors at the IBC provided more information about main campus opportunities or simply helped them more. One of the survey respondents provided the following comment:

> Some of the advisors over there don't know how to help you to enroll courses in a way that you can finish your degree according to the milestones established by each program. Also, we should be able to enroll [in] classes before orientation, because since we get here as juniors, most of for the classes we need are already closed. The home program could also have information about the opportunities here for each department; for example, science majors have the option to do a DIS, which is highly recommended. It's hard to get

here as a junior and catch up with the people that have been here for a couple of years taking advantage of every opportunity here.

The length of this response in the IBC Student Transition Survey highlights how important academic advising was to the IBC transfer student and how much more the IBC campus could have done to align with the academic reality of the US main campus.

Timeliness. The respondents seemed to suggest that the transfer information must be provided in a timely manner. Responses such as "start earlier" and "be quicker with the process" revealed this concern. At the same time, responses like the following revealed that they did not feel the information had been clear, especially the deadlines and the steps in the process: "Be upfront and honest with timelines," "make…deadlines [clearer]"; "provide information about the transfer process as soon as possible; it felt like I waited so much to get information about what to do for the transfer process."

Similar to this idea was the suggestion provided in additional feedback of question 50 for a more organized process: "more organization would make the process easier for us." Another indicated there were delays that caused anxiety for the transfer students: "most of the anxiety of the transfer comes from the fact that the process might get delayed a bit and that might put the students' plan on hold or delay them."

These responses revealed that the transfer process generated anxiety that the IBC could have relieved through timely access to the information and clear communication on deadlines and important steps of the process.

Information and communication. Some respondents demanded concrete answers or information about key aspects of the transfer process: "tuition costs"; "immunization"; "more information about the main campus"; "provide a list of recommended [off]-campus housing"

"tell them where to live"; and "teach them how to add classes to the cart." At the same time, they offered suggestions for better communication between the IBC and the transfer students: "communicating with the students transferring; we were left out in the dark many times and had to figure out the processes by ourselves; staff was not very helpful"; "doing a seminar right after the transfers have been confirmed will refresh and give students more information about the transfer process."

A more extensive response was given in the additional feedback section of question 50:

> I often felt that I was going to a high school in [the IBC], and so when I came here, classes were bigger and tougher. There … [were many] more people and activities. It is very overwhelming, and you wish you were a little more prepared.

These responses speak directly to the level of preparation provided before the transfer. Even though their initial responses about their preparedness suggested that they felt prepared and ready to cope with the challenges of changing campuses, the section on recommendations to their home campus revealed that their home campus could have done more to prepare and support them.

Interest in their wellbeing. The respondents pointed to the attitude that the IBC as an institution could project with respect to the students' wellbeing. This recommendation was revealed through the following responses: "check up on their wellbeing" and "maybe have a session to mentally prepare students regarding this transition."

Overall, their recommendations highlighted the academic aspect of the transition experience and recommended that the IBC place a higher emphasis on academic advising. The respondents also demanded timely and concrete information about important aspects of the

transfer process, such as academics and housing. Finally, they recommended that their home campus establish and maintain clear communication that also reflects an interest in the students´ wellbeing.

Recommendations for the US main campus. Question 49 "What additional resources should the main campus make available to the Latin American IBC transfers?" elicited recommendations for the US campus in order to better support this group. The number of responses was significantly reduced (only 12 of the 38 survey respondents offered recommendations for the US main campus), and the language used was much softer; the recommendations did not read as complaints but rather as suggestions.

Respondents still asked for concrete information such as "how the bus system works," "tips for the day to day," "where to go for food," and they suggested "videos for explaining the process." Additionally, they would like additional resources--"tutoring, clubs, better library resources, personalized advising, job workshops and internship search" -- and flexibility: "The possibility to make a housing contract even though it is outside of the time schedule," "more classes" and even "Spanish speaking counselors." Finally, they expressed the need for additional support with a particular aspect of their transfer process, namely their scholarship: "help with dealing with the scholarship; students that transfer here are not able to continue unless they maintain their GPA and that can be very stressful and potentially life-altering."

In other words, they requested that the US main campus anticipate their needs and provide additional resources, support, and tailored guidance.

Additional knowledge to help prepare for transition

Question 44 "What do you wish you had known before transferring?" offered respondents the opportunity to reflect on their knowledge gaps that made the transition more

challenging. A total of 30 items were listed by 28 respondents expressing their wished-for tips or prior information. Despite the variety of responses, three categories dominated the list: information on housing options (5 items), practical information (6 items), and concerns with academics and academic advising (9 items).

Housing. Information on housing and housing options appeared five times in the responses, revealing a genuine concern with their new living conditions, since for many of them, it was their first time living away from their families. They wished they had received information on "housing options," "more options for off-campus housing" and "the availability of on-campus housing" as well as "more opinions on places to live."

Practical information. The IBC respondents also wished that they had received information on practical matters, which ranged from daily tasks to navigating a new location and campus. They listed responses about daily tasks such as "laundry," "info about daily life," and "vaccination." However, they also wished they had more information about the campus resources ("the different resources used in the main campus"), the "distances," "how to move around," and "how to cool."

Academics and academic advising. The need to have more academic information and academic advising dominated the IBC Student Transition Survey responses, and this pattern is closely associated with the new academic context and the differences between the US main campus and the Latin American IBC. Notably, there was an emphasis on the lack of academic advising that could have guided them in the new stage: "better academic advising," "advising didn't tell me it was important to take [certain classes] in the [IBC]" and "more about my major and opportunities here in the US." They also wished for more directed and supported academic

preparation such as “the courses I had to take,” “that you could have your classes in the cart,” and “that we could contact advisors [on] the main campus in advance.”

The IBC transfer students also wished they had been more knowledgeable about the level of academic difficulty, the size of classes, and the new classroom culture on the US main campus: “how difficult the classes would be and the responsibility that comes with them,” “the fact that most classes are 200+ students,” and the “US classroom culture.”

The responsibility they seemed to place on the IBC to provide this information in advance defined their expectations of how their home campus should have prepared them, and later, framed their recommendations on how the IBC could improve.

Advice to future IBC transfer students

The transfer process from the Latin American IBC to the US main campus is a standardized process that occurs every semester. Therefore, there is a continuous flow of students who go through the transition experience of changing campuses as they complete their sophomore year. In part, this study sought to elicit the participants’ recommendations and advice to future IBC transfer who will undergo the same experience. Feedback was collected through both the IBC Student Transition Survey and the subsequent focus group, and it consisted of advice on action to take, mind frames to establish, and warnings about what to expect. In this section, the survey respondents provided lengthy and rich responses.

Question 51 of the IBC Student Transition Survey asked participants to offer advice to peers from the IBC who will go through the same transfer process: “What would be your advice to peers from your Latin American Campus as they transfer to the US main campus?”. Of the 38 participants who completed the survey, 22 provided advice, recommendations, or warnings to the

future IBC transfer students. Some responses were very brief ("expect studying") while others were substantial and thorough, such as the following:

> Be close to your advisor, prepare what classes you want to take and be sure of what major you want to stick to (be aware of your pre-requisites). Be prepared to feel overwhelmed and know that it is normal, and it takes a couple of weeks to get a hang of things around campus, the people and the way classes are. Try to be involved as much as you can in the [main campus] clubs; that is how you will meet people and have the best experiences! Work on time management; it is what will make you succeed in achieving everything.

This response covers the information in many other responses and highlights the major pieces of advice that the IBC transfer students wished to provide for their peers.

Helpful actions and strategies. A major piece of advice to future IBC transfer students involves taking initiative and becoming proactive with the process itself and the new conditions. The IBC Student Transition Survey respondents prompted future transfer students to become actively involved in the transfer process and not simply wait for the information to be handed to them:

> "Check everything twice or as many times you have before you complete the process."
>
> "Try to get all your documents prepared ahead of time."
>
> "Try to obtain more information apart from what the [IBC] admissions say."
>
> "Don't trust the [IBC] advisors."
>
> "Find the webpage of your career and minor, look for the advisor's emails and ask questions at least a semester before you transfer."

Similar advice was given in relation to the new campus and the new reality that the transfer students will face. The respondents prompted future transfer students to take action, become involved in their academic plans, take advantage of the different activities at the main campus, and meet new people:

> "Be close to your advisor, prepare what classes you want to take and be sure of what major you want to stick to (be aware of your pre-requisites)."
>
> "Contact your US advisors to make sure you are aware of requirements."
>
> "Get more involved with the process and opportunities [in the main campus], so you can transfer with a plan in mind."
>
> "Join a club of your liking and try to meet US citizens."
>
> "… get a bike."
>
> "Try to be involved as much as you can in the [main campus] clubs; that is how you will meet people and have the best experiences!"
>
> "Join clubs, a fraternity, [and] get new friends outside your bubble because your education also comes from others outside the classroom."
>
> "Work on time management; it is what will make you succeed in achieving everything."

The focus group participants provided suggestions for the practical side of the transition process, such as the preparation and the transfer process itself. Tom insisted that the process of transferring is "made really dead simple" and all the students need to do is "follow instructions." He highlighted that all the stages—from the transfer requirements to the visa process to the classes at the new campus—rely on a series of instructions "everywhere in the transition process." Therefore, his recommendation is to focus on the stages of the process and rely on the

instructions and procedures. The emotional reaction may not be controlled as easily, “cause you’re gonna react how you’re gonna react,” but if the IBC transfer students trust the process and its instructions, they can cope.

Pete reinforced this idea by inviting future transfers to “do exactly as you are told and follow instructions.” Similarly, he reminded future transfer students that the orientation process introduces them to a series of support systems and services at the US main campus, and he recommended that new transfer students become familiar with them and use them:

> When you go to the [International Student Center], they take you [on] a tour around [the Center] and they tell you there are systems that can help you with academics or anything else, and they tell you they are here, here and here. Use them if you need them. . . or even if you don’t; or if you feel something is missing, try going there and they will help you more than you think.

One of the most important recommendations given by Suzy is to “reach out.” This is consistently the action that dominated in their coping strategies, their support systems, and their personal choices, and they did not hesitate to offer this piece of wisdom and advice. They identified the different offices on the US main campus, such as the International Student Center, but also peers in the same situation. As Suzy highlighted, the point was to use all of these resources in order to receive help and support:

> I know that many of us at some point … need help, and you will find it. . . you just need to reach out. You will find tons of people [who] are willing to help you and other students going through the same thing.

Additional practical recommendations were participation in extracurricular activities, finding a “good, happy spot” to frequent and making sure to know people from the same transfer

group in order to create a buddy system. Jim developed the idea of the buddy system: "[H]ave someone that will assist you in case you get sick or have an emergency in the house, because most of us don't have family close by, so just make sure to have that responsible body. . . [because] it's important to always have an emergency contact."

Prepare emotionally and establish helpful mind frames. Some of the advice the respondents provided warned future IBC transfer students about the emotional impact of the transfer and indicated ways to cope:

> "Be prepared to feel overwhelmed and know that it is normal; and it takes a couple of weeks to get a hang of things around campus, the people and the way classes are."
>
> "Do not panic during the process; it might be slow, but it gets completed."
>
> "Don't be afraid, don't stress. Just enjoy the ride and meet new people!"
>
> "Don't listen to your friends because there is a lot of hearsay/untruths about the transfer process, [North] American culture and the changes in your lifestyle. It will be difficult and rewarding, but it starts with you and your ability to fall seven times and get up eight."
>
> "It's easier than it looks. Be diligent and responsible."
>
> "It's not as hard or scary as it seems."

This advice seems to suggest that, while one cannot deny the difficulties in the transition, a positive mind frame helps alleviate the difficulties. The respondents are honest about the emotional impact that the transition entails but also positive that it can be overcome with the right attitude.

On the topic of preparing emotionally and establishing helpful mind frames, the focus group participants offered one major piece of advice: "Don't stress out and don't worry." They almost uttered this in unison when asked what recommendation on this topic they had for new transfers. As for mind sets or attitudes, the focus group participants delved further into what "don't stress out and don't worry" entails. They acknowledged that the change of campus coincided with moving away from their family and their hometown, so feeling lonely and out of place were normal reactions. However, they offered ways to manage those emotions and re-direct the energy they consume.

Pete, for instance, spelled out the process of experiencing loneliness or a sense of despair, only to realize that "it's not the worse that you feel" and can be overcome with some additional effort. Even if you feel you are "away from home and your family," he asserted, "don't let that to be the thing that guides you." In other words, he recommended that students turn the negative thoughts around and focus on the positive outcomes of their development:

> Even if you feel like, yes, you are away from your family or away from your hometown, you will feel that, I mean it's normal, but don't let that be the thing that guides you. When you leave that to guide you, then you start thinking about things that you shouldn´t, like, 'why am I here? Why am I doing this?'... don't do that, do the opposite …like, 'I made it to here; that is something that not everyone can do, so let's make the most out of it.'

He also insisted that these negative feelings are transitory: "[M]aybe the first day you will feel like you're out of place because you don't know anyone, but when you let time go on and you start doing things by yourself, you start seeing… 'yeah, it's not that hard. I am not feeling that alone.'"

Jim offered an additional recommendation, that of challenging oneself to step out of one's comfort zone:

> For example, when I came back from summer, I figured that I would do a little bit of a challenge, and for the first week of class, I would talk to one random stranger a day, at least. And…if I didn't do that, …there had to be a punishment. So, it's like you have reinforcement or punishment and reward; that is how psychology works. So, do those little tricks and … that will force you …, while you still have your [IBC] circle, [to have] that extra thing to slowly reach out.

While his system of rewards and punishments seemed somewhat extreme to the other participants, he managed to support the rationale of striking a balance between the familiar and unfamiliar behind such a challenge:

> Having that balance of …that comfort zone of going to your old friends, people that have …the same exact cultural background as you but also be involved in different activities that take you out of your comfort zone, so that you little by little get used to the culture you're living in. Because [at] the end of the day, you are going to still be here for, what, two years? So, you better embrace it and try to make friends that have …different backgrounds, and you're going to get used to it.

Suzy supported this view and added that this tactic would allow them to "grow as a person."

The focus group participants were ready to provide practical advice and suggest useful mind sets or attitudes that could help future IBC transfer students cope with the transition, but they were not given the opportunity to make specific recommendations for either of the two

campuses. Paco, however, offered his perception of the overall transfer process, indicating that it was “seamless,” “organized, “and “incredibly easy,” and instead of being a “daunting and challenging” process, it felt “super simple, super easy.” He added that the “core elements” of the transfer process were simple and felt that the US main campus treated its Latin American transfer students well.

Rely on others. Both the IBC Student Transition Survey respondents and the focus group participants systematically acknowledged the importance of reaching out to others for support and guidance. As to what was particularly helpful (question 47), access to others was the most frequent response.

Being surrounded by others seems to have been a useful strategy for helping with the transition, either for retrieving important information or simply seeking emotional support:

“Friendships do help you a long way; it’s always good to be surrounded [by] good company.”

“American friends I've met here.”

“Family and friends.”

“Having friends around and being a call away from my parents.”

“My friends.”

“My friends and faculty members.”

“My friends from [my home country].”

“Other students are usually eager to help if they know you're an exchange student.”

“Reaching out to people when I didn't know what to do.”

“Support from friends.”

After recognizing that the support and guidance of others was extremely helpful, the IBC transfer students advised future transfers to resort to others:

“Start the process by asking people who have done it.”

"Have a friend."

"Don't lose contact with family and friends."

Aside from family and friends, they suggested reaching out to advisors, making new friends, and becoming involved in student clubs or fraternities. Relying on others was highlighted as a useful strategy for coping with the transition, and the IBC transfer students make this very clear in their recommendations to future transfers.

Hope for the best. The respondents managed to be encouraging but also funny. The list of responses included "It's going to be ok. It's just 2 hard years" and "may the force be with you." These responses were brief but also rich in undertone. They acknowledge the difficulties that come with the transition and accept that not everything can be controlled. The respondents implied that sometimes, you just have to go with the flow and trust that things will be all right.

The IBC focus group respondents encouraged peers to prepare, find information, visit the relevant websites, and become proactive in seeking help and resources.

An overview of the recommendations that IBC transfers provided

Recommendations or advice that the IBC transfer students in this study could offer to future transfer students was collected in this section, and it can potentially become the most useful in determining best practices for supporting the IBC transfer students as well as establishing preparation strategies before they transfer. In other words, it can provide the necessary feedback that the Latin American IBC and the US main campus need to build better bridges for the students transferring from the former to the latter. The participants offered improvement recommendations to the IBC campus, but also recommendations for the US main campus. The important information they wished they had received becomes an additional area of interest for improvement efforts, whereas the advice they provided to future IBC transfers

provides an opportunity to detect what mattered the most in this process and the allows further room for transfer process enhancement.

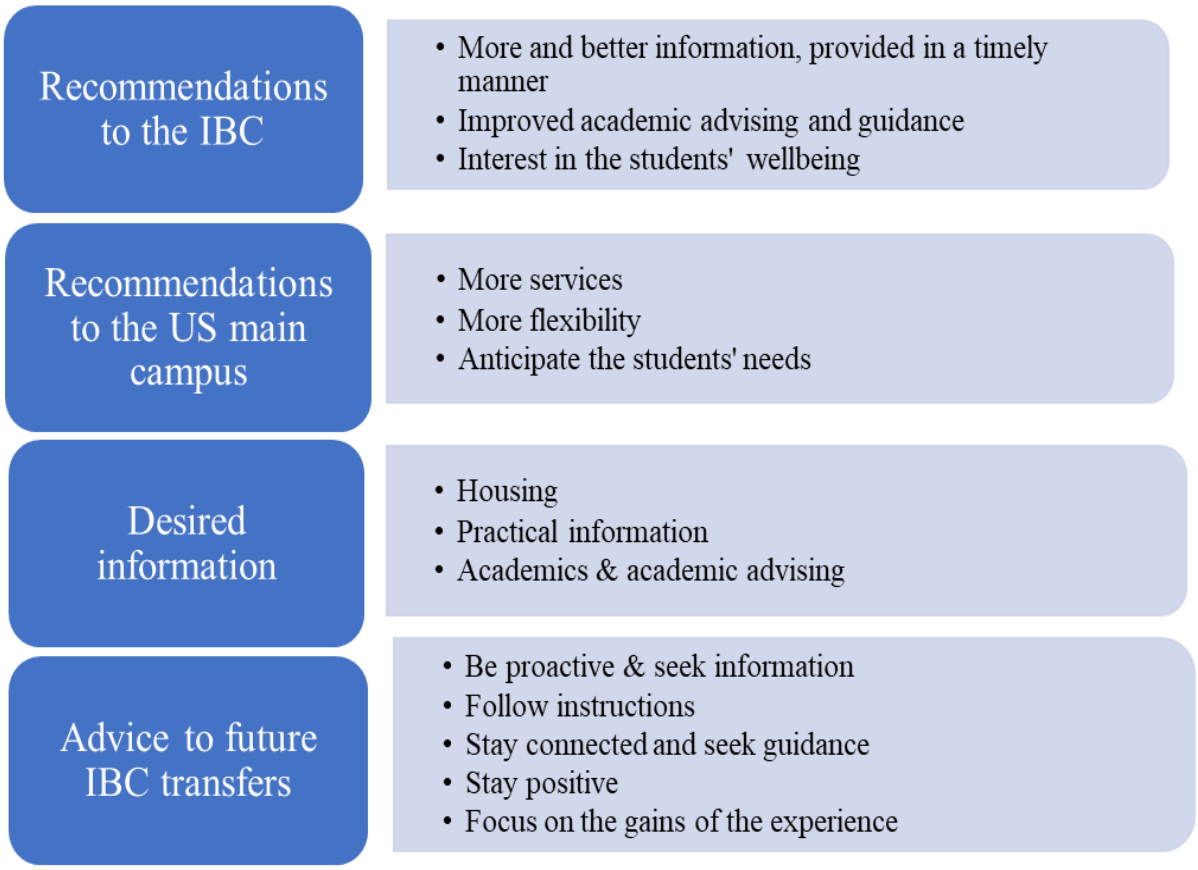

Figure 4.3. The recommendations and advice that the IBC transfers offered.

In sum, a combined analysis of the IBC Student Transition Survey and focus group data helped to answer the fifth research question and provide findings that can lead to a reflection for program improvement and best practices.

Summary of findings

In combining the results of the IBC Student Transition Survey and the subsequent focus group session, this study made an in-depth exploration of the transition experience of the students who transfer from a Latin American IBC to its US main campus. The richness of details and the sincerity with which the participants shared their personal stories and reflections

unpacked various dimensions of the transition. The sequential mixed methods design utilized in this inquiry fully addressed the five research questions. These questions explored: 1) the reasons that led the IBC transfer students to change campuses in the academic year 2017-2018, 2) their perception of the transition experience and the way it affected their roles and relationships, 3) the institutional support systems that they utilized in each campus, 4) the coping strategies they employed during the transition process, and 5) their recommendations for facilitating the transition process and for program improvement. A summary of the findings follows.

Initially, the inquiry helped determine the reasons that led the IBC transfer students to change campuses. Specifically, reasons for transferring rest on a goal of academic advancement: by attending an IBC, it is affordable to study in the US. The importance of the academic preparation follows cultural and social norms that value US education as more prestigious than the education offered in the students' respective countries. Attending the Latin American IBC for two years before moving to the US main campus is also viewed as a safe path, allowing for maturation before studying on their own in another country.

The findings related to the students' perception of the transition process and the way it affected their roles and relationships are extensive and reveal the many aspects of the transition experience. The emotional responses to the transition encompass both positive and negative sentiments: excitement, freedom and sense of achievement combine with fear, anxiety, homesickness, and discomfort. Despite their level of preparation and the several tools they used to prepare for the transition, they still faced challenges on several levels: academic, social, and cultural. As a result, they assumed new roles to handle new demands and respond to new challenges. Their roles ranged from becoming housekeepers to caregivers as they were called to combine tasks and balance new responsibilities. When asked to reflect on the way their

relationships to others have changed, they clearly take pride in their independence, the respect they have earned in their families, and the recognition they have received in their classes.

The third section of this analysis explored the institutional supports systems that the IBC transfer students used in order to cope with the transition. The IBC support systems became less relevant as the students transferred to the US main campus, indicating that they had either exhausted the IBC services or the IBC had fulfilled their role. The US main campus resources gain more prominence when dealing with the transition, but the students show preference for three support systems composed of services that relate most to their new status as international students: New Student Orientation, the International Student Center, and academic advisors. A surprising element arises in their reliance on the IBC group or cohort for information and support.

The fourth section included important findings about the transfer student-initiated coping strategies that were used to deal with the transition. It highlights the ways the IBC transfer students themselves took control of the transition process, a key item of interest in this study. Importantly, the IBC transfer students used a variety of coping strategies and the majority did not give up or abandon efforts to cope. Establishing and maintaining connections with others stands out as an important strategy, but they also took command of their everyday lives, adopted helpful habits and routines, took on mind sets that were conducive to a balanced and positive attitude, and found creative ways to connect with their cultural background.

The last section presents the IBC transfer students' recommendations for facilitating the transition and improving the process. Through open-ended questions and the focus group session, this inquiry collected important leads for professional practitioners of both the Latin American IBC and the US main campus. The IBC transfer students responded critically to the

preparation the IBC provided, claiming that more and better information would have been useful. Academic advising surfaces repeatedly as a deficient service of the IBC, which resulted in more challenges when they transferred. When they turn to the US main campus, the IBC student transfers are less critical but express the need for more services and more flexibility. In giving advice to their peers—future IBC transfer students—they encourage them to be proactive and seek information, to follow instructions, and to stay in contact with others for support and guidance. Above all, they advise future IBC transfer peers to stay positive and focus on gains rather than losses.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Introduction

The transition experience of students who transfer from the Latin American IBC to the US main campus is a major event in their academic journey and a significant milestone in their academic and social lives. As they change campuses in order to continue their studies, they leave their families and their socio-cultural networks. Inevitably, the Latin American IBC transfer students face a series of challenges and are asked to change and assume new roles. Accessing and using formal or informal resources and coping resources can ease the transition experience and ensure that they reach a new level of adjustment and adaptation.

The present study explored various layers of this transition experience and reached a series of findings that can help educational practitioners at both the Latin American IBC and its US main campus better prepare and support this particular group of transfer students. Although the study focused on a specific educational context—a Latin American IBC—it fits with the existing literature on transfer and international students and contributes to the overall understanding of students who change postsecondary institutions either in their countries or abroad.

Through a sequential mixed methods research design based on a survey and subsequent focus group, this study answered five research questions:

1. What were the factors that led rising juniors from the Latin American IBC to transfer to the US main campus for the academic year fall 2017 through summer 2018?
2. What were the Latin American IBC transfers' perceptions about the transition experience and the way it affected their roles and relationships?

3. What types of institutional support from the Latin American IBC and from the main campus did the Latin American IBC transfers employ to manage their transition process?
4. What types of student-initiated coping strategies did the Latin American IBC transfers employ during their transition process?
5. What recommendations do the Latin American IBC transfers suggest for facilitating the transition process and for program improvement?

Schlossberg's (1981) Transition Theory provided the theoretical framework in order to approach and analyze the transition experience of the students who transferred from a Latin American IBC to its US main campus in the academic year 2017-2018. The study allowed an in-depth examination of the process of changing campuses and its meaning in the eyes of the students. The findings of the study shed light on the students' perception of the transition, the challenges they faced, and the support systems and coping strategies that they employed in order to manage. Additionally, the study elicited student recommendations for institutional improvements of the transfer process and advice for future IBC transfer students. Their recommendations and advice, in combination with the findings on challenges, supports, and strategies, provide a solid understanding of how the transfer process from the Latin American IBC can be facilitated and improved.

Schlossberg's (1981) Transition Model and its value as theoretical framework

Schlossberg's (1981) Transition Model provided a structure for understanding the students' transfer from the Latin American IBC to the US main campus without being prescriptive or imposing patterns or generalizations. Schlossberg's efforts to define 'transition' are not to pre-determine what will take place during one but to frame transition in a way that action, response, and intervention can be strategically offered to support the individual in transition (Schlossberg, 1981b). In responding to the criticism of her model, Schlossberg

emphasizes its usefulness not so much as a predictive tool but as "an organizing framework for research and intervention" (1981b, p. 50) and "a structure for analyzing any transition" (2011, p. 161). It was precisely in this light that Schlossberg's Transition Model was used in this study. Even though the Transition Model did not specifically address transition experiences within a multicultural context, it has nevertheless become a staple in Student Affairs research precisely because of its applicability across diverse situations and university experiences (Killam & Degges-White, 2017, p. 31)

Schlossberg's Transition Model maps out a method for understanding the transition experience and helps professionals build support strategies derived from both individual reactions to the transition and resources for coping with it. Rather than prescribing, the Transition Model delineates the layers of a transition experience that need to be explored and, more importantly, accepts that each individual will experience transition in different ways. For Schlossberg (1981), transition takes place "if an event or non-event results in a change in assumptions about oneself and the world and thus requires a corresponding change in one's behavior and relationships" (p. 5). The key here is the individual's *perception* of these changes. An individual's own perceptions of changes allows for unique and nuanced reactions to be encompassed under the definition of 'transition.' This feature of the TM allowed me to accept as a given that changes occur in students who transfer from one institution to another yet explore with an open mind how individual students perceived, reacted to, and coped with these changes.

The Transition Framework (Schlossberg, 1984; Schlossberg et al. 1995) provides a visualization of the three stages in understanding and responding to transitions: approaching transitions; taking stock of coping resources; and taking charge or strengthening resources (Schlossberg, 1984).

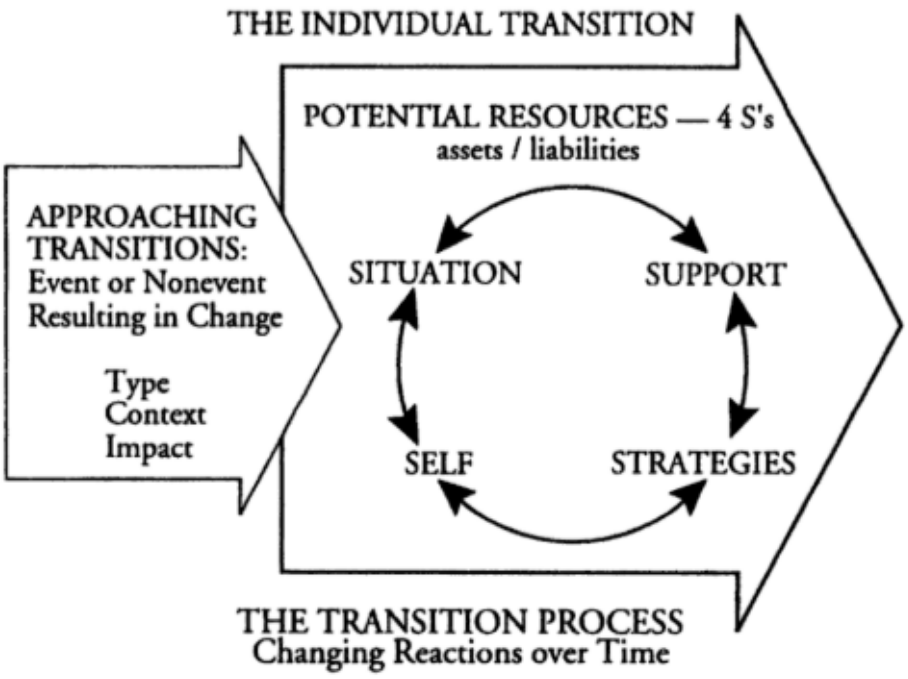

Figure 5.1. Schlossberg's Transition Framework revisited (Schlossberg et al., 1995, p. 27).

The Latin American IBC students' transfer process was explored through Schlossberg's (1981) Transition Theory and viewed as an example of a developmental stage. The transition experience of the Latin American IBC students is a good example of transition according to Schlossberg's definition, and the stages in her transition model allowed me to both unpack and value individual responses to the transition experience. Using the developmental stage parameter allowed me to first define the layers of the transition experience using four categories (changes, challenges, supports, and coping strategies) and then to synthesize the information to explore how the Latin American IBC and its US main campus can improve their practices. The study also revealed the support systems and coping strategies that students employed in their effort to cope with the changes in their lives as a result of the transition. The information collected in this study provides a solid basis for advocating that transfer student supports be strengthened by both campuses.

Transition is that space of flux and change between two stable points. Students who study for two years at the Latin American IBC adopt a pattern of effort and expectations tied to the specific context. They may feel settled in this pattern and routine; certainly, they become familiar with the hallways and classrooms of the IBC. When they need support, they can access their social circles and family at the end of the day or on weekends. As the focus group participants highlighted, attending the IBC was conducive to building a type of social interaction that ensured they were always surrounded by familiar faces and familiar cultural connections. The transfer process introduced them to a new context and a disruption of many of their patterns and routines. Eventually, they learned to feel comfortable in the new context, developed resilience and enjoyed the novelty. What lies in between defines their transition.

The discussion of the findings is organized by research question. The findings reveal the layers of the students' transition experience as they transferred from the Latin American IBC to the US main campus and prepare the ground for recommendations for improvements in the process itself or the support services that the two campuses can offer.

Implications

The factors that determine the transfer from the IBC to the US main campus

There are multiple reasons why students transferred from the Latin American IBC to the US main campus: it allowed them to complete their undergraduate degrees; it represented added social and educational value; it was affordable through the 2+2 IBC scholarship; and the option of attending the IBC before transferring enabled them to reach a level of maturity before leaving their families and countries.

The Latin American IBC offers only limited academic program options, but it provides an entry point for most programs offered on the US main campus. This means that many students who begin at the IBC are destined to transfer out unless they pursue one of the five

undergraduate programs that can be completed at the IBC. This creates a sense of inevitability about the transfer: they need to transfer in order to finish their degree. The IBC as a 'feeder' institution that offers a limited number of complete programs on campus is consistent with its mission. Therefore, the students' inevitable transfer to the US main campus entails a responsibility for the Latin American IBC to prepare students and ensure as smooth a transition as possible.

Another reason for transferring is the prestige and recognition gained by studying abroad, a typical motivator for international students (Prazeres, 2013; Rienties & Jindal-Snape, 2016). Research on international student experiences reveals that students themselves see the prospect of studying in another country as an advantage, a privilege, and a factor that increases their "cultural and symbolic capital" (Prazeres, 2013, p. 812). Still, this can create a heightened pressure to succeed for many transfer students. One study revealed that transferring from an IBC to a US main campus is a 'high-stakes move,' a shot at the big time of prestigious US education fraught with challenges (Ecochard & Fortheringham, 2017; Mesidor & Sly, 2016).

While students reflected on the factors that determined their reason to transfer, they also reflected on the Latin American IBC and what it offered, namely a safe environment to begin their studies and a way to test the waters before venturing out to live independently and away from their families. Importantly, the scholarship opportunity made completing a US degree affordable. Although their responses echoed the typical reasons for studying abroad, the references to the Latin American IBC provide a glimpse its unique strengths: a stepping stone introduction to a US university system and an affordable way to complete a degree on the US main campus.

As the IBC transfer student demographic table indicates (Appendix G), most of these students were already 20 or above by the time they transferred to the US main campus and had already attended the university for two academic years; in other words, they were probably much more mature and capable of handling the changes that came with the transition from one campus to another. Paco highlights this idea: "[T]he 2+2 program offered … a little bit more safety and security [so] …that I could still experience university [at the IBC] and then transfer over [to the main campus]." In other words, they had the opportunity to experience the change from high school to university closer to home.

Establishing the reasons for transferring opened the ground for a consideration of the ways they perceived or experienced the transition from the Latin American IBC to the US main campus. The IBC transfer students became international students upon their relocation to the US main campus, and the literature relevant to international student transitions has provided a useful framework in understanding their challenges. As upper-division transfers from a small international branch campus to the large US main campus, they in some ways resemble typical transfer students in the US. The application of Schlossberg's (1981) Transition Model allowed me to explore their transition experience in a systematic way.

The IBC transfer students' perception of the transition experience and changes in roles and relationships

Schlossberg (1981) reminds us that there is no transition without change, and it is specifically the individual's perception of change that determines whether he or she is experiencing transition. This concept of transition guided the study of the Latin American IBC transfer students. When the Latin American IBC students transfer to the US main campus, they not only change location but move up in their academic program and move out of the familiar

social and cultural landscape of their first two years of postsecondary education. It was important to view those changes through their eyes.

The IBC transfer student perceptions of their transition experience provided a rich tapestry of information about the transfer process itself, the challenges they experienced, and the new insights obtained from this experience. It also shows us how the transition affected their roles in different environments, their relationships in their established networks, and an in-depth understanding of how meaningful the transition became in their overall growth.

The students' mixed perspectives on the transition experience. Based on the literature review on how transition to a university abroad can affect international students (Cemalcilar & Falbo, 2008; Ecochard & Fotheringham, 2017; Hotta & Ting-Toomey, 2013) and how the transition to a new university can affect transfer students (Barefoot, 2008; Grites and Farina, 2012), the IBC Student Transition Survey listed a series of perceptions—some positive and some negative— and asked participants to rate the extent to which they experienced each.

While this is a moment of triumph, excitement, and achievement on both academic and personal levels, the study participants were also sincere in identifying it also as a moment of both fear and anxiety. These emotional responses are supported by the literature on international students, and quite often, transfer students at the college level. Because the IBC transfer students leave behind their families and familiar cultural and social contexts in order to continue their studies in a new, larger, and much more diverse educational environment, feelings of anxiety, fear, and homesickness are to be expected.

While most of the IBC transfer students indicated feeling fear, anxiety, and homesickness, the majority did not experience feeling lost and confused, an intriguing finding. I wondered whether their level of preparedness helped them to handle certain challenges of their transition and

avoid being overwhelmed, that is, feeling lost and confused. Indeed, the IBC transfer students indicated that they had felt prepared for the transition and had used different tools, such as friends who had transferred before them, friends from the same transfer cohort, and main campus website. Because the transfer process to the US main campus was an anticipated event, they prepared for it in advance, and I speculate that this preparedness may have mitigated more extreme emotional responses to the transfer experience.

Challenges. The study participants enumerated the challenges they faced upon transferring, and in so doing, both confirmed the literature on international and transfer students and highlighted the distinct characteristics of the Latin American IBC.

The students felt prepared overall but still acknowledged that the increased academic difficulty on the US main campus was one of the biggest challenges they faced. Feeling prepared and still facing academic difficulty may seem like a contradiction until we focus on the differences in levels of responsible freedom and student accountability between the Latin American IBC and by the US main campus. The closer monitoring provided by the Latin American IBC is no longer present when they transfer to the US main campus, and students must balance their freedom with the responsibility to perform and succeed academically.
Zhou et al. (2008) refer to this exposure to different assumptions as "pedagogical adaptation" which is a "subset of culture shock." Among other things, it can include coming face to face with different assumptions about the role of the educators and the level of student engagement expected in a new educational context. In addition, increased academic difficulty upon transferring is supported in the literature on transfer students, who face anxiety about the increasing demand on performance (Townsend, 2008), and on international students, who are

under pressure to succeed and must adjust to new "teaching practices and classroom dynamics" (Ecochard & Fotheringham, 2017, p.102).

Another factor to consider is how and whether the context gap between the Latin American IBC and the US main campus partly explains the academic difficulty experienced by the IBC transfer students. IBCs may operate with the same academic directives and standards as their institutional centers, but IBCs still "operate in unique cultural environments" (Stanfield, 2014, p. 42). Despite the close oversight exercised by the US main campus over the Latin American IBC, the IBC is a very distinct institution that has developed its own identity (Montoto, 2013). No matter how closely aligned in policy and curricula, the unique context affects the learning environment in various ways. Ecochard & Fortheringham (2017) concur that new academic environments can be demanding for international students exactly because "pedagogy [is] context-dependent" (p. 1020; in other words, context may explain some of the academic difficulties the IBC transfer students experienced.

Aside from the academic difficulty, a significant challenge was the size of everything—campus and classes—and what this meant for the Latin American IBC transfer students' social and personal lives. Transferring from a campus of 500 students to the large US main campus of 40,000 was a daunting experience. They needed to navigate the new academic demands while also re-negotiating their sense of identity and connection to a new cultural and social context (Hotta & Ting-Toomey, 2012; Zhou et al. 2008; Terrazas-Castillo et al. 2014). The small IBC campus allowed virtually constant student interaction and bonding, whereas the big campus launched them into a larger crowd that required additional effort to both meet people and feel included. The IBC transfer student response to size is supported by the literature on transfer student transition, which mentions the anonymity of a large campus (Townshend & Wilson,

2006) and the work of reconnecting all over again with peers and instructors while at the same time feeling unaccounted for and mostly neglected (Tobolowsky et al., 2014).

The distinct differences in classroom culture between the Latin American IBC and the US main campus emerged as a significant topic. In fact, this topic was a bigger source of discomfort than the change in location, the increased responsibility, and the increased academic difficulty. At the Latin American IBC, their social and academic lives mixed; they interacted with peers inside and outside class and built connections. Jim, one of the focus group participants, shared that the classroom culture was one of the most uncomfortable things he encountered on the US main campus. He explained that on the Latin American IBC campus, students build relationships in class that endure beyond the classroom walls, whereas at the US main campus, while students may be polite in class, "as soon as the bell rings and the class is over, they do not recognize you."

The IBC transfer students also observed that, on the main US campus, there is a different classroom culture concerning attendance. The IBC transfers claimed that they skipped or missed class less frequently than their main campus peers, probably due to a mixture of factors, including a certain pressure or responsibility to succeed and their newly acquired maturity and independence as international students.

Overall, the study results confirmed what the literature reveals about the challenges international and transfer student face. However, the focus group session, made up of five participants from the IBC transfer group, helped unpack the challenges these students faced in ways that go beyond mimicking the literature to provide specificity to the unique case of one particular Latin American IBC.

Changes in roles and relationships. Change is integral to transition, especially changes in roles and relationships. In fact, according to Schlossberg's definition, transition is bound to affect an individual's roles and relationships (Schlossberg, 2011, p. 159). The IBC Student Transition Survey confirmed the assumption that the transition from the Latin American IBC to the US main campus entailed a series of changes, including changes in student roles, either assumed or abandoned, and changes in relationships to others. Changes could have been triggered either by the challenges they encountered on the new campus or their newly-found freedom and independence.

The IBC transfer students assumed new roles as they changed campuses in terms of living independently and assuming more responsibility. They actively took on the role of being 'adults' and made decisions about their day-to-day lives, such as cooking, cleaning, shopping, and organizing their daily schedules. All of the IBC transfer students anticipated these changes before the transfer, and this may have helped cope. At the US main campus, they took on the roles of housekeepers, cooks, caregivers, and advisors. One focus group participant, Tom, simply called this process "growth" and indicated that it was unexpected. This special type of growth, stepping up to share household tasks and caring for sick friends, emerged when the IBC transfer students transferred to the US main campus and needed to reach out to each other.

Change also occurred in how the IBC transfer students were perceived by others. Their families gave them more space than before and accepted their new level of freedom and independence. The distance from family and home opened up new roles and established a new position in their family context. They knew things their parents did not know, and they became experts in their new home and reality. These changes became sources of pride and self-

confidence—and maturity—that they could share with future IBC transfer students. They felt the changes happening, they withstood the challenges, and they grew.

Several researchers identify this process as "identity negotiation," or the process of moving from feeling like an outsider to becoming comfortable with and even feeling part of the new environment (Cemalcicar & Falbo, 2008; Hotta & Ting-Toomey, 2013; Mesidor & Sly, 2016). This corresponds to what Zhou et al. (2008) refer to as "cultural learning" as opposed to culture shock, and the idea that international students are in "cultural transit…proactively responding to and resolving problems stemming from change, rather than being passive victims of trauma stemming from a noxious event" (p. 65).

In sum, the IBC transfer students felt the inevitability of change in the roles they played as they assumed adult roles and took command of their everyday lives. They acquired a new authority within their social and family network based on their newly-gained freedom and capacity to respond to the challenges of the transition.

Institutional support systems

The Transition Framework (Schlossberg et al. 1995) incorporates the 4 S's System of coping with transition, namely *situation, self, supports, and strategies*. Taking stock of the 4S's in a transition process can help in handling transition and overcoming its challenges. The study of the IBC transfer students focused specifically on *supports and strategies* in order to determine the institutional support mechanisms most useful to the IBC transfer students and the coping strategies they most often adopted. The focus was on those coping methods that the institution could either implement or help activate.

The two educational contexts that support the IBC transfer students (the IBC and the US main campus) both allocate resources to help students handle the demands of studying on their

respective campuses. Although the Latin American IBC is very small, formal resources exist, such as academic advisors, an academic dean, and professors. The IBC transfer students of this study admitted little use of the IBC institutional resources during their transition, probably because the transition was not actually experienced until their physical arrival at the US main campus. Essentially, the formal resources of the old campus became irrelevant upon arrival at the new campus.

IBC transfer students made use of mainly three of institutional support systems among the many offered at the US main campus, and two were mandatory for their status as transfer and international students: The new student Orientation and the International Student Center. A third one, their academic advisors, was another significant and systematically accessed university resource.

An unexpected finding was the emergence of the transfer cohort as an informal, yet very important support system or mechanism used by the IBC transfer students. Based on my knowledge and familiarity of the IBC context, there is no conscious effort to establish the transfer cohort as a support system, possibly because it is deemed unnecessary or because the IBC values more direct individual rapport with the students regarding the transfer process. However, since the IBC students get to know one another through continuous interaction in the hallways of a small campus and through their shared cultural/social background, they inevitably end up supporting one another during the transfer process. This is an aspect that makes the IBC group and its experience a unique one in the literature on transfer and international students, who often need to work to establish a new social network as soon as they arrive to the new educational context. The IBC transfer students, in contrast, relocate as part of an already established social network.

The literature on both international and transfer students highlights that receiving institutions have a responsibility to understand the needs of these two groups of students and enable the most helpful support systems (Arthur, 2017; Cemarcilar & Falbo, 2008). The IBC transfer students reveal that, in addition to the institutional or formal support systems, their pre-transfer IBC social network is a resource that provides substantial support. While appreciating this unique aspect of the IBC group, I am nevertheless concerned that the formal support systems provided by the Latin American IBC may not be utilized sufficiently or may not be sufficiently trusted; this area was targeted early on as an area of potential improvement and strengthening.

Coping strategies

Coping strategies are defined by Schlossberg (1981) as the actions initiated by the individual and define the conscious efforts made to handle challenges associated with transition; in other words, everything "an individual does on his or her own behalf" (Anderson et al. 2012, p. 87). Coping strategies become apparent when an individual takes charge and resorts to a personal reservoir of helpful actions or self-regulating mechanisms. The study of the IBC transfer students revealed the coping strategies that these students used in order to handle the transition experience as they changed campuses.

The most prominent coping strategy revealed by the study was reaching out to others in different ways and for different purposes. They sought information through IBC peers for support and guidance and relied on others as a coping strategy. Literature on international and transfer students alike suggests that strengthening the students' social networks is a useful strategy to help them cope (Wan, Chapman and Biggs, 1992; Arthur, N., 2017; Rienties and Jindal-Snape, 2016). In this case, however, the Latin American IBC transfer students' social network has been a key resource for the start, one not imposed on them but one they resorted to

when things got tough. While the present study confirms the research conclusions about social networks, the IBC transfer student experience adds to our understanding of coping strategies by indicating that a pre-established network can be an especially helpful transition coping strategy, albeit a somewhat rare one for contexts outside this IBC.

This emphasizes the importance that the IBC transfer students place on their connection with the other IBC transfers as a coping strategy and support system. Rienties and Jindal-Snape (2016) warn that relying too heavily on "cultural cliques" might inhibit international students from developing connections with other international students or nationals, but this does not seem to be a concern for the IBC transfer students under study. They relied on the IBC group to relieve the anxiety of trying to make connections or as a means to handle the transition, but they did not remain in this comfortable social network. In fact, there was an awareness in the focus group session of the dangers of staying too close to the IBC group or using it as a "crutch."

Another coping strategy, nurturing cultural connections, provides reassurance, comfort, and self-definition, all important elements for their wellbeing on the new campus. The IBC transfer students had a sense of nostalgia for their homes and cultural identity, and they resorted to several cultural elements in order to appease the nostalgia and turn it into a coping mechanism. The focus group participants demonstrated this technique during the session: they referred to places, foods, music styles, or stereotypical images from their shared culture to build cohesion and feel comfortable. They resorted to representations of their culture frequently and got together with other IBC students to reminisce about their time at the IBC and their home countries.

Terrazas-Castillo et al. (2014) show how location can be an important element in supporting international students. They assert that developing ties with a new physical space can

ease the anxiety that the distance from home can generate. The IBC transfer students spoke of a "pocket space," in their case a Mexican restaurant, that became their special space, creating the illusion of a home away from home.

Setting routines also emerged as an important coping strategy among the IBC transfer students. No matter the type of routine, or whether it was old or new, the students established routines to respond to the demands of the new campus and deal with the new responsibilities they had acquired as part of the transition. The key idea behind setting routines and adhering to them is the predictability that routine provides. Routine can provide the deep assurance that, despite all the changes, something can be controlled; this is a great comfort.

Recommendations to the university & advice to future IBC transfer students

The attempt to understand the transition experience of students that transfer from a Latin American IBC to its US main campus presupposed that the students themselves are the experts, having experienced the challenges and activated the coping mechanisms. For this reason, the IBC transfer students were in an ideal position to provide recommendations to the institutions that support them and offer advice to the future transfers. Consequently, the research design incorporated questions that sought their input for facilitating the transfer process and improving the program through open-ended questions to allow for more meaningful and extensive responses. Schlossberg (1981b) highlighted that her model should be useful for "research and intervention" and that the main goal is "identifying ways in which we can help people respond, adapt, creatively transform themselves as life unfolds and as they impact life's unfolding" (p. 50). The participants' recommendations and advice provide the necessary scaffolding for the subsequent strategies for improvement of the transfer process from the Latin American IBC to the US main campus.

Recommendations to the IBC and the US main campus. The IBC Student Transition Survey directly addressed recommendations that students would provide to their sending institution in order to improve the preparation of future transfers and facilitate the process. Likewise, the survey asked for recommendations for the receiving institution (the US main campus).

Their responses identify information gaps or additional support mechanisms that the two campuses can provide to ease the transition. In addition, we see how the IBC transfer students rate the services provided by the two campuses. That they did not use the institutional supports offered by the Latin American IBC does not necessarily mean that they don't need supports; in fact, their recommendations for the IBC indicate that they need support and preparation. This suggests a need to find out exactly what supports the IBC transfer students would use and what supports would meet their needs. For instance, if they already see academic advising as deficient at the Latin American IBC, then it is unlikely that they will see the academic advisors as a useful support system. This calls for the IBC to consider the need for support systems that students can feel confident using.

The IBC Student Transition Survey respondents were much more critical of the Latin American IBC and its process of preparing students than they were of the US main campus. They used stronger language in their recommendations towards the IBC—the sending institution—than they did for the receiving institution. Their expectations of the IBC surpassed their expectations of the US main campus, which takes us back to the ways they use the IBC, namely as a pathway that leads to the US main campus and thus the attainment of their educational goals. An additional explanation for this discrepancy relates to their lack of experience at the US main campus. At most, the participants of the study had spent three

semesters on the new campus when the survey was circulated, and some of them had only completed one semester on the new campus. Therefore, they were still newcomers and possibly still unfamiliar with all the support systems that the US main campus provides.

The IBC transfer students requested timely, organized, and practical information, while also demanding that the IBC show concern for their wellbeing. Their recommendations take us back to the emotional responses to their transition experience, which included excitement and a sense of accomplishment, but also anxiety and fear. Despite their preparation strategies, the transfer process generated stress, and they desired additional support from the IBC. Similarly, they were very critical of the academic advising and guidance they received at the IBC and recommended improvement and strengthening of those services. Such concerns can never be underestimated, and they point to deficiencies not only for the transfer process but for the operation of the IBC and its academic quality in general; it is clear that the quality of the academic advising and guidance offered at the Latin American IBC needs to be evaluated.

The responsibility that the IBC transfer students place on the IBC in their transfer process points to the close connection they develop with the sending institution. They see the IBC as responsible for preparing them holistically, not merely through administrative procedure. As their home campus, the IBC needs to foresee the challenges ahead and prepare them accordingly. In the international or transfer student transition literature reviewed for this study, there are no references whatsoever to these students turning back to their sending institutions (high schools or universities in their home countries or community colleges) to demand more information or preparation. This indicates that even after their departure, the IBC transfer students identify themselves as belonging to that unique group.

How might these suggestions be used or considered in the types of institutional supports provided? There has to be an acknowledgement that the transfer moment is loaded with expectation and importance; it matters to them on multiple levels. The IBC must recognize its higher level of responsibility in ensuring that its students will be able to tackle the most challenging aspects of the transfer process. Although the focus group participants insisted that following instructions is crucial to managing the transfer process, the IBC needs to recognize that providing instructions and information is not enough. Apart from offering different resources, it must also make sure those resources address the plethora of concerns that the IBC students face, from concerns about traveling to academic advising to settling in.

Advice to future IBC transfer students. Preparation, organization, and active involvement seem to be the major advice points for future IBC transfer students, but suggestions also include adopting mind sets or attitudes to balance emotions and attitudes, see the positive side, relax and enjoy, and take advantage of all opportunities. This conforms with the literature on the coping strategies that international students, for instance, employ in order to cope with the challenges associated with their educational experience abroad. Mesidor & Sly (2016) indicate that the higher a student scores in emotional intelligence, the more capable he or she will be "to recognize, evaluate, manage one's emotions, and interact with others" (p. 265).

The IBC transfer students also add to these recommendations by stressing the importance of following procedures and instructions. Despite their critical stance and their confirmation that the transition has been difficult, by the time of the study, they had reached a point at which they are positive, optimistic, and satisfied with their decision to transfer to the US main campus. They point to the need to trust the process and provide the reassurance that "it's worth it" (Suzy, 2018). They stress the importance of following instructions at every stage of the transfer process

and their academic experience at the new campus. Tom, one of the focus group participants, highlighted that in every step of the way, from the student visa paperwork to the class organization on the new campus, there will be a set of instructions as a safety net: "So, when you get lost, like when you don't know what to do, read the syllabus, read the instructions on the embassy website, [and] read the instructions [you receive] about the transfer process."

The message that emanates from both the survey and focus group is that the transition it tough and stressful, but with the right attitude and preparation, students can overcome the obstacles and enjoy the ride. Their tips and advice can lead practitioners in the Latin American IBC and US main campus to learn what coping strategies need to be activated and promoted in order to better support students undergoing this significant transition.

Recommendations

This study has confirmed that regardless of how standardized an educational process becomes, there may always be layers that are neglected or disregarded. The transfer process from the Latin American IBC to its US main campus is a routine process that takes place every semester, carrying forward a group of IBC students who aim to complete their undergraduate degrees and reap the benefits of an international experience for their personal and academic growth. Despite the standardization of this process, the experience of these students is far more complex and multi-layered than any administrative process can capture.

The main recommendation for program improvement stems from this realization: the effort to make the process more efficient on the administrative level may neglect detection of what transferring to the US main campus means to the students on a very personal level. Therefore, all of those involved should be made aware of the nuances of that experience and the complexity of its perception.

The major challenges that students named—academic demands and day-to-day challenges—can guide the course of action for improving the preparation strategies at the Latin American IBC and the reception strategies at the US main campus.

Recommendations for the Latin American IBC personnel and academic advisors

Strengthening academic advising and services. Both ends of the transition need to become more connected in order to ensure that the major aspects of these students' lives will not be unnecessarily disturbed. The communication and connection between the Latin American IBC and its institutional center must be kept strong and active. Students perceived that their IBC advisors were not fully knowledgeable about the academic requirements of various majors, so an important resource for student progress is under-utilized. Therefore, the IBC advisors should become as familiar as possible with the academic requirements that the IBC students will need to fulfill.

The student demographics (Appendix G) revealed that the majority of students transferring from the Latin American IBC to the US main campus tend to choose majors within four major academic colleges: Arts and Sciences, Business, Engineering, and Social Sciences. Although these colleges encompass a great number of different programs, establishing connections with the academic advisors in those colleges would help align resources and streamline academic advising. Visits to the main campus can be enabled to keep the IBC staff updated on the services and academic policies and advising manuals can be introduced to guide students about the academic maps of their programs. In this way, the transfer process can become smoother on the academic side.

Using the Latin American IBC social network. If the most important coping mechanism and the most important aspect of the IBC group is precisely their identity and

cohesion as an IBC group, here lies one of the tools that the university can use to prepare the IBC transfers. For example, the IBC can use an ambassador system with IBC transfers that are already on the main campus to prepare or receive the new group. The focus group session revealed the deep-seated connection that the IBC students carry with them once they transfer. This is a valuable component and a tool that can be used to address issues and challenges that are bound to affect them on a collective level. Making the group dynamic explicit helps formalize it and make resorting to it a standard procedure.

A Latin American IBC student group can be created at the main campus and seek approval as a student organization with a formal structure and leadership. Such a process would empower the IBC student group and give it the tools and the resources to support newcomers. Similarly, members of the group could be invited during their summer semesters to come to the Latin American IBC for formal presentations or Q&A sessions with prospective transfers.

Adding practical information in the preparation strategies. When asked about the tools they used to prepare for the transition, IBC students resorted to their peers and friends or did their own research through the web. Once more, the resources the Latin American IBC provides are under-utilized or mistrusted. The Latin American IBC could play a more active role in their preparation and reach far beyond instructions for the transfer process. The IBC personnel should consider providing additional tips and information about the different layers of their life on the new campus. For instance, students expressed a concern about their housing options and practical day-to-day tasks. The Latin American IBC could establish a series of workshops or information sessions to address these aspects, offer a directory of housing options, and connect them to the on-campus housing office. To connect with the previous recommendation, these workshops could be either led by or involve former IBC transfers who could share their

experience and offer useful advice. Once more, the connection that the IBC students maintain can be the mechanism that enables the transferring of important information from one transfer cohort to another.

Addressing the anticipated challenges of the transition. Information sessions in a group setting can address those anticipated changes that signify growth but also carry the burden of handling a great deal at once. This connects with the significance of emotional intelligence and the power that increased emotional intelligence has to enable a smoother transition and adjustment. If the Latin American IBC employs a counselor or visiting psychologist, this specialist can run a session on the anticipated challenges and the added roles or responsibilities that the transfer process entails. It may not be the explicit responsibility of the institution to assume such a role, but it will fulfill the IBC transfer students' expectation that their sending institution is also caring and supportive.

Maintaining contact with the transfer students. The IBC transfer students' responses have revealed that they never lose sight of the campus from which they have transferred, namely the IBC. They used systematic references to the Latin American IBC context and its social/cultural context as a way to assert their identity and maintain their sense of belonging. If the IBC administration and leadership maintain the connection and communication with the Latin American IBC transfers, it can help build a lasting network of alumni. Similarly, by maintaining contact with the Latin American IBC students who have transferred, the IBC can build a continuous evaluation and improvement plan for its preparation strategies. Such contact can be enabled by keeping the IBC transfer students in the student listservs that the IBC maintains and by reaching out to them periodically in order to inquire about their progress and wellbeing.

Recommendations for the US main campus

Montoto (2013) has highlighted that the close oversight by the US main campus of its Latin American IBC has guaranteed the quality of its educational program and reassured its students of the prestige associated with its academic programs. However, as this study has revealed, this oversight may be more concerned with the alignment of academic policies and requirements and less with connecting the two educational contexts through student services and support mechanisms. For instance, the participants highlighted academic advising at the US main campus as a major support tool, while they criticized the academic advising at the Latin American IBC as deficient. As the parent institution that shares its prestige and accreditation with the Latin American IBC, the US main campus has a responsibility to maintain a continuous connection with its satellite campus abroad and ensure that its transfer receptive strategies are inclusive enough to take the IBC transfers into consideration.

Strengthening the academic advising services. Students highlighted that the academic advising they received at the US main campus was far superior than that received at the Latin American IBC. Although this response may be somewhat unfair, since the academic advisors at the main campus specialize in a given academic area, there are still strategies that the US main campus can follow in order to align advising practices. For instance, the advising listserv that operates at the main campus can also incorporate the IBC advisors. In this way, updates on academic requirements and policies can be circulated to both campuses simultaneously.

Additionally, the academic advisors in the major colleges chosen by the Latin American IBC transfers could reach out to the IBC advisors in preparation for the arrival of the students and receive more detailed information about their majors and academic status. This could ensure that the important information that determines these students' progress will be prompt and

reliable. Finally, webinars or online sessions can be organized for the benefit of the Latin American IBC advisors, and ultimately the benefit of the IBC students.

Strengthening its receptive strategies. A "transfer receptive" academic environment or "ecosystem" (Stempel, 2013) is one that actively seeks to incorporate transfer students into the university community and helps them thrive. A strong transfer receptive campus recognizes the needs of a diverse student population and implements specific strategies to address those needs in unique ways. The US main campus has only recently initiated a more active campaign of formally strengthening its transfer student support services with the implementation of transfer roundtables, the transfer seminar, or transfer student study groups and tutoring. These efforts reveal a genuine interest in improving the quality of experience that transfer students receive upon arrival to the new campus, and they mostly target the underlying assumption that transfer students face more difficulties adjusting to and coping with the new academic context. However, once more, those efforts fail to address the specific needs or challenges of the IBC transfers by an almost explicit emphasis on the community college transfers. The US main campus could use the platform of the already implemented transfer strategies to explicitly address the IBC transfer population.

Tailored workshops and campus rituals. The US main campus already organizes tutoring or support workshops for transfer students. However, the IBC transfers do not necessarily identify with this broad category and may become a neglected group. Therefore, the US main campus could organize workshops and seminars specially tailored to the Latin American IBC transfers, either through its Student Affairs Office or through the International Student Center. These workshops could become initiation rituals for transfer students—and Latin American IBC transfers in particular—so that they feel accounted and cared for. Schreiner et al.

(2012) emphasize that building a sense of community is crucial for the involvement of transfer students, but that transfer students "are not afforded the same attention or rituals to mark their joining the institution." They suggest that "one way for institutions to enhance transfer students' sense of belonging is through transfer orientations, ceremonies or welcome receptions that are just for transfers, and special attention from university leaders" (p. 155). Such a recommendation can be applied to the case of the Latin American IBC transfers. While they are currently included in the general upper-division transfer orientation, there could be a more specific and tailored orientation to address their specific needs and bring them closer to the university community. As students that initiated their university journey within the US main campus university system, they are already familiar with most of the academic policies and program structure, so their orientation could provide only those parts that complete their knowledge of the new academic context.

Peer support and ambassador programs. The study has revealed that the IBC transfers are willing to reach out to others for support and guidance, but they have also admitted that in a big campus of over 40,000 students it is easy to be lost in the crowd and feel marginalized. A peer-mentorship or ambassador program can link US main campus students with Latin American IBC transfer students in order to build their expectations and knowledge of the new academic environment and the new cultural context. In this manner, main campus students will have the opportunity for volunteer activities. Similarly, they will be afforded the possibility to learn valuable communication skills while inducting IBC transfers into the new campus culture. On the other hand, the IBC transfer will feel both welcomed and involved in the new educational environment and establish valuable friendships and support resources. Such practice will

strengthen “cross-cultural learning” (Arthur, 2017, p. 891) across student populations in the big campus.

A transfer seminar for IBC students. The transfer seminar, very often a 1-credit elective course, has been adopted by several universities in the US, in an effort to support their transfer students and improve those students’ persistence and success (Grites & Farina, 2012). The US main campus has adopted this initiative since 2018, it was only in the Spring of 2019 that some of the IBC transfers were encouraged to enroll. This existing transfer support tool could be tailored to the IBC transfer needs and offer a formal introduction to the new academic context. The transfer seminar provides the comfort zone (Grites & Farina, 2012) that transfer students in general may require as part of their adjustment stage, and for the IBC transfers it can be a way of recreating the small campus atmosphere that had surrounded them for two years. Once more, it can provide tailored information for IBC transfers while also allowing the university to learn more about this unique student population. The IBC transfer seminar can also be a way to encourage a deeper familiarity with the different formal and informal support systems in the US main campus such as the counselling center, student organizations, and other support groups.

Appointing a formal IBC liaison or ombudsman in the US main campus. It is not uncommon for the IBC leadership to act as advocates for the IBC transfers when they face difficulties or attempt to navigate the complex academic and administrative network of the main campus. It is also not uncommon for the IBC transfers to reach back to the IBC advisors or leadership in search for answers for some of their problems at the main campus, simply because they know who to reach and feel comfortable contacting them. A formal IBC liaison or ombudsman at the main campus could provide IBC transfers with easier access to information and support, while also maintaining the close connection between the two academic contexts.

Schlossberg (2011) indicated that her model "can take the mystery—if not the misery out of change" (p. 161), but the application of these strategies by the two academic contexts can effectively address the institutional neglect of this group of students and possibly also ease their misery. Ultimately, it can also become a strengthening mechanism between the two campuses.

Dissemination plan

Action research, the research tradition that guided this inquiry, invites us to focus on "actionable knowledge" and not merely on "the processes that turn knowledge into action" (Zhang et al., 2015, p. 152). It invites us to develop a rigorous scholarly process but be prepared to share the results and the knowledge generated in order to lead change and improvement. An exploration of the Latin American IBC students' transition experience when they transfer to the US main campus is not a mere intellectual exercise; it fits the definition of action research precisely because it connects scholarly rigor with the capacity to bring about change. Sagor (2001) provided three criteria in order to for an investigation to qualify as action research: "[I]t pertains to one's professional action, focuses on an aspect of one's work where one has a significant degree of control, and focuses on a particular area where (with enough information) improvement can be expected to occur" (p. 7).

This definition of action research connects with my position within the context where this research project was conducted. The Latin American IBC of this study has been my place of work for 25 years, and I have become closely involved with the transfer process that leads these students from the bosom of the Latin American IBC to the wider educational context of the US main campus. It is easy to be locked into the established practices through which we conduct our jobs, but we are also in a unique position to bring change that is supported by research. Action research brings greater reflexivity and invites those involved to solve a problem or address a situation (Merriam et al., 2016). My administrative role at the Latin American IBC

placed me at the very center of this discussion. On the one hand, I was glad to see that my involvement and position of authority did not inhibit the participants from voicing some of their criticisms of the Latin American IBC or the US main campus; on the other, such criticism triggered a set of ideas that I have the power to implement or at the very least, propose and work towards implementing. Every step of this project invited me to reflect on the findings and connect them to my professional practice. The source of my subjectivity, therefore, is also the source of my impetus to bring about change and improvement.

As McNiff & Whitehead (2001) emphasize, even if action research is conducted by an individual, "it is always undertaken in the company of others who might be influenced by the research" (n. p.). The transfer process from the Latin American IBC to the US main campus is supported by two educational organizations and their respective teams, and any process of change and improvement will require a dissemination process that involves sharing the knowledge; after all, action research "is a collaborative effort" (McNiff & Whitehead, 2001, n. p.).

Dissemination plan at the IBC

My position at the Latin American IBC as Vice Rector for Academics allows me to a) disseminate the results of this study on the local level, b) evaluate the capacity of the IBC to respond to the implications of the study, c) gather resources in order to respond to the needs, and d) propose strategies that can best prepare the students before the transfer.

There are two important avenues for disseminating the results of this study at the IBC: the Faculty Development Committee and the Academic Affairs unit. Each of them provides several opportunities for formal and informal presentations and discussions.

The Faculty Development Committee approves funding for faculty projects and advancement, and in turn requires a report on the goals that were achieved. My project was partially funded by the Latin American IBC, which carries with it the responsibility to report on the project and its findings. The Faculty Development Committee opens the venue to other faculty and even students, especially if the project has wide relevance for the campus community. This is a project that clearly carries relevance to all the members of the Latin American IBC community, and I expect my presentation will gather a significant number of participants and generate rich discussion. The Latin American IBC also organizes a Lunch and Learn series with guest speakers both from the academic community and the wider context, another excellent venue to share the results of this study.

The Academic Affairs unit is a smaller circle of participants, comprised of those directly involved with the recruitment of Latin American IBC students and their preparation for the transfer to the US main campus, both admissions and academic advising personnel as well as external affairs personnel. Dissemination of the results at this level will open the discussion to improvement actions and implementation strategies. This is also the unit that can address one of the major points of dissatisfaction expressed by the Latin American IBC transfer students: the need for a higher level of academic advising at the IBC.

Dissemination plan at the US main campus

My familiarity with the process and the stakeholders at the US main campus allow me to find avenues of collaboration on that end. Professional and student networks can provide venues for presenting the results and inviting reactions or suggestions.

The US main campus has already undertaken a significant project to improve its transfer reception strategies in order to ensure the success of transfer students. This research project,

which focuses on a sub-group that transfers to the US main campus, has the capacity to contribute to this effort and provide additional feedback on how the Latin American IBC students perceive their transition to the main campus. Their similarities with transfer students from community colleges and international students make their experience relevant for improvements in the main campus' reception strategies. The two major resources that the Latin American IBC students indicated using are also two of the offices that the IBC collaborates very closely with during the preparation for the transfer process: International Student Center and New Student Orientation. My established rapport with both bodies of support can open the channel of communication for continuing improvement of the Latin American IBC students' transition experience based on this research project.

Finally, it has come to my attention that the Latin American IBC students at the US main campus already have an approved student organization that aims to support the IBC transfers with activities, networking, and coaching. Through my established connection with this group of students, I could attain their permission to present the project and its results, and in this way not only strengthen the bridge that connects the two campuses but also open the dialogue for ongoing support and improvement of the transfer strategies.

Limitations

The limitations of this study stem primarily from two aspects: 1) the level of subjectivity that my position within the educational context under study implies, and 2) the unique context of the Latin American IBC. These two aspects require further consideration.

My position within the IBC educational context was addressed early in this inquiry both as a source of potential bias as well as a source of knowledge and familiarity. As an administrator and key person in the academic affairs unit of the IBC, I am directly involved with

the academic program at the Latin American IBC, the structure of the advising services, and the transfer process itself. Inevitably, I could become sensitive to some of the responses generated during this inquiry, and I must admit I did on several occasions. Similarly, the level of spontaneity or naturalness with which the participants responded could be questioned. As Patton (2015) reminds us, the presence of the researcher in a context is a form of intrusion or interruption of naturalistic inquiry (p. 49). I tried to address the limitations of my position in the context through systematic reference to relevant literature to support the anticipated findings; regular journal writing, especially after data collection and throughout data analysis, to help me address my emotional reactions and re-focus on the importance of the inquiry. Similarly, I applied rigorous methods of data display to allow the findings to become prominent, connected them to the relevant literature, and relied on the complementarity between the quantitative and qualitative stages.

At the same time, it is important to emphasize that my position at the Latin American IBC gave me a privileged position in order to understand the cultural references that the participants provided, and my familiarity with the context helped me focus on their responses instead of exploring the context first. The experience with the focus group revealed that my presence did not inhibit them, probably because I was no longer an authority on the US main campus and they therefore no longer depended on my area of influence.

The second aspect of the study that implies a limitation has to do with the uniqueness of the Latin American IBC. As the study established, the Latin American IBC may resemble the typical IBCs that operate around the world, but it stands out for its lengthy history and the level of autonomy it exercises. The Latin American IBC transfers may resemble international students who travel overseas to attain a degree, and they may also resemble transfer students from

community colleges to universities; however, neither the former nor the latter group defines them completely. Therefore, the nature of the context and the participants limit the generalizability of the study to other populations of students and IBCs.

Such a limitation is often the case with action research, which implies a response to a specific context and a specific problem. Without forfeiting scholarly rigor, action research connects to practice and invites researchers to use their knowledge and experience in order to introduce change (Zambo, 2011; Brydon-Miller et al. 2003). This inquiry may add to the existing knowledge of how international and transfer students perceive the transition as they move from one educational context to another, but its primary purpose is to respond to the institutional neglect of the Latin American IBC transfers and reveal their unique challenges.

Future Research

Even though the study addressed all aspects of the IBC transfers students' transition experience when they transferred from the Latin American IBC to the US main campus, the findings triggered additional questions that future research can study and address. One of these possibilities involves the Latin American IBC transfers students after adaptation and the other with the wider phenomenon of IBCs as educational ventures.

Persistence and success

The students who participated in this study seemed to have reached "adaptation," which, in Schlossberg's (1981) terms, implies a balance between the deficits and the resources that the individual experiences. It denotes "the integration of the transition into [the individual's] life" (p. 7). Does that adaptation translate into persistence and success? In other words, do the Latin American BC transfer students complete their undergraduate studies in a timely manner? Such an exploration would shed light on both the academic preparation offered by the Latin American

IBC as well as the US main campus' capacity to integrate them to the larger student group that initiated their studies as freshman at the US main campus.

A longitudinal study of a Latin American IBC cohort could trace their progress upon transfer in order to determine their level of persistence and success.

The future of IBCs

Even though the Latin American IBC of this study emerges as a unique case, it can still be understood within the existing literature on such educational endeavors. For that reason, it can be a case study of an IBC that has persisted for over 60 years and has managed to undergo changes that have facilitated its prevalence. A closer exploration of current IBC development around the world can be used as a framework of the expectations placed on these institutions and reveal their contribution to the diversification and of higher education and internationalization of higher education. Such information could enrich the discussion of the mission of the Latin American IBC in question as well as amplify the types of IBCs and their strategic planning.

Conclusion

Student transitions on the postsecondary level have received a lot of attention in educational research. But the increasing student mobility, both domestic and international, calls for a continuous effort to explore and respond to the diversity of student transitions. Not all of the studies that explore student transitions will have widespread applicability, but if they manage to bring about change and support for a considerable group of students, then they are worth the time and effort.

The study of the transition experience of students transferring from a Latin American IBC to its US main campus is one of those studies that has the potential to bring about change and improvement in an educational context. The Latin American IBC of this study has persisted

for over 60 years, and in the span of so many years it has allowed hundreds of students to complete their undergraduate degrees through a combination of two years in the international location and two years in the US main campus location. The transfer process from one location to another is not simply an administrative procedure; it is a life-changing experience for the students that undertake the challenge of the transition.

The study of this multi-layered transition was made possible through a rigorous research methodology combining survey with a focus group, in order to reach an in-depth understanding of the students' experience. Schlossberg's (1981) Transition Theory provided a theoretical framework that enabled the close study and helped unpack the many aspects of the transition that the IBC students experienced during their transfer from their Latin American Campus to the US main campus.

The findings that were generated have the potential to guide action and improvements in both educational locations: the Latin American IBC and its institutional center, the US main campus. These two educational locations are connected by policy but disconnected due to physical distance and their distinct cultural contexts, but this study has indicated ways to bridge the distance and, in this way, make the students' transition smoother and easier.

APPENDIX A

USE OF HUMAN SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH APPROVAL MEMO

Office of the Vice President for Research
Human Subjects Committee
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2742
(850) 644-8673 · FAX (850) 644-4392

APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 08/21/2018

To: Alexandra Anyfanti [redacted]

Address: [redacted]

Dept.: EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS AND POLICY STUDIES

From: Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair

Re: Use of Human Subjects in Research
UNDERSTANDING THE TRANSITION EXPERIENCE OF STUDENTS TRANSFERRING FROM A LATIN AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL BRANCH CAMPUS TO ITS US MAIN CAMPUS

The application that you submitted to this office in regard to the use of human subjects in the proposal referenced above have been reviewed by the Secretary, the Chair, and two members of the Human Subjects Committee. Your project is determined to be Expedited per 45 CFR § 46.110(7) and has been approved by an expedited review process.

The Human Subjects Committee has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals, which may be required.

If you submitted a proposed consent form with your application, the approved stamped consent form is attached to this approval notice. Only the stamped version of the consent form may be used in recruiting research subjects.

If the project has not been completed by 08/19/2019 you must request a renewal of approval for continuation of the project. As a courtesy, a renewal notice will be sent to you prior to your expiration date; however, it is your responsibility as the Principal Investigator to timely request renewal of your approval from the Committee.

You are advised that any change in protocol for this project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee prior to implementation of the proposed change in the protocol. A protocol change/amendment form is required to be submitted for approval by the Committee. In addition, federal regulations require that the Principal Investigator promptly report, in writing any unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risks to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the chairman of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Human Research Protection. The Assurance Number is IRB00000446.

Cc: Linda Schrader <lschrader@fsu.edu>, Advisor
HSC No. 2018.25239

APPENDIX B

APPROVAL EMAIL TO ACCESS STUDENT DATABASE AT THE IBC

From: [redacted]
Sent: Friday, August 3, 2018 3:42 PM
To: Alexandra Anyfanti; [redacted]
Subject: RE: Request for permission to circulate survey through [redacted] email list for doctoral project

Dear Alexandra,

I have no objection on the use of the list of emails of students transferring to the [redacted] campus to circulate the survey to collect data required for completion of your dissertation, based on the conditions you outlined below.

I look forward to learning more about your findings.

Sincerely,

[redacted]

[redacted]
Rector
[redacted]
Phone: +507 317-0367
Email: [redacted]

From: Alexandra Anyfanti [mailto:aa16am@my.fsu.edu]
Sent: Friday, August 3, 2018 3:13 PM
To: [redacted]
Cc: Alexandra Anyfanti <aa16am@my.fsu.edu>
Subject: Request for permission to circulate survey through [redacted] email list for doctoral project

July 30th, 2018

[redacted], PhD.

Rector

[redacted] Campus

[redacted]

[redacted]

Dear Dr. [redacted]

The purpose of this email is to request permission for conducting a research project as part of my dissertation in practice titled "Understanding the transition experience of students transferring from a Latin American International Branch Campus to its US Main Campus." The dissertation contemplates a quantitative section that consists of a survey distributed to all students that transferred from the [redacted] campus to the Main Campus of [redacted] in [redacted] during the year 2017-2018 (comprising Fall 2017, Spring 2018, and Summer 2018).

Specifically, I request permission to use the list of emails of all students that completed the transfer process from the [redacted] Campus to the Main Campus in Fall 2017, Spring 2018, and Summer 2018. The survey will be circulated to the email list, it is voluntary and completely anonymous. I will be using the Qualtrics software through the [redacted] servers for collecting and managing the data. Participants can opt out of the survey at any moment without any penalty or consequences. Additionally, they will be given the option to volunteer for a focus group that will take place in the main campus in October. The results of the survey will be used as an aggregate and at no point will responses be tied to the students' identities. The purpose of the survey is to collect some of the most prominent topics related to the transition experience of the students as they change campus, and they will sever as the foundation for the focus group session.

My study hopes to shed light on the moment of transition as students change campus, and at the same time move to a new country and a new academic level. The results will help capture this multi-dimensional transition and in the long run can assist administrators on both ends of the transition to improve practices or implement policy. I would be happy to discuss the details of the research project and provide a copy of the survey.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Alexandra Anyfanti

EdD candidate, Educational Leadership and Policy

College of Education

FSU

[redacted]

APPENDIX C

EMAIL INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN IBC TRANSITION SURVEY

Dear students, hello.
My name is Alexandra Anyfanti and I am involved in a research study called "UNDERSTANDING THE TRANSITION EXPERIENCE OF STUDENTS THAT TRANSFERRED FROM A LATIN AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL BRANCH CAMPUS TO ITS US MAIN CAMPUS." You were selected because you were identified as students that transferred from your Latin American home campus to the US main campus of your university during the academic year Fall 2017 through Summer 2018.

I am asking you to take part in the study because I am trying to understand the complex transition experience of students that move from an international branch campus to the US main campus after completing their sophomore year. This experience has not been explored in its depth and so I hope to be able to open up the layers of that experience from the students´ perspective.

You will be asked to complete an anonymous online survey about this experience, titled the **"IBC Transition Survey".** Your participation in the survey is totally voluntary, and you can stop the survey at any time or skip any questions that you don´t feel comfortable answering. The survey will consist mostly of multiple choice items with a few open questions that you can complete in your own words. The total length of time is about 15 minutes. The results of the survey will remain confidential and there is no way to trace back answers to the individual responders.

There is no risk involved in your participation in this research, and although there are no direct benefits to you, your responses will be of great benefit in expanding our knowledge of what the transition experience from one campus to another means to the students. You will, in other words, be able to further knowledge and support research. There is no direct payment offered for your participation, but you will be given the option to have your email entered in a raffle for 3 $15 dollar gift vouchers from amazon.com.

Thank you so much for your attention to this request. The survey will be sent out to you in a subsequent email. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at [redacted]. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact the FSU IRB at 850-644-8633 or humansubjects@fsu.edu.

Best,
Alexandra Anyfanti
Doctoral Candidate, Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
FSU College of Education

APPENDIX D

EMAIL TO FOCUS GROUP VOLUNTEERS

Dear students, hello.
My name is Alexandra Anyfanti and I am involved in a research study called "UNDERSTANDING THE TRANSITION EXPERIENCE OF STUDENTS THAT TRANSFER FROM A LATIN AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL BRANCH CAMPUS TO ITS US MAIN CAMPUS." You receive this email because you volunteered to participate in a focus group after taking the IBC Transition survey online.

The focus group will take place in your current campus, in a place to be decided. It will include no more than 12 participants that went through the same experience of changing campuses during the academic year 2017-2018. The focus group session will last between 2-3 hours, and food and refreshments will be offered during that time. The session will be audio recorded. Your participation is voluntary, and you can leave at any time without any penalty to you. There is no risk involved in your participation in this research, and although there are no direct benefits to you, your responses will be of great benefit in expanding our knowledge of what the transition experience from one campus to another means to the students. You will, in other words, be able to further knowledge and support research. Your identities will be protected through the use of pseudonyms.

If you are still willing to participating in the focus group, please respond to this email including the following statement: **I agree to participate in a focus group as part of the research project "Understanding the Transition experience of students that transfer from a Latin American International Branch campus to its US main campus. My contact email for follow-up purpose is _____@_____"**

Thank you so much for your attention to this request. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact me at [redacted] If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact the FSU IRB at 850-644-8633 or humansubjects@fsu.edu.

Best,
Alexandra Anyfanti
Doctoral Candidate, Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
FSU College of Education

APPENDIX E

SURVEY CONSENT FORM

Dear study participant,

You are invited to be in a research study of the transition experience of the students that transferred from a Latin American International Branch Campus (IBC) to its US Main campus for the academic year Fall 2017 through Summer 2018. You were selected as a possible participant because you went through this transfer process at some point during the academic year in question. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Alexandra Anyfanti, a doctoral student in the program of Educational Leadership and Policy at Florida State University.

Background Information:
The purpose of this study is to understand how students perceive their transition experience when transferring from the Latin American International Branch Campus to its US main campus. This explores not only what students experienced while changing locations, but also how they used the different support systems and coping strategies.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following things: Take the **IBC Transition Survey**, which will take approximately 15 minutes to complete, and from which you can opt out at any moment. The results of the IBC Transitions Survey will be used for scholarly purposes only, and they will help define the most important topics to discuss in a subsequent focus group. At the end of the survey, you will be given the option to select if you would like to participate in a focus group in order to further discuss the transition experience.

Focus group:
If you volunteer to participate in the focus group you will be in a group of about 10-12 participants. The focus group session may last approximately 2 to 3 hours and it will be audio recorded.

Risks and benefits of being in the Study:
The study does not involve any known immediate or long-term risks to participants. The benefits involve active engagement in a deep and rich discussion about an important milestone in your academic life and the opportunity to further the understanding of such a complex experience.

Compensation:
To thank you for your time and feedback, if you volunteer for the focus group at the end of the survey you can be entered into a drawing to win one of three (3) $15-dollar gift certificates from amazon.com. Food and refreshments will be offered at the focus group location.

Confidentiality:
The records of this study will be kept private and confidential to the extent permitted by law, and

they will be used for scholarly purposes only. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify responses or comments to a subject. The results of the anonymous survey will be compiled in a spreadsheet without any link to your identity. The researcher will have no way to connect responses to the individuals, nor will she know which students completed the survey and which students have not. The results will be compiled through the Qualtrics survey software though the FSU servers, and will be stored in a safe location and server. Whenever necessary to make references to individual responses in the report, pseudonyms will be utilized to protect your identity. Your email will not be stored with your responses; it will only be used to notify winners of the gift certificate drawing. The transcribed focus group session will be kept in a safe storage location such as FSU´s One Drive with back-up copies in password-protected computer and server.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:
The researcher conducting this study is Alexandra Anyfanti. You may ask any question you have now. If you have a question later, you are encouraged to contact her at [redacted], or at [redacted] My advisor is Dr. Linda Schrader, and her contact information is 1205F Stone Building Florida State University, lschrader@fsu.edu, or by phone at (850) 644-8780. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you are encouraged to contact the FSU IRB at 2010 Levy Street, Research Building B, Suite 276, Tallahassee, FL 32306-2742, or 850-644-8633, or by email at humansubjects@fsu.edu
You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:
By selecting "I Agree," you acknowledge that you have read this information and agree to participate in the online survey.

○ I agree to participate in the IBC transition survey

○ I do not agree to participate in the IBC transition survey

APPENDIX F

FOCUS GROUP CONSENT FORM

Dear study participant,

You are invited to be in a research study of the transition experience of the students that transferred from a Latin American International Branch Campus to its US Main campus for the academic year Fall 2017 through Summer 2018. You were selected as a possible participant because you went through this transfer process at some point during the academic year in question. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Alexandra Anyfanti, a doctoral student in the program of Educational Leadership and Policy at Florida State University.

Background Information:
The purpose of this study is to understand how students perceive their transition experience when transferring from the Latin American International Branch Campus to its US main campus. This explores not only what students experienced while changing locations, but also how they used the different support systems and coping strategies.

Procedures
Focus group: The focus group session will last approximately 2 hours and it will be audio recorded.

Risks and benefits of being in the Study
The study does not involve any known immediate or long-term risks to participants. The benefits involve active engagement in a deep and rich discussion about an important milestone in your academic life and the opportunity to further the understanding of such a complex experience.

Compensation:
Food and refreshments will be offered at the focus group location.

Confidentiality:
The records of this study will be kept private and confidential to the extent permitted by law, and they will be used for scholarly purposes only. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify responses or comments to a subject. The transcribed focus group session will be kept in a safe storage location such as FSU´s One Drive with back-up copies in password-protected computer and server.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:
The researcher conducting this study is Alexandra Anyfanti. You may ask any question you have

now. If you have a question later, you are encouraged to contact her at [redacted] or at [redacted] My advisor is Dr. Linda Schrader, and her contact information is 1205F Stone Building Florida State University, lschrader@fsu.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you are encouraged to contact the FSU IRB at 2010 Levy Street, Research Building B, Suite 276, Tallahassee, FL 32306-2742, or 850-644-8633, or by email at humansubjects@fsu.edu

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

By selecting "Agree," you acknowledge that you have read this information and agree to participate in the focus group.

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

_____ _____

Signature Date

_____ _____

Signature of Investigator Date

APPENDIX G

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF STUDY GROUP & SURVEY RESPONDENTS GROUP

Table 2. Demographic information of the transfer group for 2017-2018 (N= 151)

Gender	***n***	***%***
Female	73	48.3%
Male	78	51.7%
Age	***n***	***%***
21	67	44.4%
20	47	31.1%
22	22	14.6%
19	6	4%
23	5	3.3%
24	3	2%
25	1	0.7%
18	0	0.0%
Race/Ethnicity	***n***	***%***
Hispanic or Latino/a	136	90%
White (non-Hispanic)	9	5.7%
Asian	6	4%
African American/Black	0	0.0%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0	0.0%
Non-resident alien	0	0.0%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0	0.0%
Two or more	0	0.0%
Academic Area	***n***	***%***
Business	46	30.5%
Arts and Sciences	39	25.8%
Engineering	32	21.2%
Social Sciences and Public Policy	15	9.9%
Communication	5	3.3%
Human Sciences	4	2.6%
Visual/Fine Arts	3	2%
Criminology	2	1.3%
Entrepreneurship	2	1.3%
Hospitality	2	1.3%
Education	1	0.7%
GPA	***n***	**%**
3.0-3.4	68	45%
3.5-4.0	59	39%
2.5-2.9	18	11.9%
2.0-2.4	6	4%

Table 3. Demographic information of the respondent group (N=38)

Gender	***n***	***%***
Female	21	58.3%
Male	17	41.6%
Age	***n***	***%***
20, 21 or 22	37	95.8%
19	1	4.2%
Race/Ethnicity	***n***	***%***
Hispanic or Latino/a	28	73.6%
Two or more	6	15.8%
Asian	2	5.2%
Academic Area	***n***	***%***
Engineering	12	31.5%
Arts and Sciences	10	26.3%
Business	8	21.0%
Social Sciences and Public Policy	3	7.9%
Communication	2	5.3%
Education	1	2.6%
Entrepreneurship	1	2.6%
Hospitality	1	2.6%
GPA	***n***	***%***
3.5-4.0	19	50%
3.0-3.4	16	42.1%
2.5-2.9	3	7.9%
2.0-2.4	0	0.00

APPENDIX H

IBC TRANSITION SURVEY

IBC Transition Survey

Survey Flow

Standard: Consent (1 Question)
Block: A. The Factors that determined your decision to transfer to the main campus (2 Questions)
Standard: B. Students' perception of the transfer process (12 Questions)
Standard: C. The changes in roles and relationships upon transferring (4 Questions)
Standard: D. The Institutional Support Systems you used when dealing with the transition (14 Questions)
Standard: E. The Coping Strategies you used for the transition process (11 Questions)
Standard: F. Overall Feedback (8 Questions)
Standard: G. Background Information (6 Questions)
Standard: H. End of survey and focus group. (1 Question)

Branch: New Branch
If
If Would you like to participate in a focus group session to discuss the major findings of this surv... Yes, I want to participate in the focus group (you will be redirected to a contact form) Is Selected

EndSurvey: Advanced

Start of Block: Consent

Dear study participant,
You are invited to be in a research study of the transition experience of the students that transferred from a Latin American International Branch Campus (IBC) to its US Main campus for the academic year Fall 2017 through Summer 2018. You were selected as a possible participant because you went through this transfer process at some point during the academic year in question. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.
This study is being conducted by Alexandra Anyfanti, a doctoral student in the program of Educational Leadership and Policy at Florida State University. **Background Information:**
The purpose of this study is to understand how students perceive their transition experience when transferring from the Latin American International Branch Campus to its US main campus. This explores not only what students experienced while changing locations, but also how they used the different support systems and coping strategies.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following things: Take the **IBC Transition Survey**, which will take approximately 15 minutes to complete, and from which you can opt out at any moment. The results of the IBC Transitions Survey will be used for scholarly purposes only, and they will help define the most important topics to discuss in a subsequent focus group. At the end of the survey, you will be given the option to select if you would like to participate in a focus group in order to further discuss the transition experience.

Focus group: If you volunteer to participate in the focus group you will be in a group of about 10-12 participants. The focus group session may last approximately 2 to 3 hours and it will be audio recorded.

Risks and benefits of being in the Study
The study does not involve any known immediate or long-term risks to participants. The benefits involve active engagement in a deep and rich discussion about an important milestone in your academic life and the opportunity to further the understanding of such a complex experience.

Compensation:
To thank you for your time and feedback, if you volunteer for the focus group at the end of the survey you can be entered into a drawing to win one of three (3) $15-dollar gift certificates from amazon.com. Food and refreshments will be offered at the focus group location.

Confidentiality:
The records of this study will be kept private and confidential to the extent permitted by law, and they will be used for scholarly purposes only. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify responses or comments to a subject. The results of the anonymous survey will be compiled in a spreadsheet without any link to your identity. The researcher will have no way to connect responses to the individuals, nor will she know which students completed the survey and which students have not. The results will be compiled through the Qualtrics survey software though the FSU servers, and will be stored in a safe location and server. Whenever necessary to make references to individual responses in the report, pseudonyms will be utilized to protect your identity. Your email will not be stored with your responses; it will only be used to notify winners of the gift certificate drawing. The transcribed focus group session will be kept in a safe storage location such as FSU´s One Drive with back-up copies in password-protected computer and server.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:
The researcher conducting this study is Alexandra Anyfanti. You may ask any question you have now. If you have a question later, you are encouraged to contact her at [redacted] or at [redacted] My advisor is Dr. Linda Schrader, and her contact information is 1205F Stone Building Florida State University, lschrader@fsu.edu, or by phone at (850) 644-8780

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you are encouraged to contact the FSU IRB at 2010 Levy Street, Research Building B, Suite 276, Tallahassee, FL 32306-2742, or 850-644-8633, or by email at humansubjects@fsu.edu

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:
By selecting "I Agree," you acknowledge that you have read this information and agree to participate in the online survey.

- ○ I agree to participate in the IBC transition survey
- ○ I do not agree to participate in the IBC transition survey

Skip To: End of Survey If Dear study participant, You are invited to be in a research study of the transition experience of... != I agree to participate in the IBC transition survey

End of Block: Consent

Start of Block: A. The Factors that determined your decision to transfer to the main campus

Q1 What are the **reasons that made you transfer** from the IBC in Latin America to the US main campus? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Familiarity with the main campus University system
- ☐ The reputation of the US main campus
- ☐ The academic program that I wanted to pursue
- ☐ Friends were also transferring
- ☐ It was recommended by friends or family
- ☐ The scholarship opportunity that offered in-state tuition
- ☐ Other (specify) _____

Q2 To what extent did you consider other schools for your transfer process? (Scale--1- Not at all, 2-Very

little, 3- Somewhat, 4- Quite a bit, and 5- A great deal)

- ○ Not at all
- ○ Very little
- ○ Somewhat
- ○ Quite a bit
- ○ A great deal

End of Block: A. The Factors that determined your decision to transfer to the main campus

---

Start of Block: B. Students' perception of the transfer process

Q3 To what extent were you **excited** about transferring to the US main campus? (Scale--1- Not at all, 2- Very little, 3- Somewhat, 4- Quite a bit, and 5- A great deal)

- ○ Not at all
- ○ Very little
- ○ Somewhat
- ○ Quite a bit
- ○ A great deal

Q4 To what extent did transferring to the US main campus give you a sense of achievement? (Scale--1-

Not at all, 2-Very little, 3- Somewhat, 4- Quite a bit, and 5- A great deal)

- ○ Not at all
- ○ Very little
- ○ Somewhat
- ○ Quite a bit
- ○ A great deal

Q5 To what extent did transferring to the US main campus give you a **sense of freedom**?

- ○ Not at all
- ○ Very little
- ○ Somewhat
- ○ Quite a bit
- ○ A great deal

Q6 To what extent did transferring to the main campus give you a **sense of fear**?

- ○ Not at all
- ○ Very little
- ○ Somewhat
- ○ Quite a bit
- ○ A great deal

Q7 To what extent did transferring to the main campus give you a **sense of anxiety**?

- ○ Not at all
- ○ Very little
- ○ Somewhat
- ○ Quite a bit
- ○ A great deal

Q8 To what extent did you experience **homesickness** upon transferring?

- ○ Not at all
- ○ Very little
- ○ Somewhat
- ○ Quite a bit
- ○ A great deal

Q9 To what extent did you **feel lost** upon your transfer to the main campus?

- ○ Not at all
- ○ Very little
- ○ Somewhat
- ○ Quite a bit
- ○ A great deal

Q10 To what extent did you feel **confused** upon your transfer to the main campus?

- ○ Not at all
- ○ Very little
- ○ Somewhat
- ○ Quite a bit
- ○ A great deal

Q11 How prepared did you feel about the transition to the main campus?

- ○ Not at all
- ○ Very little
- ○ Somewhat
- ○ Quite a bit
- ○ A great deal

Q12 To what extent did you experience **challenges** in your new academic environment?

- ○ Not at all
- ○ Very little
- ○ Somewhat
- ○ Quite a bit
- ○ A great deal

Q13 What **tools did you use to prepare** for the transition process from the IBC in Latin America to the

US main campus? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Internet
- ☐ Main campus website
- ☐ Blogs by other students
- ☐ The IBC advisors
- ☐ Friends that were already in the main campus
- ☐ Friends or peers that were in the same transfer group
- ☐ Other (specify _____)

Q14 What were the most **challenging aspects** of the transfer to the main campus? Select all that apply.

- ☐ The increased academic difficulty
- ☐ The increased responsibility
- ☐ The new language
- ☐ The new social context
- ☐ The distance from home and family
- ☐ Other (specify) _____

End of Block: B. Students' perception of the transfer process

Start of Block: C. The changes in roles and relationships upon transferring

Q15 To what extent did you find yourself assume **new roles** (family, social, personal) as part of the

transition process?

- ○ Not at all
- ○ Very little
- ○ Somewhat
- ○ Quite a bit
- ○ A great deal

Q16 To what extent did you find yourself **abandoning old roles** (family, social, personal) as part of the transition process?

- ○ Not at all
- ○ Very little
- ○ Somewhat
- ○ Quite a bit
- ○ A great deal

Q17 To what extent did you find that you were **assigned new roles** (family, social, personal) as part of the transition process?

- ○ Not at all
- ○ Very little
- ○ Somewhat
- ○ Quite a bit
- ○ A great deal

Q18 To what extent were your **relationships to others** affected by your transfer to the US main

campus?

- Not at all
- Very little
- Somewhat
- Quite a bit
- A great deal

End of Block: C. The changes in roles and relationships upon transferring

Start of Block: D. The Institutional Support Systems you used when dealing with the transition

Q19 To what extent did you seek support from **the advisors at the Latin American campus**?

- Not at all
- Very little
- Somewhat
- Quite a bit
- A great deal

Q20 To what extent did you seek support from your **Dean's office at the Latin American campus**?

- Not at all
- Very little
- Somewhat
- Quite a bit
- A great deal

Q21 To what extent did you seek support from **the Admissions office at the Latin American campus**?

- ○ Not at all
- ○ Very little
- ○ Somewhat
- ○ Quite a bit
- ○ A great deal

Q22 To what extent did you seek support from **the professors at the Latin American campus**?

- ○ Not at all
- ○ Very little
- ○ Somewhat
- ○ Quite a bit
- ○ A great deal

Q23 To what extent did you rely on **the US Main Campus orientation** when dealing with the transition process?

- ○ Not at all
- ○ Very little
- ○ Somewhat
- ○ Quite a bit
- ○ A great deal

Q24 To what extent did you rely on **the US Main Campus International Student Center** when dealing

with the transition process:?

- ○ Not at all
- ○ Very little
- ○ Somewhat
- ○ Quite a bit
- ○ A great deal

Q25 To what extent did you rely on **the US Main Campus Counseling Center** when dealing with the transition process?

- ○ Not at all
- ○ Very little
- ○ Somewhat
- ○ Quite a bit
- ○ A great deal

Q26 To what extent did you rely on **the US Main Campus Health Center** when dealing with the transition process:?

- ○ Not at all
- ○ Very little
- ○ Somewhat
- ○ Quite a bit
- ○ A great deal

Q27 To what extent did you rely on **your Dean's office at the US Main Campus** when dealing with the

transition process?

- ○ Not at all
- ○ Very little
- ○ Somewhat
- ○ Quite a bit
- ○ A great deal

Q28 To what extent did you rely on **the US Main Campus Academic Advisors** when dealing with the transition process?

- ○ Not at all
- ○ Very little
- ○ Somewhat
- ○ Quite a bit
- ○ A great deal

Q29 To what extent did you rely on **the US Main Campus Student Disability Resource Center** when dealing with the transition process?

- ○ Not at all
- ○ Very little
- ○ Somewhat
- ○ Quite a bit
- ○ A great deal

Q30 To what extent did you rely on **the US Main Campus Recreational and Athletic Center** when

dealing with the transition process?

- Not at all
- Very little
- Somewhat
- Quite a bit
- A great deal

Q31 To what extent did you rely on **the US Main Campus Student Organizations** when dealing with the transition process?

- Not at all
- Very little
- Somewhat
- Quite a bit
- A great deal

Q32 To what extent did you rely on **the US Main Campus Greek Life groups** when dealing with the transition process?

- Not at all
- Very little
- Somewhat
- Quite a bit
- A great deal

End of Block: D. The Institutional Support Systems you used when dealing with the transition

---

Start of Block: E. The Coping Strategies you used for the transition process

Q33 To what extent did you stop to think about how best to handle the transition process?

- Not at all
- Very little
- Somewhat
- Quite a bit
- A great deal

Q34 To what extent did you make a plan of action?

- Not at all
- Very little
- Somewhat
- Quite a bit
- A great deal

Q35 To what extent did you try to reach out to friends and family?

- Not at all
- Very little
- Somewhat
- Quite a bit
- A great deal

Q36 To what extent did you discuss your feelings with others?

- Not at all
- Very little
- Somewhat
- Quite a bit
- A great deal

Q37 To what extent did you pretend it was not happening?

- Not at all
- Very little
- Somewhat
- Quite a bit
- A great deal

Q38 To what extent did you get upset but kept it to yourself?

- Not at all
- Very little
- Somewhat
- Quite a bit
- A great deal

Q39 To what extent did you feel upset and let your emotions out?

- ○ Not at all
- ○ Very little
- ○ Somewhat
- ○ Quite a bit
- ○ A great deal

Q40 To what extent did you skip class?

- ○ Not at all
- ○ Very little
- ○ Somewhat
- ○ Quite a bit
- ○ A great deal

Q41 To what extent did you give up trying to cope?

- ○ Not at all
- ○ Very little
- ○ Somewhat
- ○ Quite a bit
- ○ A great deal

Q42 What other strategy did you use to cope with the transition process? (specify)

- ○ Click to write_____

Q43 What actions did you take to manage challenges associated with the transfer process? (Choose all

that apply)

- [ ] I tried to find more information from main campus resources
- [ ] I tried to find more information from the local program
- [ ] I asked my peers from the same transfer group
- [ ] I asked others not associated with either program
- [ ] Other (specify) _____

End of Block: E. The Coping Strategies you used for the transition process

Start of Block: F. Overall Feedback

Q44 What do you wish you had known before transferring?

- ○ Click to write _____

Q45 What situations were you prepared for upon transferring to the US main campus?

- ○ Click to write _____

Q46 What situations took you by surprise?

- ○ Click to write_____

Q47 What was particularly helpful?

- ○ Click to write_____

Q48 What additional steps should your home program take to help students in the transfer process?

- ○ Click to write_____

Q49 What additional resources should the main campus make available to the Latin American campus transfers?

- ○ Click to write _____

Q50 What else would you like us to know about the transition experience from your home program to the main campus?

- ○ Click to write _____

Q51 What would be your advice to peers from your Latin American Campus as they transfer to the US main campus?

- ○ Click to write _____

End of Block: F. Overall Feedback

Start of Block: G. Background Information

Q52 What is your **age**?

- ○ 18
- ○ 19
- ○ 20 or above

Q53 What is your **gender**?

- ○ Female
- ○ Male
- ○ Other

Q54 What is your **Racial/Ethnic Background**

- White (non-Hispanic)
- African American/Black
- American Indian/Alaskan Native
- Asian
- Hispanic or Latino/a
- Non-resident alien
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- Two or more
- No response

Q55 What is your **academic college**?

- Arts and Sciences
- Business
- Communication
- Criminology
- Engineering
- Entrepreneurship
- Hospitality
- Human Sciences
- Social Sciences and Public Policy
- Other (specify) _____

Q56 What is your **grade point average**?

- ○ 2.0-2.4
- ○ 2.5-2.9
- ○ 3.0-3.4
- ○ 3.5-4.0

Q57 How is your education **funded**?

- ○ Family funds
- ○ Personal funds
- ○ Financial Aid grants
- ○ Loans
- ○ Scholarship
- ○ Other (specify) _____

End of Block: G. Background Information

Start of Block: H. End of survey and focus group.

Q58 Would you like to participate in a focus group session to discuss the major findings of this survey in more detail? The focus group will take place in your current campus, in a place to be decided. It will include no more than 12 participants that went through the same experience of changing campuses during the academic year 2017-2018. The focus group session will last between 2-3 hours, and food and refreshments will be offered during that time. The session will be audio recorded. Your participation is voluntary, and you can leave at any time without any penalty to you. There is no risk involved in your participation in this research, and although there are no direct benefits to you, your responses will be of great benefit in expanding our knowledge of what the transition experience from one campus to another means to the students. You will, in other words, be able to further knowledge and support research. Your identities will be protected through the use of pseudonyms. The first 8 focus group participants will be entered in a raffle drawing for three $15-dollar vouchers from amazon.com.

- ○ Yes, I want to participate in the focus group (you will be redirected to a contact form)
- ○ No, I am not interested

End of Block: H. End of survey and focus group.

APPENDIX I

IBC TRANSITION SURVEY RESULTS

A. The Factors that determined your decision to transfer to the main campus

Table 1. The factors that determined the decision to transfer and extent to which other options were considered (N=51)

Q1. What are the reasons that made you transfer from the IBC in Latin American to the US main campus? (check all that apply)		
	n	**%**
The scholarship opportunity that offered in-state tuition	41	80%
The academic program that I wanted to pursue	33	64.7%
The reputation of the US main campus	22	43.1%
It was recommended by friends or family	10	19.6%
Friends were also transferring	7	13.7%
Familiarity with the main campus university system	3	5.89%
Other (specify)	OPT (1)	5.1%
Q2. To what extent did you consider other schools for your transfer process?		
Not at all	15	30%
Very little	12	24%
Somewhat	13	26%
Quite a bit	7	14%
A great deal	3	6%

B. Students perception of the transfer process

Table 1. The emotional reactions to the transfer process from the Latin American IBC to the US main campus (N=49)

Q3. To what extent were you excited about transferring to the US main campus?		
	n	**%**
A great deal	25	51%
Quite a bit	16	32.7
Somewhat	5	10.2%
Very little	2	4.1%
Not at all	1	2.0%
Q4. To what extent did transferring to the US main campus give you a sense of achievement?		
A great deal	21	42.8%
Quite a bit	14	28.5%
Somewhat	10	20.4%
Very little	4	8.1%
Not at all	0	0.00

Table 1 continued

	n	**%**
Q5. To what extent did transferring to the US main campus give you a sense of freedom?		
A great deal	22	44.9%
Quite a bit	16	32.6%
Somewhat	6	12.2%
Not at all	3	6.1%
Very little	2	4.1%
Q6. To what extent did transferring to the US main campus give you a sense of fear?		
Scale	***n***	**%**
Somewhat	16	32.7%
Quite a bit	11	22.4%
Very little	9	18.4%
A great deal	8	16.3
Not at all	5	10.2%
Q7. To what extent did transferring to the US main campus give you a sense of anxiety?		
Scale	***n***	**%**
Quite a bit	13	27.1%
A great deal	12	25%
Somewhat	9	18.8
Not at all	7	14.6%
Very little	7	14.6%
Q8. To what extent did you experience homesickness upon transferring?		
	n	**%**
Very little	14	28.6%
Somewhat	12	24.5%
Quite a bit	10	20.5%
A great deal	8	16.3
Not at all	5	10.2%
Q9. To what extent did you feel lost upon your transfer to the US main campus?		
	n	**%**
Very little	15	30.6%
Not at all	11	22.4%
Somewhat	9	18.4%
Quite a bit	9	18.4%
A great deal	5	10.2%
Q10. To what extent did you feel confused upon your transfer to the US main campus?		
	n	**%**
Very little	15	30.6%
Not at all	13	26.5%
Somewhat	10	20.4%
Quite a bit	6	12.2%
A great deal	5	10.2%
Q11. How prepared did you feel about the transition to the US main campus?		
	n	**%**

Somewhat	17	34.7%
Quite a bit	14	28.6%
Very little	11	22.4%
A great deal	5	10.2%
Not at all	2	4.1%
Q12. To what extent did you experience challenges in your new academic environment?		
	n	**%**
Somewhat	15	30.6%
Quite a bit	14	28.6%
Very little	11	22.4%
A great deal	8	16.3%
Not at all	1	2.0%

Table 2. Tools that students used to prepare for the transfer process (N=48)

Q13. What tools did you use to prepare for the transition process from the IBC in Latin America to the US main campus? (select all that apply)		
	n	**%**
Friends that were already in the main campus	39	81.3%
Internet	35	73%
Friends or peers that were in the same transfer group	34	70.8%
Main campus website	21	43.8%
The IBC advisors	6	12.5%
Blogs by other students	3	6.3%
Other (specify)	3	6.3%

Table 3. The most challenging aspects of the transfer to the US main campus (N=47)

Q14. What were the most challenging aspects of the transfer to the US main campus? (select all that apply)		
	n	**%**
The increased academic difficulty	29	61.7%
The increased responsibility	24	51%
The new social context	27	57.4%
The distance from home and family	24	51%
The new language	8	17%
Other (specify)		
No laundry and kitchen service	1	2.1%
Another culture and speaking English 24/7	1	2.1%
More students per class, hence less teacher-student interaction	1	2.1%

C. The changes in roles and relationships upon transferring

Table 1. Changes in roles and relationships (N=49)

Q15. To what extent did you find yourself assume new roles (family, social, personal) as part of the transition process?		
	n	**%**

Somewhat	15	30.6%
Quite a bit	12	24.5%
A great deal	10	20.4%
Not at all	6	12.2%
Very little	6	12.2%
Q16. To what extent did you find yourself abandoning old roles (family, social, personal) as part of the transition process?		
	n	**%**
Very little	12	24.5%
Somewhat	11	22.4
Quite a bit	10	20.4%
Not at all	9	18.4%
A great deal	7	14.3%
Q17. To what extent did you find that you were assigned new roles (family, social, personal) as part of the transition process?		
Scale	***n***	**%**
Somewhat	19	38.8%
Not at all	10	20.4%
Quite a bit	8	16.3%
Very little	7	14.3%
A great deal	5	10.2%
Q18. To what extent were your relationships to others affected by your transfer to the US main campus?		
	n	**%**
Quite a bit	16	32.7%
Very little	12	24.5%
Somewhat	12	24.5%
A great deal	7	14.3%
Not at all	2	4.1%

D. The Institutional Support Systems students used when dealing with the transition

Table 1. The Latin American IBC institutional support systems (N=47)

	n	**%**
The IBC advisors		
Not at all	22	46.8%
Very little	12	25.5%
Somewhat	8	17.0%
Quite a bit	4	8.5%
A great deal	1	2.1%
Dean´s office at IBC		
Not at all	19	40.4%
Very little	13	27.7%

Somewhat	5	10.6%
Quite a bit	4	8.5%
A great deal	6	12.8%
Admissions Office at IBC		
Not at all	15	31.9%
Very little	17	36.2%
Somewhat	11	23.4%
Quite a bit	3	6.4%
A great deal	1	2.1%
Professors at IBC		
Not at all	23	48.9%
Very little	9	19.1%
Somewhat	9	19.1%
Quite a bit	2	4.3%
A great deal	4	8.5%

Table 2. The US Main Campus institutional support systems (N=47)

	n	**%**
The US main campus Orientation		
Somewhat	15	31.9%
Very little	11	23.4%
Quite a bit	11	23.4%
A great deal	8	17.0%
Not at all	2	4.3%
The US main campus International Student Center		
Somewhat	15	31.9%
Not at all	10	21.2%
Very little	9	19.1%
Quite a bit	9	19.1
A great deal	4	8.5%
The US main campus Counseling Center		
Not at all	23	48.9%
Very little	9	19.4%
Somewhat	8	17.0%
Quite a bit	4	8.5%
A great deal	3	6.4%
The US main campus Health Center		
Not at all	18	38.2%
Very little	11	23.4%
Somewhat	6	12.8%
Quite a bit	4	8.5%
A great deal	8	17.0%
The US main campus Dean´s Office		
Not at all	27	57.4%

Very little	12	25.5%
Somewhat	3	6.4%
Quite a bit	3	6.4%
A great deal	1	2.1%
The US main campus Academic Advisors		
Somewhat	12	25.5%
A great deal	12	25.5%
Quite a bit	9	19.1%
Not at all	8	17.0%
Very little	6	12.8%
The US main campus Student Disability Resource Center		
Not at all	40	85.1%
Very little	5	10.6%
Somewhat	0	0.00
Quite a bit	2	4.3%
A great deal	0	0.00
The US main campus Recreational and Athletic Center		
Not at all	20	42.5%
Very little	8	17.0%
Somewhat	7	14.9%
Quite a bit	7	14.8%
A great deal	5	10.6%
The US main campus Student Organizations		
Not at all	19	40.4%
Somewhat	13	27.7%
Very little	8	17.1%
A great deal	4	8.5%
Quite a bit	3	6.4%
The US main campus Greek Life groups		
Not at all	44	93.6%
Very little	2	4.3%
Somewhat	0	0.00
Quite a bit	0	0.00
A great deal	1	2.1%

E. The Coping Strategies

Table 1. Coping Strategies (N=45)

		n	**%**
Q33.To what extent did you stop to think about how best to handle the transition process?			
Not at all		4	8.9%
Very little		7	15.6%
Somewhat		17	37.8%

Quite a bit		12	26.7%
A great deal		5	11.1%
Q34. To what extent did you make a plan of action?			
Not at all		2	4.4%
Very little		8	17.8%
Somewhat		19	42.2%
Quite a bit		6	13.3%
A great deal		10	22.2%
Q35. To what extent did you reach out to friends and family?			
Not at all		1	2.3%
Very little		3	6.7%
Somewhat		10	23.3%
Quite a bit		16	37.2%
A great deal		15	34.9%
Q36. To what extent did you discuss your feelings with others?			
Not at all		5	11.1%
Very little		6	13.3%
Somewhat		10	22.2%
Quite a bit		14	31.1%
A great deal		10	22.2
Q37. To what extent did you pretend it was not happening?			
Not at all		20	44.4%
Very little		7	15.6%
Somewhat		10	22.2%
Quite a bit		5	11.1%
A great deal		3	6.7%
Q38. To what extent did you get upset but kept it to yourself?			
Not at all		15	33.3%
Very little		13	28.9%
Somewhat		7	15.6%
Quite a bit		4	8.9%
A great deal		6	13.3%
Q39. To what extent did you get upset and let your emotions out?			
Not at all		12	26.7%
Very little		11	24.4%
Somewhat		11	24.4%
Quite a bit		6	13.3%
A great deal		5	11.1%
Q40. To what extent did you skip class?			
Not at all		19	42.2%
Very little		13	28.9%
Somewhat		9	20.0%
Quite a bit		3	6.7%
A great deal		1	2.2%
Q41. To what extent did you give up trying to cope?			

Not at all		27	60.0%
Very little		9	20.0%
Somewhat		4	8.9%
Quite a bit		3	6.7%
A great deal		2	4.4%

Table 2. Additional coping strategies students used

Q42. What other strategies did you use to cope with the transition process?
Keep working as if I never left home.
Focusing on my school work and creating relationships with professors here
Creating daily habits that were healthy and made me happy, acknowledging that I am building my adult self through those habits
watch anime
Time management was a key
Just don't over think the situation, and ask other people for help if you need.
my roommates were a really big help, specially because they are from the states.
Online guidance through the process
Read
Spending time with family
Smoking
Focus More on school work
Making my home as comfortable as possible so as to have a place to study and organize myself
Making friends
calling family and hanging out with friends
Ask studenst who already transfer, close relationship with advisor, study the bus maps and apps before the first day of class.
Go with the pack is safer than alone
Video games
talking with other people
Friends
Talking with friends outside the transfer process asking them some tips and advices
Nothing
Relied on calling my mother everyday to let out all my emotions
Make new friends
Having an open mind before the transition allowed me to enjoy more life in the US.
Motivation
Time organization
Trying to see as a more positive experience than negative

Table 2. Additional actions students took to cope (N=37)

Q43. What actions did you take to manage the challenges associated with the transfer process? (Choose all that apply)

	n	**%**
I asked my peers from the same transfer group	30	81%
I tried to find more information from main campus resources	29	78%
I tried to find more information from the local program	10	27%
I asked others not associated with either program	7	19%
Other (specify)	3	8.1%
My own experiences of having previously lived in the US helped me	1	2.7%

F. Overall Feedback: Open-Ended questions on the transition experience

Table 1. Feedback on prior knowledge

Q44 What do you wish you had known before transferring?
It won't be as bad as I imagine.
That we can also contact advisors in the main campus even if we are studying in FSU Panama
Everything
Greek life, Golden Girls tryouts, more options for off-campus housing
laundry
That you could have all of your classes in the cart, instead of waiting until the last moment as they say...
I wish the Latin american Campus prepared us with more time
More opinions on places to live
How to cool
Physical separation will negatively affect relationships with peers
The courses I had to take
Vaccination
Better academical advising
Housing options
The different resources used in the Main Campus
That I wouldn´t be in it alone
Some organizations and how to move around
ABOUT ACTUALLY TAKING BIO AND CHEM IN PANAMA because ADVISING DIDNT TELL ME IT WAS IMPORTANT
U.S. classroom culture
info about daily life
I wish i was better prepared
The availability of In-Campus Housing
It´s not as hard when you transfer as a junior
More about my major and opportunities here in the US
The fact that most business classes are 200+ students
How difficult the classes would start to be and the responsibility to come with them
Housing
Distance between campus and college of engineering

Table 2. Prior preparation

Q45 - What situations were you prepared for upon transferring to the US main campus?
Almost all
Buying stuff for the apartment, and academics.
Class
class, moving through campus, living on my own.
Classes
General requirements
Getting lost on campus
Going to different locations that might be on the other side of the campus
Higher academic level
Living alone
loneliness
Migratory things. Where to go when sick. Etc
More academic work (as I was going to actually start my major)
More studying
Moving in, attending classes, dealing with loneliness and being independent
New classes, new people, new home
Nothing
School
study
The language, social situations, and school
The loneliness and the fear of being in such a big campus
To enjoy this new phase of my life.

Table 3. Surprises

Q46. What situations took you by surprise?
Abundance of social activities
Class enrollments
Classmate indifference
cleaning

Cooking is hard, and Spring is too cold (-3 Celsius).
Death of my grandma
EVERYTHING. People are weird here
House chores
How big classes can be
How hard it is to be so far from the ones I love
N a
N/A
none
None, really
Not knowing the people in the classroom most of the time
Number of credits I needed to take in summer
The amount of people and how big and hard classes were
The bipolar weather
The change of the time perception and pace of the classes
The social difference
Vaccination

Table 4. Helpful aspects

Q47 - What was particularly helpful?
Academic advising, LatAm Campus advising
activities on campus
Advisors for classes in 2nd semester in Tallahassee.
American friends I've met here
Family and friends
Friendships do help you a long way, it’s always good to be surrounded with good company.
Having an advisor that knows everything about your major
Having friends around and being a call away from my parents.
internet

My friends
My friends and faculty members
My friends from Panama, the advisor
Nothing
Orientation
Orientation at the main campus
Other students are usually eager to help if they know you're an exchange student
Reaching out to people when I didn't know what to do
Support from friends
Talking with the actual advisors of my career.
The availability of the CGE advisors in order to help with the transfer the visa process
The vice rector opening classes for me
Video calls

Table 5. Required actions by IBC campus

Q48 - What additional steps should your home program take to help students in the transfer process?
Advise students on what they will see in main campus
Be quicker in the process
Be upfront and honest with timelines. Students would rush thinking about the documents, where being realistic about the time they'll delay. As well as the tuition costs fixing time.
Better academic advising
Better advising. Please.
better and more focused advising programs
Check up on their well being
Communicating to the students transferring, we were left out in the dark many times and had to figure out the processes by ourselves. Staff was not very helpful.
Doing a seminar right after the transfers have been confirmed will refresh and give students more information about the transfer
get together´s
GPA minimum flexibility

Help them contact the Majors' advisors and the requirements to enter the programs
Immunization
Make it more clear about deadlines and explain when steps aren't.
Maybe have a session to mentally prepare students regarding this transition and give them more information about main campus.
none
Provide a list of recommended out of campus lodging
Provide information about the transfer process as soon as possible. It felt like I waited so much to get information about what to do for the transfer process
Start earlier
Teach them how to add classes to the cart.
tell them where to live
They need to be more involved with the departments here. Know more about the requirements for each major so we can plan better our 2 years here

Table 6. Required resources by US main campus

Q49 - What additional resources should the main campus make available to the Latin American campus transfers?
Allow students to finish their career at panama
An explanation on how the bus system works. I was lost at first when I got here. Give tips for the day to day, where to go for good food, etc.
Better advising.
Easier transfers
Help with dealing with the scholarship. Students that transfer here are not able to continue unless they maintain their GPA and that can be very stressful and potentially life-altering.
N a
Na
none
Offer more classes
People who know about main campus process
Spanish speaking counselors
That the Visa usually takes time. So, no need to worry about it.
The possibility to make a housing contract even though it is outside of the time schedule (excluding the spring semester)

Tips
Tutoring, Clubs, better library resources, personalized advising, job workshops and internship search (a career center)
Vídeos explaining the process

Table 7. Additional feedback about the transition process

Q50 - What else would you like us to know about the transition experience from your home program to the main campus?
I adapted really fast. It's been an amazing experience so far. I'm loving it!
I often felt that i was going to a high school in Panama and so when i came here classes were bigger and tougher. There was much more people and activities. It is very overwhelming, and you wish you were a little more prepared. The quality of advising here is outstanding and advisors become really involved in helping and offering you real solutions when sometimes I felt like in Panama the advisors barely helped.
It is hard to move so far when all you wanted was stability
It was not smooth
Living housing
Makes you value the Tallahassee campus and feel an improvement.
More organization would make the process easier for us
Most of the anxiety of the transfer comes from the fact that the process might get delayed a bit and that might put the student's plan on hold or delay them
Na
nothing
Some of the advisors over there don’t know how to help you to enroll courses in a way that you can finish your degree according to the milestones established by each program. Also, we should be able to enroll classes before orientation, because since we get here as juniors, most of for the classes we need are already close. The home program could also have information about the opportunities here for each department, for example, science majors have the option to do a DIS which is highly recommended, it’s hard to get here as a junior and catch up with the people that has been here for a couple of years taking advantage of every opportunity here.
Some professors love Latin American students.
The Scholarship is a very good opportunity, but the handling is lackluster at best. I lost it due to personal issues and no one could help me get it back.
While it was hard, I was very motivated to actually start my major.

Table 8. Advice to future IBC transfers

Q51 - What would be your advice to peers from your Latin American Campus as they transfer to the US main campus?
Be close to your advisor, prepare what classes you want to take and be sure of what major you want to stick to. (be aware of your pre-requisites) Be prepared to feel overwhelmed and know that it is normal and it takes a couple of weeks to get a hang of things around campus, the people and the way classes are. Try to be involved as much as you can in the clubs, that is how you will meet people and have the best experiences! Work on time management, it is what will make you succeed in achieving everything.
check everything twice or as many times you have before you complete the process
Contact your US advisors to make sure you are aware or requirements
Do not panic during the process, it might be slow but it gets completed
Don't be afraid, don't stress. Just enjoy the ride and meet new people!
Don't listen to your friends because there is a lot of hearsay/untruths about the transfer process, American culture and the changes in your lifestyle. It will be difficult and rewarding, but it starts with you and your ability to fall seven times and get up eight. Join clubs, a fraternity, get new friends outside your bubble because your education also comes from others outside the classroom.
Don't lose contact with family and friends
Expect studying
Find the webpage of your career and minor, look for the advisor’s emails and ask questions at least a semester before you transfer.
Get more involved with the process and opportunities here, so we can transfer with a plan on mind
have a friend
It's completely different from the experience in Panama
Its going to be ok. It´s just 2 hard years.
It’s easier than it looks. Be diligent and responsible
It’s not as hard or scary as it seems
Join a club of your liking, and try to meet US citizens.
may the force be with you
Start the process by asking people who have done it
To get a bike
Try to get all your documents prepared ahead of time.
Try to obtain more information apart from what admissions say

APPENDIX J

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

1. Greetings and singing of consent forms—students received them in advance so as to have the opportunity to review and be prepared to sign
2. Explanation of the research and what it aims to discover. Confidentiality assurance on my end. Fictitious names will be used whenever there is a need to refer to specific examples.

QUESTIONS

1. Can you elaborate on the reasons that led you to transfer from the Latin American IBC to the US main campus?
2. Think of your transition from the Latin American Campus to the US Main Campus. What did you expect from this transition? And what did it mean to you?
3. How did that transition affect you? And how did you feel? (Follow up question: Did you feel some pressure? Is this pressure related to your situation?)
4. What demands or challenges did the transfer process place on you? (Follow up question:
5. How did you prepare for that transition while in the Latin American IBC?
6. Did you rely on any support systems in preparation for the transfer process and then afterwards? Formal or informal support systems.
7. Can you think of coping strategies, i.e. actions that were initiated from you? (Follow up questions: How often do you resort to physical representations of your culture or home? Any other examples of things you do or resort to in order to cope?)
8. What recommendations would you give to students that are about to take the leap that you took from the IBC campus to the US main campus?
9. What else would you like us to know about the transition experience from your home program to the main campus?
10. Would you like to add something else that we have not addressed related to the transition experience?

APPENDIX K

NOTETAKING TEMPLATE FOR FOCUS GROUP

Focus Question	**Key issues—ideas that stand out, briefly written**	**Interesting examples (use "…" to record the participants words or phrases)**
1. Can you elaborate on the reasons that led you to transfer from the Latin American IBC to the US main campus?		
2. Think of your transition from the Latin American Campus to the US Main Campus. What did you expect from this transition?		
3. What did that transition involve?		
Focus Question	**Key issues—ideas that stand out, briefly written**	**Interesting examples (use "…" to record the participants words or phrases)**
4. How did that transition affect you? And how did you feel?		
5. What demands did the transfer process place on you?		
6. How did you prepare for that transition while in the Latin American IBC?		
7. How effective was this preparation?		
Focus Question	**Key issues—ideas that stand out, briefly written**	**Interesting examples (use "…" to record the participants words or phrases)**
8. Once in the main campus, what institutional support systems did you use? What were		

your expectations from those support systems?		
9. How effective were those support systems? In what areas of your transition did they help?		
10. What were some of your reactions during the transition to the main campus? What did you do that was different from before?		
11. How did you cope with the transition? What was the impact of those actions?		
12. What suggestions or recommendations would you give to future transfers from the IBC campus to the US main campus?		
Focus Question	**Key issues—ideas that stand out, briefly written**	**Interesting examples (use "…" to record the participants words or phrases)**
13. What else would you like us to know about the transition experience from your home program to the main campus?		
14. Would you like to add something else that we have not addressed related to the transition experience?		

APPENDIX L

CODEBOOK

Name	Description
CHALL	Challenges they faced as part of the transition experience
ACADEMIC	Academic challenges
PERSONAL	Personal challenges or challenges experienced on the personal level
SOCIAL	Social challenges, or challenges related to the social context that changed as part of the transition process.
classroom culture	
COPE	Coping strategies; student-initiated strategies in order to handle the transition
COPE-ACTIONS	Actions students took to cope with the transition
COPE-THOUGHTS	Mind frame attitudes that were identifies as coping strategies
EMOTIONS	Emotional reactions related to the transition experience
Achievement	
Anxiety	
Confused	
Excitement	
Fear	
Freedom	
Homesickness	
Loss	
Others	
Idea	

Name	Description
PREP	Preparation techniques for the transition process
PREP-INSTITUTION	Tools to prepare that stem from the institution
PREP-OTHERS	Others are tools in the preparation process for the transition
PREP-PERSONAL	Personal preparation tools or ways in which students prepared for the transition
RECOMM-STUDENTS	Recommendations that the participants could give to other students that will go through the same process
RECOMM-STUDENTS-ATTITUDES	What attitudes are recommended as best practice in order to handle the transition
RECOMM-STUDENTS-DO	Recommendations of things students should do
RECOMM-UNI	Recommendations that the participants could give to the institutions for the improvement of the process
REL-CHANGE	Changes in their relationships as part of the transition process
ROLE-CHANGE	Changes in the roles as part of the transition process
ROLES-NEW	New roles that students assumed or developed as part of the transition process
ROLES-OLD	Roles that were abandonded or changed as part of the transition process
SUPPORT SYSTEMS	Formal or informal support structures or systems that they relied on during the transition
IBC SUPPORT	Support systems provided by the Latin American IBC
MAIN SUPPORT	Support systems enabled by the US main campus
SUPPORT OTHER	Support systems other than the institutional ones
TRANSFER REASONS	Reasons that enabled or led students to transfer
ACADEMIC	
PERSONAL	
SOCIAL	

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Alexandra Anyfanti works with a Latin American International Branch Campus of a large, research intensive university in the US. She has been affiliated with the IBC for 25 years in different capacities: adjunct instructor, full time English instructor, director of Student Affairs, and Vice Rector for Academic Affairs. She holds a Master of Arts degree in English literature and a doctorate in Educational Leadership and Administration. She is a native of Greece, but she has developed her professional career in Latin America with the IBC. Although she is mostly involved with the administration at the IBC, she still teaches classes in English composition and literature.

In her dissertation in practice she focuses on the transition experience of the students that transfer from the Latin American IBC to its US main campus. The transfer process is a standard administrative and academic connector between the two campuses, and it enables students that begin their undergraduate studies at the IBC to complete a degree at the US main campus. Although this is a process that takes place every semester, the transition experience of the students that complete the move to the US main campus had never been explored in its depth and complexity.