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SPONSORING LITERACY: BORDERLAND COMMUNITIES AND STUDENT IDENTITIES IN AN ACADEMIC SUPPORT PROGRAM

by

Aimee Cheree Mapes

An Abstract

Of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Doctor of
Philosophy degree in Teaching and Learning (Language, Literacy, and Culture)
in the Graduate College of
The University of Iowa

May 2009

Thesis Supervisors: Professor Anne DiPardo
Associate Professor Carolyn Colvin

ABSTRACT

While much has been written about the efficacy of academic support programs for increasing the retention rates of university students deemed academically underprepared, few studies examine how students engage the support classroom with an emphasis on expressions of literacy. This qualitative study responds to recent calls in student development literature for more studies into particular practices of university support programs. Focused on an exemplar support program at a larger, public university in the American Midwest, the study gathered perspectives about the support of academically underprepared students, teasing out the differences in administrators', instructors', and students' voices. Insights from the perspectives revealed that explicit metaphors of support in the programmatic discourse emphasized a skills model for academic development and a utopian model of student safe houses. In the classroom, however, five focal students suggested that literacy learning was far more complex. In particular, students' data revealed the generative potential of sociocultural literacy theory for conceptualizing praxis in an academic support program.

Examining how five focal students responded to the complex programmatic perspectives of support showed that student engagement was far more intricate than strong retention rates. First, a close analysis of five focal students revealed that learning academic discourses was more than appropriation of skills; it was ways of discerning which practices to use for different communities and learning to signal one's role in these communities. Second, students revealed that student community in the support program was a borderland of difference rather than a safe house. Finally, students illustrated that opportunities for creative improvisation in literacy performances was integral to student engagement.

The findings have insights for how to conceptualize pedagogy in support programs related to emergent sociocultural theories of Third Space. Specifically,

imagining the support classroom as borderland play suggests that the how of student engagement was often how the five focal students proactively co-constructed the learning.

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Graduate College
The University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

PH.D. THESIS

This is to certify that the Ph.D. thesis of

Aimee Cheree Mapes

has been approved by the Examining Committee
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Mary Trachsel

For Mom and Michael. Equal parts love and support.

You don’t need to know everything. There is no everything. The stories themselves make meaning.

Jeanette Winterson
Lighthousekeeping

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A good dissertation is a story of learning. This I know. First, I want to thank students who have taught me so much, those who were participants and those who were not—students of my past and future. Thanks especially to Ben, Zach, Tika, Mariah, and Danni, the spirited men and women of this study. I also must thank my colleagues, the collaborative instructors of the seminar, Shell and Lauren, whose teaching stories continue even today.

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While LLC was a central community for my scholarship, other departments were fundamental to my development. I owe a great deal to Kristine Fitch for instructing me on discourse analysis. She has a way of being forthright with students that I find refreshing. Kristine was spot on with her feedback on and guidance of discourse analysis.

Her ear for language, like a lighthouse, helped me find my way through analysis amid a sea of voices.

When I decided to pursue a Ph.D. after teaching fulltime, I knew that my work would be interdisciplinary with a deep connection to composition and rhetoric. At The University of Iowa, Mary Trachsel is a central figure of the department of Rhetoric. Providing a Writing Program Administration perspective, she was a natural reader, having examined histories of composition in her own scholarship. Mary's careful reading of the prospectus and early versions of chapters in the dissertation proved to be beneficial to the final conclusions. Similarly, Jim Elmborg added a thoughtful perspective as a former instructor of composition himself and a respected scholar in the field of Library Science. His feedback on chapters honed the analysis of classroom communities. I am grateful for the multiple perspectives, as they challenged my thinking and writing.

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ABSTRACT

While much has been written about the efficacy of academic support programs for increasing the retention rates of university students deemed academically underprepared, few studies examine how students engage the support classroom with an emphasis on expressions of literacy. This qualitative study responds to recent calls in student development literature for more studies into particular practices of university support programs. Focused on an exemplar support program at a larger, public university in the American Midwest, the study gathered perspectives about the support of academically underprepared students, teasing out the differences in administrators', instructors', and students' voices. Insights from the perspectives revealed that explicit metaphors of support in the programmatic discourse emphasized a skills model for academic development and a utopian model of student safe houses. In the classroom, however, five focal students suggested that literacy learning was far more complex. In particular, students' data revealed the generative potential of sociocultural literacy theory for conceptualizing praxis in an academic support program.

Examining how five focal students responded to the complex programmatic perspectives of support showed that student engagement was far more intricate than strong retention rates. First, a close analysis of five focal students revealed that learning academic discourses was more than appropriation of skills; it was ways of discerning which practices to use for different communities and learning to signal one's role in these communities. Second, students revealed that student community in the support program was a borderland of difference rather than a safe house. Finally, students illustrated that opportunities for creative improvisation in literacy performances was integral to student engagement.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

> I didn't know I could do this because I didn't know I could push myself this far and it kind of made me open my eyes to be like I have all this potential. That's what everybody's always telling me, but I could never see it within myself, so I guess Freshman Connection helped me just to say you have a lot to offer, but you need to realize it in yourself first.
>
> --Keneika, a former student

Statement of Problem

In the past decade, first-year support programs have emerged in higher education as the most prevalent practice of supporting students in their first year of college study. While features of first-year support programs vary across types of institutions and missions, empirical research has demonstrated the efficacy of these programs in increasing student retention (Engberg & Mayhew, 2007; Goodman & Pascarella, 2006; Higbee, 2005). In recent years, positive effects of these programs have been empirically verified over time through indices like rates of persistence, retention, student achievement, grade point average, graduation rates, degree attainment, and opportunities to go on establish successful outcomes of first-year support programs (Goodman & Pascarella, 2006; Higbee, 2005; Pascarella, Edison, Hagedorn, Nora, & Terenzini, 1996). In short, the research in higher education has endorsed, within limits, the benefits of first-year academic support programs in increasing student retention.

For large, public state universities this is an urgent intention as first-year programs are increasingly designed to foster the retention of students deemed by universities to be the most at-risk of academic failure (Barefoot, 2005; Dabari, 2006; Gablenick, MacGregor, Mathews, and Smith, 1990; Higbee, 2005). Empirical studies driving university policies on the support of underprepared first-year students have shown a strong correlation between learning communities, residential colleges, and

supplemental skill instruction, and increased student achievement, persistence, and retention (Barefoot, 2005; Dabari, 2006; Gablenick et al., 1990; Higbee, 2005; Pascarella et al., 1996). Supports involve integrating academic skill building with regular content coursework, supplemental instruction (SI), tutoring, learning centers and more access to academic advising. Such structure caters to developmental needs of first-year students, including interpersonal relationships, diversity, and intellectual skill (Barefoot, 2005). Positive outcomes include "increased persistence and retention," "more meaningful interaction with faculty," "more involvement in co-curricular activities," "more positive perceptions of themselves," and "higher grades" for students of all types (Goodman & Pascarella, 2006, p. 27), even students deemed at-risk for academic failure by their host university (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Pascarella et al., 1996).

Despite the demonstrated efficacy of first-year support programs, little research has been conducted beyond analysis of retention rates (Barefoot, 2000; Engberg & Mayhew, 2007). According to Barefoot (2000), most scholarship on first-year programs focuses solely on analysis of retention rates, offering a narrow glimpse of student participation in support programs. Similarly, Engberg and Mayhew (2007) argue that few studies consider the way that particular practices in first-year programs impact student outcomes. While research must continue to verify empirically the efficacy of first-year support programs, especially in supporting students deemed to be underrepresented on campuses, research also needs to respond to the unmet need of illustrating how students participate in first-year programs, what their voices share about the experience and what we can learn from listening to them. It is important to identify what works in the support of students deemed academically underprepared for university study, but it is equally valuable to address *how* students interact with and construct identities within university academic support programs. Measurable outcomes like rates of retention reveal only abstractly how students negotiate the designs of first-year programs. As an instructor working in a first-year support program for students deemed academically underprepared,

I'm provoked to explore the richness and complexity of student literate engagement in these programs because of sentiments like those expressed by my former student Keneika in the epigraph to this chapter. While Keneika asserted that our first-year support program for students deemed academically underprepared helped her, she also emphasized the need to realize potential in herself first. Like other students I've been able to teach in the last four years as part of a university first-year support program called Freshman Connection, Keneika inspired my efforts as a teacher and a researcher. I'm left asking how Keneika began to see herself as a student with a lot to offer. In what ways did reading and writing help with the self-expression she described as necessary for her transition in the first-year program and the larger university community?

As a teacher of students deemed academically underprepared at a number of institutions over ten years, I see that the measurable outcomes outlined above tell part of the story. Another important—though often overlooked—outcome of first-year support programs is the dynamic competencies students gain as they negotiate across cultural, linguistic, regional, and economic barriers in order to engage in the university setting. First, I understand the shared engagement in the support classroom as a repertoire of skills, competencies, and abilities students gain while flowing among a variety of social communities as is demanded in first-year programs designed to provide access to underrepresented students (Gutiérrez, 2008; Leander & Rowe, 2004; Lam, 2006; MacDonald & Bernardo, 2005). Second, I see that students play an active role in responding to simultaneous calls in the classroom and the larger university culture. For example, my former student Keneika described her participation in a support program as pushing herself: "I didn't know I could push myself this far and it kind of made me open my eyes to be like I have all this potential." The self-reflexivity Keneika described provides a lens into the larger process of literacy engagement and identity performance sponsored through an academic support program.

As an educator in a university academic support program housed at a predominately Euro-American, public, Research One university in a rural Midwestern region, I consider the performance of literacy and identity of students in support classrooms, like Keneika, as deserving rigorous examinations. As a result, the purpose of this study is to share closer examinations into student literacy engagement to extend current research of first-year support programs. By bridging conversations between student development theory and literacy studies, I explore the ways in which both bodies of literature can suitably inform policy and practice in these important programs. Following the call from researchers like Engberg and Mayhew (2007) and Barefoot (2000) that demand richer analysis of specific practices in first-year support programs, this qualitative teacher-research is a study of a support program for students labeled as academically "underprepared" for their university. The context of my study is a first-year academic support program called Freshman Connection[1], designed to teach students deemed by the university to be academically "at-risk." FC consistently produced strong retention rates, high grade point averages, and degree attainment. However, I focused on activities in the FC program that were not measured through outcomes like retention rates. Instead I emphasized performances of literacy in the context. First, I examined how the institution locates and situates FC students as "at-risk." Second, I considered students' literacy practices as processes of negotiation that foster particular competencies. In my experience, students in the FC program offered evidence of literacy performances that impact their engagement of the larger university, and my desire in this study was to document successes of students in FC as a more complex story than one of retention.

[1] Freshman Connection is a pseudonym, and I will use it interchangeably with an abbreviated form FC.

A Personal and Programmatic History

As luck would have it, my personal history of teaching writing to students deemed underprepared for college coincides with the history of Freshman Connection. In the mid 1990s, I stumbled into what was called "remedial" writing instruction as an undergraduate recommended to become a tutor in my university's writing center. At the writing center, I became peripherally involved in debates over the purpose and place of basic writing. This was my foray into teaching. Soon after, I started as a basic writing instructor for students labeled underprepared for college. At the time, the National Center for Education Statistics (hereafter NCES, 1996) reported that 78% of all postsecondary institutions offered at least one remedial reading, writing, or mathematics course. Just five years later, in 2000, when I began as a fulltime instructor with Louisiana State University, 76% of all postsecondary institutions offered these remedial courses (NCES, 2003). During the past decade, despite recurrent national debates on the utility, efficacy, and expense of remedial programs due to limited resources[2], they persisted.

In the last decade of the twentieth century, however, programs designed to support underrepresented students have faced increased public attack. National debates over the place of remedial programs in higher education surfaced as contentious arguments in the statewide papers and the local university community. For example, *New York Times* writer Richard Perez-Pena (1998) described a troubling shift in New York and California in the 1990s. As Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani's and Governor George Pataki collaborated on efforts to end open admissions and limit remedial services in the City University of New York system, California's universities effectively eliminated affirmative action in admission policies (Fox, 1999; McClearly, 1997; Perez-Pena, 1998;

---

[2] The term remediation (or remedial) is troubled by its etymology. In chapter 2, I examine the history of remediation as a construct in American education, paying particular attention to the political, social, and institutional pressures that saturate its meaning. I adopt it here because the public discourse of the period used the term "remedial" un-problematically.

Prendergast, 2003; Schmidt, 1998). Certainly, the California State University and CUNY systems were known as bastions of access to higher education, often through support programs aligned with remedial education on campuses (Stygall, 1998): California providing remedial courses to 60% of its first-year students and New York to 75% of its undergraduates (Shaw, 1997). By the mid-1990s, however, fervent calls to limit remedial programs in these university systems by state legislators and university board of regents paved the way for other states to follow suit, as is true of Arkansas, Louisiana, Tennessee, and Florida, each moving toward eliminating remediation in four-year universities (Merisotis & Phipps, 2000). The national debates in news media represented a public consciousness that distrusted remedial education. In California, for instance, debates about remediation were linked to debates regarding the legality of California's affirmative action programs (Fox, 1999; McCleary, 1997; Schmidt, 1998; Shaw, 1997).

In 1996, one such debate epitomized the struggle in California—Proposition 209. An amendment effectively calling to abolish affirmative-action policies in public institutions, Prop. 209 convinced California voters that affirmative-action was a form of legal discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, and gender. In November, 1996 it was voted into law. While 209 didn't explicitly point to university admission policies, a University of California Board of Regent sponsored the proposition. Its implementation also resulted in a significant reconfiguration of admission polices in state university systems. Any programs in the university system perceived to function as affirmative-action were revamped. In California state colleges, for example, many equal opportunity support services were eliminated or completely changed. While California experienced a heightened level of scrutiny regarding affirmative-action policies as a result of Proposition 209, the crux of the conflict spread across the nation in the form of debates over poor standards and remedial education. In fact, debates of the late 1980s paved the way: take for instance the well-known perspective of Allan Bloom in *The Closing of the American Mind*, who writes "Affirmative action now institutionalizes the worst aspect of

separatism. The fact is that the average black student's achievements do not equal those of the average white student in the good universities" (1987, p. 96). Tom Fox (1999) analyzes Bloom's argument as a "critique of affirmative action and multiculturalism" (p. 5). In response, Fox argues that national and local backlash against affirmative-action and remediation is often hidden in discussions of poor standards, but the concerns over poor academic preparation re-inscribe particular non-dominant groups as deficient (Lam, 2006). According to Merisotis and Phipps (2000), despite criticism of anti-affirmative action movements, like Fox's perspective, in the 1990s most states moved toward the elimination of remediation in four-year universities after anti-affirmative action and anti-remediation rhetoric gained favor. More recently, in 2006, a similar proposition gained favor in the state of Michigan, called the Michigan Civil Rights Initiative.

As anti-affirmative action campaigns contributed to the elimination of remediation on university campus, remedial reading and writing programs—being the most visible representation of cultural and linguistic difference—became highly scrutinized programs (see Perez-Pena, 1998; Schmidt, 1998). According to Stygall (1998), the ties between the retention of underrepresented university students and basic writing are strong, so much that "diversity and retention of underrepresented students at public research schools may well be a partial function of the success of their basic writing programs" (p. 4). The pull toward anti-affirmative-action movements in combination with institutional trends against remediation diminished the recruitment of underrepresented university student groups in public research universities (Schmidt, 1998; Stygall, 1998). For example, among the 29 percent of university first-year students enrolling in remedial courses nationally (Ishlar, 2005, p. 25), California's colleges and universities required over 60% of African-American and Latino first-year students to enroll in remedial English courses in the 90s (Hrabowsky, 2005, p. 135). The diminishment of remedial education in California, like that of City University of New York, ably represented national trends in higher education of reducing the support of students deemed

academically underprepared. When I began teaching "basic writing" in the California State university system, many university English departments faced the difficult debate over the efficacy of remedial courses and their function in the university (DiPardo, 1993; Fox, 1999; Horner, 1996; Rodby, 1996; Soliday, 1996; Stygall, 1998). Stygall explains:

> These two movements—the falling away from lower division undergraduate services at public research institutions and the embracing of the anti-affirmative action crusade—are often addressed as separate issues. Yet the interaction between the two movements is invidious and has contributed to our losing sight of the main event. While we have argued about whether to mainstream basic writers, whether to test basic writers, and even whether to acknowledge the social perceptions that "create" the subject position of basic writers, those who have no interest in a wider educational franchise are closing the doors at research institutions. (p. 7).

As a result, I entered the classroom with a healthy skepticism of institutional policies targeting value-based issues like affirmative-action, remedial education, and access due to the political landscape of California in the 1990s. At the time, I was (and continue to be) an advocate of equity programs and diversity initiatives in higher education in part because I believed American public education reproduced social inequities with a disproportionate effect on non-dominant groups, including students of lower-socio-economic status (Fox, 1999; Rose, 1989). Likewise, I saw policies like Proposition 209 as effectively dismantling policies serving to support students academically underprepared as a result of socio-economic inequities in schooling (Erickson, 1987; Giroux, 1983; MacLeod, 1987).

Moreover, the student-led movements of the 1970s that paved the way for equity support programs in higher education pointed to the historical inequities of public education disproportionately experienced in communities of cultural, linguistic, and class differences (Gutiérrez, Hunter, & Arzubiaga, 2009; Prendergast, 2003). The history of equity programs as "social design experiments" in state universities of California had illustrated material benefits for students fostered through carefully cultivated support programs of students deemed academically underprepared for the university (Gutiérrez,

Hunter, & Arzubiaga, 2009; Shaughnessy, 1977; Stygall, 1998). I supported equity programs and institutional missions advocating access. However, support programs vary in type and efficacy, and not all programs are created equally. Each needs to navigate the double binds of support programs: programs designed to assist non-dominant students deemed "academically underprepared" in their transition to university learning within some institutional university systems that had historically excluded these students academically, culturally, and politically (see Gutiérrez, Hunter, & Arzubiaga, 2009; Rose, 1989). How to cater across these purposes continues to be the challenging task for support programs.

The political landscape of California and New York regarding programs designed for the support of students deemed academically underprepared emerged in the heartland of our nation, revealing the persistence of calls to eliminate remedial education and affirmative action programs. The primary response for Research One public institutions of the Midwest, according to Stygall (1998), was to mainstream underprepared students. Because recruitment of traditionally underrepresented student groups often worked in tandem with support programs (Prendergast, 2003; Stygall, 1998; Watson, Terrell, Wright and Associates, 2002), universities faced the difficult position of recruiting underrepresented students through support programs while also screening against public objections of these programs. Support programs could likely be scrutinized as remedial or affirmative action programs by state and local organizations of oversight (Grubb, 1999; Merisotis & Phipps, 2000). Freshman Connection, the focus of this study, was implemented when policies for mainstreaming academically underprepared emerged in public Research One institutions of higher education in the Midwest. In 1996, Freshman Connection replaced a type of preparatory program similar to summer bridge programs and designed to give recruited but "underprepared" students a head start on college (Kuh, 2005). Informed by student development theory (Higbee, 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991), administrators of the FC program created the FC support program to be nestled in

the first-year of the students' engagement of the university, as opposed to a precursor to the university. According to the Current Director of the program, Freshman Connection was implemented to foster better rates of retention for students deemed academically underprepared. Circumstances such as those described by Stygall (1998) above likely predicated the need to implement a different programmatic design for the recruited "underprepared" students in a summer bridge program. The legal and political conflicts typical of the 1990s are relevant to the context of Freshman Connection. While it is evident that FC is successful at retention, it is also a story of institutional survival.

Freshman Connection targeted students identified as academically "at-risk" or "underprepared" and recruited to the university; like the trend outlined by Stygall above, many FC students were underrepresented cultural minorities and first generation college students. As a support program, FC quickly emerged as a story of success in the university. The few articles about it in the late 1990s described FC as fostering strong retention of these first-year students, establishing a pattern of increased retention of FC students. By 2000, for instance, reports in the Office of the Provost boasted a 96% rate of retention in the FC program. However, the stories of increased student retention didn't speak to the robust engagement of some FC students, which was not easily measured in outcomes like retention rates. As a result, I wanted to explore more deeply into the story of supporting student success in the Freshman Connection program. I wanted to see how students engage the program and to learn from their voices.

Research Purpose: Institutional Sponsors of Literacy

Describing student engagement in a first-year support program includes a careful examination of its institutional context. Researchers Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, and Associates (2005) examine how university conditions foster student success. In their analysis, Kuh et al. (2005) emphasize the function of university missions, differentiating "*espoused* and *enacted* missions" (p. 25, emphasis in original). In short, an espoused

mission is the official description the university writes or says about itself publicly while the enacted mission is how espoused objectives are enacted in the regular policies and practices of the university. An enacted mission:

> is arguably more important to student success than the espoused mission because it guides the daily actions of those in regular contact with students—in classrooms, in residence halls, and on playing fields—as well as those who set institutional policy, make strategic plans and decisions, and allocate resources. The enacted mission often differs from what the institution says or writes about itself. (p. 25)

The relationship between espoused and enacted objectives described by Kuh et al. captures the dilemma facing most university programs. The larger the disparity between the espoused and enacted missions, the less effective the environment at ensuring student success. Disparity between espoused and enacted missions also cultivates tensions in programmatic designs, a central focus of my analysis of support in Freshman Connection.

An espoused mission on a public university is expansive because it must respond to the expectations and desires of the taxpayers of the community. A public university's mission statement responds to a larger social dialogue about the role and function of higher education and answers to accreditation issues, state-level legislative initiatives as well as general public perceptions of higher education. Espoused missions on large, public research universities are not simple statements of goals or promises; according to Tracy and Ashcroft (1997), mission statements must address value-focused policies in educational institutions on issues with social implications, such as commitments to equality or diversity. While value-focused policies have action implications, espoused missions are more concerned with displaying the value priorities of the institution rather than implementing action-specific designs. Espoused missions often symbolize "agreement about the values to which the group is to become publicly committed" (Tracy & Ashcroft, 1997 p. 299). The enacted missions, however, represent "what the institution actually does and whom it serves" (Kuh, et al., p. 26). The espoused mission is like a spokesperson whose language is carefully crafted to respond to public scrutiny while the

enacted mission is the everyday activities and practices. Kuh et al. explain, for instance, that some universities may claim in their mission to highlight undergraduate education, while their enacted missions focus "human and fiscal resources on graduate students and research" (p. 26). Enacted missions become tacit representations of shared values that can shed light on the "unspoken but deeply held values and beliefs about students and their education" (Kuh et al., p. 27).

A program like Freshman Connection is designed to enact espoused missions for fostering success of students deemed "academically underprepared" on a large, Research One public university. At the center of academic support in FC was the role of literacy. I borrow from the scholarship of Deborah Brandt (2001) to justify the study into Freshman Connection because the relationships between institutional support, "academically underprepared" students, and literacy learning warrant thoughtful consideration. Brandt (2001) says that sponsors of literacy grant access to literacy in powerful ways. According to Brandt, sponsors refer to any "agents who enable, support, teach, and model literacy" (p. 19). There are effects of sponsorship:

> Although the interests of the sponsor and the sponsored do not have to converge (and, in fact, may conflict), sponsors nevertheless set the terms for access to literacy and wield powerful incentives for compliance and loyalty. … In whatever form, sponsors deliver the ideological freight that must be borne for access to what they have. Of course, the sponsored can be oblivious to or innovative with this ideological burden." (Brandt, p. 19 - 20)

Literacy sponsorship entails the tangible and intangible relationship between sponsors and those being sponsored in the FC support program. The problem to be explored in FC support was one of sponsorship, which Brandt defines as including a "range of human relationships and ideological pressures that turn up at the scenes of literacy learning" (p. 20). For this reason, a close look at "enacted missions" in the Freshman Connection support program was designed to amplify the ideological pressures that coincide with sponsoring literacy.

Theoretical Framework: Framing Sponsorship in FC

Accordingly, this project set out to portray the relationship between the Freshman Connection program and the university that houses it. In particular, I was looking to tease out layers of ideological burden the literacy sponsorship in FC. To this end, I adopted a complex conceptual framework drawn from three complementary theories of language, literacy, and culture: Bakhtin's theory of discourse as dialogic; sociocultural theories of literacy; and situated practice theories of identity.

Language as Discourse

As language in use, discourse is an intricate relationship between representation, social context, and meaning-making. Wetherell (2001) writes simply that "Words are about the world but they also form the world as they represent it" (p. 16). In discourse analysis, various approaches delimit the boundaries or limits of discourse as meaning-making; for example, some researchers emphasize identity construction and social relations within a local, more immediate social context, while others situate language use (talk, text, image, bodies) in larger historical, political, and cultural contexts (Wetherell, 2001, p. 27). For some researchers, then, discourse is a broad concept for thinking about human meaning-making in relation to larger structures of thought, feeling, or value. Bakhtin (1981) approaches discourse as a social struggle as much as a sign system. Language is a social practice according to Bakhtin, who describes a word as capable of indexing multiple meanings at once; it is never passive or neutral as a transmission tool; it is a mediating tool of meaning making. Bakhtin writes:

> But no living word relates to its object in a *singular* way: between the word and its object, between the word and the speaking subject, there exists an elastic environment of other, alien words about the same object, the same theme, and this is an environment that it is often difficult to penetrate. (p. 276, emphasis in original)

A word can be "hot," as in warm to the touch; it can be "hot" as in the Paris Hilton description of what's popular, or ironically what's cool. As such, Bakhtin underscores

context as situating a significant dialogue of meanings available to and intermingling with the word—the elastic environment saturated by voices. He writes that discourse, "having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousness" (p. 276). Discourse actively participates in a social dialogue.

As a conceptual frame, Bakhtin describes language as dialogism. By turning to Bakhtin, I emphasize how different voices inter-animate and coalesce in the discourse of the Freshman Connection program. Bakhtin (1981) sees that ideological struggles are essential to language and constructions of new meaning. The dialogic process is part of emerging patterns of ideology. Discourses interpenetrate, compete and become saturated with historical, cultural, political, and institutional meanings. They are characterized by heteroglossia. According to Juzwik (2004), research in the last 30 years on language in education has highlighted precisely the limitations and benefits of that struggle, exploring "texts and contexts to see how the tensions between polemic/centripetal/official and parodic/centrifugal/unofficial rhetorics dialogically constitute communicative situations" (p. 543). In my study, following Bakhtin's dialogism, I examined the tensions of perspectives in Freshman Connection as a support program.

A theory of language as dialogism provides the larger heuristic for analyzing voices saturated by ideological thought flowing in the FC program, which will be evident in official university texts, spoken language in interviews, and written texts in classroom assignments. Even so, dialogism doesn't explicitly characterize institutional power relations and identity in the heteroglossia. As a result, two other philosophies of discourse inform my analysis of institutional practices and personal identities in the FC program. First, I used Foucault (1975/1978) to examine institutional actions as having a discursive impact, emphasizing that actions (such as institutional policies) construct meaning in the way words do. Stuart Hall (2000) explains that Foucault treats discourse

as a system of representation. Hall writes that "since all social practices entail *meaning*, and meanings shape and influence what we do— our conduct— all practices have a discursive aspect" (p. 72). According to Foucault (1978, 1982), practices do not emerge outside the realm of discourse. Discourses become enacted in the everyday, and the everyday practices evolve into governing systems of meaning. I turn to Foucault to highlight the attendant power relations caught up in discourse systems. Foucault (1978) writes that "Discourse transmits and produces power" (p. 101). As Kuh et al. (2005) explain, everyday activities in a university can function discursively by transmitting unspoken beliefs. I used Foucault to highlight practices in the institutional context that function discursively. Discourse in this sense is a social practice with institutional effects that produces relations of power.

Second, Gee (1996) draws from both Bakhtin (1981) and Foucault (1975) in *Social Linguistics and Literacies: Ideology in Discourse*. He coins the term "Discourse" (or big "D" Discourse) to specify that "Discourse is always more than just a language" (p. 127). Gee focuses on human meaning-making activities within a larger system of representation including group roles and affiliations:

> A *Discourse* is a socially accepted association among ways of using language, other symbolic expressions and "artifacts", of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or "social network", or to signal (that one is playing) a socially meaningful "role." (p. 131)

Gee's Discourse puts an emphasis on social practices, including language use, as they index group affiliation and constructions of identity. That is, "Discourse is a sort of identity toolkit which comes complete with the appropriate costume and instructions on how to act, talk, and often write, so as to take on a particular social role that others will recognize (1996, p. 127). In this study, I was interested in how particular roles are directed in part by institutional contexts and by "groups of people." Fundamentally, Gee captures the dynamic interactions of people as constituting Discourses, a concept

informed by Foucault, which emphasizes that people are involved in the discoursing of others. We are not simply controlled by Discourses. We become part of the system for forming and maintaining a Discourse. Gee's Discourse has particular import for current theories of socio-cultural literacy in which reading and writing are social practices.

Sociocultural Literacy

To complement theories of discourse as dialogic (Bakhtin, 1981), I turn to the New Literacy Studies (Hull & Schultz, 2002) to frame literacy as social practice. In brief, socio-cultural theory draws from Vygotsky (1968). Paying particular attention to sign systems, thus language, and the ways in which thinking through sign systems might be initiated in social and external relations, Vygotsky (1968) makes clear the primacy of social and cultural setting in creating thought. In terms of literacy theory, the field has moved from cognitive perspectives of literacy as neutral skill-set toward sociocultural perspectives of literacy as social acts that are multiple, contextually-bound, and situated within institutional and community practices (see Heath, 1983; Scribner & Cole, 1981). Following suit, the New Literacy Studies began to consider explicitly issues of power. Studies paired language and discourse in their analyses, and scholarship emphasized literacies in many contexts, full of social relationships, and identity construction (Hull & Schultz, 2002; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003; New London Group, 1996). This orientation toward literacy accommodates two important facets: multiplicity of social roles and the connection between institutions and power. Barton and Hamilton's (2000) definition provides a clear sociocultural perspective of literacy:

- Literacy is best understood as a set of social practices;
- There are different literacies associated with different domains of life;
- Literacy practices are patterned by the social institutions and power relationships, and some literacies are more dominant, visible and influential than others;
- Literacy is historically situated;

- Literacy practices change and new ones are frequently acquired through processes of informal learning and sense making. (p. 8).

Understanding literacy within this paradigm, then, suggests that a host of social and contextual influences impact the expressions of literacy produced in academic support programs.

Current sociocultural literacy research now accommodates the multiplicity of literacies people engage though digital and multimedia technologies, highlighting modalities, design as Multiliteracies, and issues of affect (The New London Group, 1996). With more access to a variety of textual design and orientations in multiple sites, scholars now consider embodiment, affect, and multimodality in literacy practices. With respect to students, Leander and Rowe (2006) explain the increasing need for:

> understanding the kinds of textual interpretations students are making, the kinds of texts they are producing, and links between student identities and engagement with literacy. Hence, these are compelling and enduring problems for literacy research and practice. Yet a significant difficulty that we have encountered in attempting to interpret literacy performances is that our interpretations fail to bring to life the experience of performances as embodied, rapidly moving, affectively charged, evolving acts that often escape prediction and structure (p. 431).

Current literacy research examines the affective, embodied, evolving, and multimodal attributes of literacy (Leander & Rowe, 2006; Lam, 2006). Similarly, Blackburn (2002) has argued for the term “literacy performance” as a concept for defining the cumulative effect of literacy practices across time spans with an emphasis on Butler’s (1991) theory of performance. Similar to Blackburn’s move to performance, Gutiérrez (2008) describes building upon the repertoires of practice individuals bring to learning environments. Gutiérrez (2008) shows that understanding how communities and institutions situate different repertoires of practice, including literacy, can prepare students to discern when and how to use tools across different institutional practices. Recent scholarship in sociocultural literacy, then, is beginning to invoke more fluid conceptions of time-space boundaries in activities of literacy learning (Blackburn, 2002; Brandt, 2001; Lam, 2006

Leander and Rowe, 2006; Gutiérrez, 2008). My concerns with literacy will include practices of reading and writing, of textual design and interpretation in relation with the historical, political, institutional and affective dimensions of Freshman Connection.

Identity, Power, and Agency: Figured Worlds

The relations among discourse, literacies, and identities continue to be important in the story of my evolving thought as an educator. According to Bartlett (2007), "the purposeful ways in which individuals endeavor to position themselves through (and/or in conjunction with) literacy practices in social and cultural fields" (p. 53) are of continued concern in New Literacy Studies. Recently, situated participation and practice-oriented theories of identity (Holland & Lave, 2001; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) have been explored in literacy practices. Scholars emphasize the means by which classroom literacy performances respond to cultural and social meanings of the context, a topic examined by Bartlett (2007), Hatt (2007), Leander (2002), Luttrell & Parker (2001), and Wortham (2004). The recent turn to situated practice theories highlights these responses. One such framework is Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain's (1998) *figured world*:

> Figured worlds in their conceptual dimensions supply the contexts of meaning for actions, cultural productions, performances, disputes, for the understandings that people come to make of themselves, and for the capabilities that people develop to direct their own behavior in these worlds. (p. 60)

In figured worlds, action, meaning making, and feeling are placed in relationship to the larger cultural meanings reified through the figured world but also situated within the local institutional context. Informed by the works of Vygotsky (1978), Bakhtin (1981) and Foucault (1975), figured worlds locate collective and individual development, struggle, and power-relations in social practices. I conceptualized the FC program as itself a figured world that supplies contexts of meanings and cultural performances.

As a theory for identity, Holland, et al.'s (1998) concept of *identity in practice* (p. 271) animates the relationship between situated practice and sociocultural calls to subject

position; it is how people "come to make themselves and … to direct their own behavior in these worlds" (p. 60). In brief, identity in practice includes four features: First, it begins with situating and demarking the figured world as it frames the social context with meaning and dispositions. Second, *positionality* defines the roles available for and to be answered by configurations of a specific figured world; positionality "is inextricably linked to power, status, and rank" (p. 271). Third, indebted to Bakhtin (1981), *space of authoring* is the mode of answering the figured world along a continuum from more limited automatic ways, like "strictly authoritative discourses" toward great variability (p. 272). And finally, *making worlds* refers to localized moments of personal agency where play, resourcefulness and improvisation allow the formation of new figured worlds "in the peculiarly Bakhtinian way that feeds the personal activities of particular groups, their 'signatures,' into the media, the cultural genres, through which even distant others may construe their lives" (p. 272). Figured worlds are also dialogized. They struggle with other figured worlds. So, identity in practice is a conceptual frame for naming the dynamic relationship between situated participation and cultural meaning making, and it allows for the dynamism of struggle, conflict, and identity affiliation which becomes part of the work of recreating (perhaps contentiously and across landscapes), of people making themselves and making figured worlds. A university support program is a site rich with competing cultural meanings that students negotiate. Crafting classroom identities is a key part of examining students' responses in Freshman Connection.

Research Questions

This study focused on the course I taught, called FC seminar, nested in the Freshmen Connection program at a Research One public university. Within the figured world of FC, I paid particular attention to expressions of identity in FC students' literacy. First, the study focused on exploring how administrators, teachers, and students characterize support and the students in the FC program through official texts, language,

images, and story. Second, the study focused on how students in the FC seminar acted, enacted, and perhaps resisted the representations of support and of students in FC with a focus on the identity performances of students in the FC seminar that I taught. These were the research questions:

1. How do administrators, faculty, staff, and students characterize support in this program? How do they characterize the mission of the program and the core course FC seminar as part of that support? What language (e.g. metaphors, stories, word choice) do administrators, faculty, and students use to describe FC support?
2. How do administrators, faculty, staff, and students characterize the student population? What language (e.g. metaphors, stories, word choice) do administrators, faculty, and students use to describe FC students?
3. In these descriptions of support and students in FC, what terms become stand-ins for what is not said? How do the characterizations match or mismatch?
4. What repertoires do students draw upon in constructing their classroom identities in response to the programmatic discourses of FC? How are these identities represented in their participation in class sessions and in student-teacher conferences, and in expressions of literacy?

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

A Loud Silence

The subject of this research, a support program for students deemed underprepared for college at a Research One university, was a curious site. Campus-level administrators touted the success rate of a program called Freshman Connection, confirmed through indices such as student retention, student achievement, grade point average, and persistence. Compared to the over 3800 enrolled first-time, first-year students, it served a minuscule number. By all accounts, Freshman Connection was in line with best practices in the field of developmental education: it integrated instruction of “basic skills” with regular content curriculum; it required supplemental instruction (SI); it offered students early registration and regular academic advising; and instructors of the academic seminar sent bi-weekly student performance reports. Generally, these services are considered best practices of developmental education (Boylan et al., 1999; Meritosis & Phipps, 2000; Saxon & Boylan, 2007). A public report in the Office of the Provost described Freshman Connection:

> There is a chasm separating high school and college, and each year far too many bright but academically underprepared students fall in. Freshman Connection is helping these students to make the leap - and to thrive in the new environment.
>
> This innovative two-semester program provides an extended academic transition between high school and college for students who have demonstrated the potential to succeed at the university, but who do not meet standards for regular admission to the university. Freshman Connection was designed to help students develop the knowledge and skills vital for academic success by providing both academic and social support. A recent report issued by the University's Academic Advising Center (which administers the program) found that, as of May 1998, the program has maintained at least an 80% retention rate for each of the first three student cohorts - an outstanding record by national norms. (Report to the Taskforce on Student Persistence, September 2000)

The irony here was that even with such a strong record in supporting students deemed academically underprepared, Freshman Connection did not define itself as a developmental program[3]. It didn't use the term remedial.

I became curious about how little teachers and students in the program seemed to know regarding Freshman Connection and its mission. My curiosity was stimulated by the inevitable moment when students in the core course that I teach, called FC Seminar, described Freshman Connection as remedial even though official reports of the program did not use the term "remedial." Reports stepped around these terms— "remedial," "basic," "deficient." In the few public documents that mentioned the program, like the one quoted above, students were defined as having the "potential to succeed at the university but who did not meet regular standards for admission" or "bright but academically underprepared" or "students with weak academic preparation." The same cautious wording characterized descriptions of the program; it provided "academic and social support." The report above defines academic support as helping "students develop knowledge and skills vital for academic success." The programmatic structure adhered to a model outlined by current research in the field of developmental education, and yet the program was not identified as a developmental program. Not in the university's catalogue, on the website, or the Office of the Provost. No where.

Terms with Baggage: Framing the story

The purpose of this chapter is to trace historical, cultural, political, and institutional forces that saturate support programs for students deemed academically

[3] When I use the term "developmental" I am both trying to render visible the negative connation of the label as it has emerged to replace remedial education while also working to highlight the tension represented by the need to differentiate between remedial and developmental. In general, I will use developmental to refer to the institutional structure designed to support students in multiple ways, like study skill development, tutoring, and strong advising as called for in student development theory (Higbee, 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Saxon & Boylan, 2007). I will use remedial or remediation to refer specifically to basic skill instruction.

underprepared for college, and I do so by focusing on two terms, “remedial” and “developmental.” As I thought about this puzzle—the pervasive language that is not used but is obvious in the absence and replacement of terms—I became interested in the code words that stand in as replacements in Freshman Connection. Curious about the dialogic relationship between presence and absence of these terms in the description of Freshman Connection, I wanted to exploit the urge by students and instructors of the program to call FC “remedial” or “developmental” even though the official title was “support program.” A Bakhtinian perspective of the terms helped frame that duality, of the multiple influences that over time have become contested, and always evolving, meanings. Drawing from Bakhtin’s notion of heteroglossia (1981), I recognized evolving meanings which emerge in the history of these terms and carry ideological baggage for support programs. Freedman and Ball (2004) explain that the struggle between internally persuasive discourse and other discourses (like authoritative or everyday) is part of our developing systems or ideologies (p. 8). The dialogic process is part of emerging patterns of ideology. For Bakhtin (1981), discourses interpenetrate, compete and become saturated with historical, cultural, political, and institutional meanings. For academic support programs like FC, the ideological baggage of policies on remedial and developmental programs influences how we perceive of the support. This was the overly saturated territory Freshman Connection inhabited. I became curious about how some terms saturated descriptions of the program even in their absence.

A Bakhtinian frame helps me to tell the story of the evolving, conflicted patterns of ideology which are present in the two key terms we use to describe support programs for students deemed underprepared, but this frame does not define silence as a tactic of conscious resistance. Foucault (1978), however, defines silence as a tactic in a discourse system. Foucault writes:

> There is no binary division to be made between what one says and what one does not say; we must try to determine the different ways of not saying such things, how those who can and those who

> cannot speak of them are distributed, which type of discourse is authorized, or which form of discretion is required in either case. (p. 27)

Here silence is not an absence of discourse, but rather an intermingling with what is said. The task for critically reading silence is to identify the strategies of not voicing discourse. It includes naming the systems which distribute access to speech (voice, terms) and for denying access to speech. It includes defining this system in terms of the power-relations, in order to define who gets to speak and who doesn't; then one is able to discern which versions of speaking (which voices and which terms) are formally sanctioned. Such a task locates historical, political, social, and economic pressures in a discourse. In Freshman Connection, the official terms of "developmental" and "remedial" that emerge in student development theory carry stigma. At the same time, however, the absence of those terms does not silence the discourse.

Chapter Overview

In this chapter, I review the evolution of "remedial" and "developmental" as terms in institutional and empirical research. The analysis here is not comprehensive; it constructs a history of key events that situate university support programs today. In this chapter, I highlight the contested, evolving nature of these terms—remedial and developmental—which are relevant to the particular instance of Freshman Connection, a support program serving relatively few students on a large Research One campus. The first section concentrates on the history of remediation in American universities, laying out the emergence of remediation as a social construct. The second section focuses on developmental education as a field which began in response to the stigma associated with remediation. The third section focuses on educational research examining the "achievement gap" for students of cultural and linguistic difference (Duncan-Andrade, 2004) as it relates to support programs with an emphasis on academic discourse. The final section reviews current educational literature on group affiliation, which offers a productive frame for thinking about student diversity in university support programs.

Remediation as a Construct

The following section provides a chronological story of higher education tracing the patterns specific to the construct of remediation. The story locates social, political, and economic forces that converge in the meaning of remediation. (1) Beginning with the myth of the underprepared in higher education, I explain that students have been labeled underprepared for college since the early years of American higher education. (2) Then, I describe the emergence of remedial classes/programs within the contested system of higher education at the turn of the twentieth century. The history of composition illustrates how social, political, and economic drives justified the implementation of college entrance exams, the legitimatization of universal standards, and the function of "remedial courses" in differentiating the normal student from the marked-as-deficient, "remedial" student. The lines are often drawn along cultural and class-based differences. (3) I consciously jump toward the social, political, and legislative events of the 1960s framing increased access to higher education that now sanction a system of standards in contemporary colleges. There are considerable similarities between the final decades of the nineteenth century and the decades of the twentieth century in American higher education. The contestations in these periods point to the moral and social judgments which stigmatize remediation.

The Myth of Underprepared Students

Contrary to popular misconception, some form of remediation has been in American universities since colonial times. In the 18th century, Harvard college provided tutors in Latin and Greek (Higbee, 2005; Merisotis & Phipps, 2000). By the 1800s, many universities openly acknowledged their preparatory classes. For example, 1849 is often named as the start of comprehensive remedial programs, when University of Wisconsin implemented college preparatory programs in remedial reading, writing, and arithmetic (Markus & Zeitlin, 1993; Merisotis & Phipps, 2000). By the close of the nineteenth

century, universities like Columbia, Harvard, and Yale began competing for a growing number of applicants, and three aspects of higher education admission emerged: a rise in less stringent admission policies, the emergence of standardized college entrance exams, and the need for preparatory courses (Markus, & Zeitlin, 1993; Miller, 1991). Histories of higher education make clear that "underprepared" college students are not a new educational phenomenon in American colleges (Markus & Zeitlin, 1993; Merisotis & Phipps, 2000; Trow, 1997; Wechsler, 1997). According to Merisotis & Phipps (2000), "those halcyon days when all students who enrolled in college were adequately prepared, all courses offered at higher education institutions were 'college level,' and students smoothly made the transition from high school and college never existed" (p. 69). In short, some form of remediation has been in place since the early forms of American higher education. Despite the obvious presence of these programs in the American university system, for years there was little interest in understanding the value of such programs (Boylan & Bonham, 2007; Boylan et al., 1999; Brothen & Wambauch, 2004; Shaw, 1997). According to Boylan and Bonham (2007), for instance, it wasn't until 1984 that the US Department of Education produced its first National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) on developmental education in higher education.

In the last twenty years, however, developmental programs have continued to receive much attention. Only a decade after the first NCES report on developmental education, the NCES reported 29% of all first time, first-year students enrolled in at least one remedial course (NCES, 1996). Although there is not an equal distribution of remediation among different university systems, all types of institutions offer some sort of developmental program, even selective, private, four-year universities. For example, in 1995, two year colleges enrolled 41% of their first-year students in developmental education, followed by 26% of first-year students at private two-year colleges; similarly public four-year institutions enrolled 22% of first-year students in remedial courses, while only 13% of first-year students at private four-year universities enrolled in remedial

courses (NCES, 1996). Likewise in 2000, according to the NCES, 28% of all first-time, first-year students enrolled in at least one remedial education course (NCES, 2003). Additionally, in 2000, 42% of freshmen at public 2-year colleges and 12% to 24% of first-year students at other types of institutions enrolled in at least one remedial reading, writing, or mathematics course (NCES, 2003). While news media in the 1990s generated a heated concern over the crisis of remediation in over 48 newspaper articles in the nation's largest newspapers (Boylan & Saxon, 1999), very few people acknowledge the historic presence of remediation in our nation's colleges.

Emergence of Remediation in Higher Education

Historian Trow (1997) says that "the market and market forces have a deep, pervasive influence" in higher education (p. 573). Nothing can better illustrate that influence than the latter half of the nineteenth century. The economic, political, and social forces of this period had a keen impact in changing the role of higher education and the student population. Beginning with the Morrill Act of 1862, higher education shifted its function and with it increased access for traditionally underrepresented populations (Gordon, 1997; Leslie, 1997; Merisotis & Phipps, 2000; Miller, 1991; Ogren, 1997). No longer a classical system of education; the new university was designed to address a more practical service for the changing economic industrial world and the needs of agriculture; Fox writes "the pressure for increased access from business and industry dovetailed with structural changes in the ways that universities organized themselves" (1999, p. 20). However, despite the pressure from industry, at first, "enrollments—a high percentage of them college preparatory courses—grew slowly, and student attrition remained high" (Williams, 1997, p. 268). At the time when federal legislation supported a vast growth in land grant universities, the boom in the number of higher education institutions was not paralleled in enrollment; this forced institutions to compete for students (Leslie, 1997; Miller, 1997; Ogren, 1997). As a result, institutions of higher education faced a double

pressure, the needs of industry and the economic consequences of low enrollment. It becomes clear that for many reasons in the late 1800s, all qualified students were admitted to colleges as well as many underprepared students. Admission policies became less stringent. Leslie (1997) writes that "underprepared students were sent to the preparatory department or given 'special' standing in the college" (p. 335). Often, college campuses offered secondary education in the same site (Leslie, 1997). In the early years following the Morrill Act, the distinctions between college-level and pre-college remained blurred.

With the increasing number of students enrolled in "pre-college" courses, came an increasing number of attacks on the worth of those students, which led to another pressure on universities. Part of the pressure had more to do with the changing model of the institution from a more classical model designed to educate cultural elite to the new business-centered model with an emphasis on service-oriented and practical instruction (Connors, 1987; Fox, 1999; Miller, 1991). The social pressure to maintain the value of university education in its former status as restricted for the elite class led to widespread criticism of the newly admitted students. According to Rose (1989), a number of highly public attacks on the new students emerged, all lamenting the abomination of teaching skills that students should have already learned (p. 5). Rose, like other authors of historical pieces focused on the field of composition, rightly explains that these assaults concentrated primarily on the perceived illiteracy (and illegitimacy) of some students. The history of freshman composition illustrates how all of these pressures stigmatize the term "remediation."

The Case of Composition

The economic, social, and political pressures described above set the scene for one of the key events to shape freshman composition as a course and a field. The concern over the illiteracy of enrolled freshman gave rise to the standardization of a college

entrance exam and the required freshman composition course (Connors, 1981, 1987; Faigley, 1989; Fox, 1999; Horner, 1996; Miller, 1991; Newkirk, 2004). In 1874, Harvard instituted the first college entrance exam for locating students whose poor writing skill needed further instruction. According to Fox (1999), the entrance exam of 1874 was a result of "institutional fear and defensiveness" (p. 21)—a trend to be taken up by other universities soon after. For example, "in 1898 the University of California instituted the Subject A Examination … and was soon designating 30 to 40 percent of those who took it as not proficient in English, a percentage that has remained fairly stable to this day" (Rose, 1989, p. 6). The college entrance exam emerged as a tactic that justified a required course in English skills to remedy the deficiency of in-coming students. According to Fox (1999) the exam is a result of a discourse of "fear and defense" about standards. He writes, "While access is usually a pragmatic adjustment to urgent economic and political pressures, the maintenance of standards is prompted by fear and defensiveness. This fear and defensiveness in the late nineteenth century was class- and culture-based, drawing on the newly defined sharpness of economic classes" (1999, p. 21). The implementation of the college entrance exam perpetuates the belief that a standard set of skills are universal, and it identifies some groups of students to be deficient in that standard. The label was defined along lines of class- and cultural- difference.

Susan Miller's *Textual Carnivals* attests to this equation. Miller (1991) explains that remediation was not about academic or linguistic skill; it was about culture. The composition course, in Miller's words, certified the propriety of students and socialized them (1991, p. 66). While pre-college departments and the use of tutors had been a part of higher education since the colonial times, social, economic, and political pressures changed the function of higher education which included the desire to socialize particular students differentiated by class and culture. Remediation fulfilled this role in for some students. The purpose of freshman composition is to fix the "illiteracy" of certain students, but it carries ideological baggage of illegitimacy.

Freshman Composition course was born of these concerns. In the final decades of the nineteenth century, the reality is not that a flood of underprepared students forced colleges to open their doors and created the need for remedial courses; it is rather a matrix of social, political, and economic forces that required universities to shift, and in this process a cry for standards emerged. Basic writing as we know it in American universities today carries this history of fears that new students lack standard skills (Connors, 1981, 1987; Faigley, 1989; Fox, 1999; Horner, 1996; Miller, 1991; Newkirk, 2004). In fact, write Boylan, Bonham, and White (1999), "the freshman writing course that so many students suffered through in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s was actually a developmental course" (p. 88).

The rise of composition in the new university is not the only event clearly pointing to the social and political pressures influencing the need for mechanisms of ranking students as appropriate for the university. In the advent of college entrance exams, higher education had the potential to measure and rank in-coming students. Despite increased access to universities resulting from the policies prior to 1900, the rate of growth slowed after World War I. According to Levine (1997), "between the two world wars, the deck of mobility cards was stacked without question and without regret against young people from lower-class, ethnic, and black backgrounds" (p. 523). A more stringent system of admission emerged, which had significant effects on access for underrepresented minorities. Fox (1999) provides a convincing analysis of how the emergence of standards helped achieve this discrimination for writing evaluation was attached to the value of the author. Fox explains that standards of text evaluation in the writing exams "worked to discriminate class and culture" (p. 26). A class-consciousness developed based on language that contributed to a system of ranking. In turn, Levine (1997) argues that restrictive policies emerged as selective admission policies governing the highly competitive private and public universities as we see them today. University standards and required entrance exams were based upon class and cultural discrimination.

Increased Access: 1870 and 1970

Not until the G.I. Bill after World War II were American universities characterized by an influx of students. After World War II, a boom in college enrollment gave rise to diverse university students as well as more remedial services (Merisotis& Phipps, 2000; Trow, 1997). According to Trow (1997), a flood of new students enrolled in our nation's universities from 1950 to 1980.

At the time, key social and political movements correlated with another shift in access to higher education. First, following the social forces of the civil rights movement, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and The Higher Education Act of 1965 were passed. These resulted in thousands more students enrolling in American universities by the 1960s (Merisotis & Phipps, 2000, p. 69). The boom was striking, and of a magnitude far larger than the turn of the twentieth century. According to Rose (1989), "in 1900 about 4 percent of American eighteen- to twenty-two-year-olds attended college; by the late 1960s, 50 percent of eighteen- to nineteen-year-olds were entering some form of postsecondary education" (1989, p. 8). Second, in the mid-1960s, a strong counter-culture Humanist movement in education began to challenge the limitations of curriculum that imposed standards that seemed arbitrary and irrelevant to students. Arguing that education itself was more destructive than useful, counter-culture Humanists believed that curriculum "neglected student needs and interests almost completely" (Santora, 1979 p. 40). With this challenge came a critique of standards and restrictive admission policies.

These social and political movements resulted in changes to university admission policies. There was more access than ever, which gave rise to efforts in remedial instruction as we know them today (Boylan, 1999; Connors, 1981, 1987; Fox, 1999; Miller, 1991; Trow, 1997). Part of the open-door policy of the 1970s involved a direct criticism of "standards," and not unlike the first decades following the Morrill Act of 1862, some colleges opened their doors to everyone. With open doors came the same public concerns characterizing the shifts in the final years of the nineteenth century. Fears

about illegitimate students were connected to a perceived diminishment in status of the cultural elite. The open door policy at CUNY is a perfect example. According to Perez-Pena (1998), “From the beginning, allowing open admissions was partly about race, about the inaccessibility of college education to most black and Hispanic students. In 1969, the year before open admissions began at CUNY, just 9 percent of CUNY’s four-year college students were nonwhite” (p. A33). After that, 70% of CUNY college students are non-white (Perez-Pena, 1998). According to Brothen & Wambauch (2004), the massive increase of students at this time in combination with an abundance of open-admissions colleges contributed to a demographic shift, and the combination of these changes has resulted in a plethora of developmental education programs. For example, Badere and Hardin (2002) describe how one large state system of higher education created developmental programs that cater specifically to underprepared minority students brought into four-year public institutions through alternative admission processes. Many American universities accommodate cultural and linguistic diversity through developmental education programs.

Much of the fears resulting in the first college entrance exams and the first freshman composition courses surface again in contemporary discussions of remediation. The conversations of the 1980s and 1990s criticizing remedial education programs, conversations that continue even today, were responses to the social shifts in university populations resulting from open admission policies and affirmative action programs in the 1960s and 1970s (Perez-Pena, 1998; Shaw, 1997; Trow, 1997; Weiner, 2002). There is a historic pattern of American universities adopting new policies and developmental programs in response to the needs of newly admitted students. As before, the discourse of fear casts some students as deficient and illegitimate. The construct is overwhelmingly drawn along cultural and class-based differences.

As a result, remedial courses start to take on the meaning of “stigmatizing catch-up programs” (IRHE, 1999, p. 57).The organizing trope depends on marking some

students with less value. Even the most well-intended research of the time gets caught up in this organizing trope. The problem of "underprepared" basic writers in the 1970s and 1980s is a great example. The labels for describing the basic writer are all troubling. Shaughnessy's use of *foreigner* is the least offensive, as much as it treats basic writers as true outsiders. According to Rose (1985) *remedial* implies a disease or mental defect while *developmental* implies immaturity. And *basic* implies simple or "rudimentary" (Fox, 1999, p. 47). It is the contested and evolving meanings of such labels that developmental education tries to address. Even as developmental education worked to re-appropriate the term *developmental* as a growth-oriented label, it is consistently contested by the verbal ideological thoughts attached to terms like remedial, basic, immature, or rudimentary. At the time of writing this chapter in 2009, a panel session at the Conference on College Communication and Composition (March, 2009) focused on the inadequate labels available to name support programs targeting struggling student readers and writers.

The Story of Developmental Education

The following section describes how the field of developmental education responded to this stigma. Developmental education evolves in dialogue with the construct of remediation, and this dialogic relationship evolves in current discourse. A brief overview of early years of developmental education as a field sets up a discussion of the growth-oriented models of student development that informed Freshman Connection. I argue that developmental education is in a difficult position responding to a variety of institution-specific and state-defined rules, and I highlight how responding to both the institutional standards and the state established rules of admission maintain developmental education's peripheral status on campuses. As a result, some programs in Research One universities must remain invisible due to the institutionally defined remedial standards.

The Early Years of Developmental Education

The above history of remediation is the climate to which educators in developmental education respond. Prior to the 1970s, concerns in the field focused on instruction in the three core areas of academic deficiency: reading, writing, and arithmetic (Higbee, 2005). In 1977, when the National Center for Developmental Education (NADE) was founded, developmental education began to emerge as a field in its own right (Boylan & Bonham, 2007). In the 1970s, developmental education began to re-conceptualize "development" as more than the academic support of skill deficiency. So began a steady debate on what to call programs designed to support students who were admitted to college without the ability to compete equally. The debate in developmental education centers around the stigma of "remediation" described above. In the field, programs define themselves in terms of how much responsibility they openly accept for "remedial" instruction. For the most part, the field consciously works to distance itself from the construct of remediation as it has evolved. Like composition in universities, developmental education is a marginal field working to become a legitimate discipline in its own right.

Boylan et al. (1999) argue that whereas *remedial* is exclusive to courses whose curriculum is precollege level, *developmental* is exclusive to courses and services that are college level (p. 88). The difference is in scope. Developmental programs will contain remedial services within them but will go beyond such services. Losak and Miles (1993) explain, "Remedial programs presumably reach their limit when the student's basic skills competence reaches a specific level. Developing human potential, however, is an open-minded objective with no natural limits" (p. 22). "Developmental education" has evolved as an umbrella term of various support services in colleges and universities which include remedial services but is not limited to remediation (Boylan et al., 1999; Brothen & Wambauch, 2004; Higbee, 2005; Losak & Miles, 1993; Meritosis & Phipps, 2000).

Brothen and Wambauch (2004) admit that the concern over remediation in developmental education is directly related to the field's "articulation of a professional identity" (p. 22). The agenda to establish a professional identity in the field of developmental education replaces the deficit construct of remediation by adopting a growth-oriented model of student support. Founded in theories of student development emerging in the last 30 years, growth-oriented models emphasize the multiple factors influencing students' transitions to and engagement with college; they include concerns with academic support, the college environment, community involvement, and social relationships. Developmental education seized the opportunity to define itself as a valuable part of higher education by adopting a growth-oriented model, a more positive lens for understanding how students engage college. I review the major theorists in the next section.

Student Development Theory

Empirical literature on student retention in college, which has shifted the focus to include academic and personal needs in student development, informs current practices in developmental education. In this section I trace the conceptual shift in philosophies of student support as they inform current models of developmental education specific to the context of Freshman Connection, the program of this study.

According to Upcraft (2005), the first theories to inform support of college students stems from Sanford (1962) who emphasized the importance of supporting students in college while challenging them. It was the balance of the two which received the most attention, and it introduced the need to understand campus climate and environment as they relate to student learning and development. Following suit, Chickering (1969) highlighted college student development within adolescent and early adulthood trajectories of personal growth. Likewise, Perry (1970) focused on the

intellectual development of students and began to emphasize students' perceptions of knowledge and learning change during the college years.

As student development theories began to focus on the balance between intellectual and personal growth for students, scholars studied factors and variables relating to both. In the late 1970s and into the 1980s, Astin's "talent development" sparked a turn toward supporting both. In brief, Astin's (1985) "talent development" is a model for supporting the "intellectual and personal" development of college students with a particular nod toward students deemed underprepared. According to Astin, "involvement" is the main factor contributing to student retention, and he identified involvement to include being engaged on campus, joining student organizations, and interacting with faculty. To this end, Astin argued that institutions should work to enhance "intellectual and scholarly development and to make a positive difference in [student and faculty] lives" (p. 61).

Informed by Astin, two seminal research projects emerged that are heavily cited in developmental education literature: Pascarella and Terenzini's (1991) work on how college affects students and Tinto's (1993) theory of college departure (Upcraft, 2005). First, Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) build from Astin's notion of talent development by emphasizing specific outcomes of personal development which include psychosocial changes, identity, self-concept, self-esteem; interpersonal changes related to others and the external world, attitudes and values, and moral development; career choice, economic benefits, and quality of life after college. According to their research, enhancing student development involves multiple factors, like instructional quality, nature of interaction among teachers and students, level of student engagement with learning experiences, and the interplay of these are important signifiers of student retention. From this perspective, an institution's ability to retain students depends on what is done to fully support students once they are enrolled.

Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) identify Tinto's (1993) theory of student departure as the most utilized theory with strong empirical support over the decades. To start, the theory of student departure holds that students arrive on campus with various personal, family, and academic attributes. These background characteristics influence how students engage or interact with college environment. Tinto acknowledged that students' histories influence their dispositions for key college behaviors, like attendance, time management, study skills, social skills, and personal objectives. As such, supporting students in college also involves interactions with students' personal histories. Tinto argued for the inherent value of students' rewarding interactions with support systems on campus (both academic and social). Such involvement will lead to greater student integration and thus, greater likelihood of college retention. Like Sanford (1962), Tinto identifies the importance of student engagement in college life, both in and outside of academic, social and formally sanctioned systems. Supporting students in their first engagements in the social and academic environments of the university, then, becomes a key to retention. According to Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) across decades of research, the empirical evidence that academic and social integration influence college retention is compelling.

Growth-Oriented Models

In the move toward a growth-oriented model for support programs, the field of developmental education began to change institutional practice, focusing more on supporting students' growth on campus, and less on remedying deficiency. As a result, according to scholar Higbee (2005), there was a slow decline in a more traditional approach to remediation, called the "three R" model, which focused on students' deficiencies and enrolled them in required reading, writing, and arithmetic courses, which were understood as pre-college level (p. 298). The "three R" approach builds an

apparatus of support around the academic deficiency of students, but it often ignores the social aspect and the growth of the student in college.

With the turn toward growth-oriented models, a body of literature began defining best practices and best policies to ensure success in the support of underprepared university students. The literature describes growth-oriented models as including supplemental instruction (SI), freshman or first-year seminars, or "an entire curriculum of credit-bearing developmental education courses" (Higbee, 2005, p. 302). Often "pre-college" (remedial) courses are paired or linked so that reading and study skill instruction is connected with a college-level content course like sociology or biology (Higbee, 2005, p. 301). The learning community is a contemporary trend in growth-oriented education offering programmatic structure of shared core classes, intrusive advising, access to tutors, and learning centers (Boylan, Bonham, & White, 1999; Higbee, 2005; Merisotis & Phipps, 2000). While the growth-oriented model has been proven to be successful through empirical research, the field itself has been unable to change public perception of remediation, something I discuss in the next section.

The Problem with Developmental Education

Losak and Miles (1993) rightly describe developmental education as a normative construct rather than an objective, universal phenomenon (p. 20). Developmental in one context may not be considered to be in another. Which students are defined as underprepared will depend on the institution. Academic standards play a significant role in how institutions define developmental education, as standards are often contextually defined by the state- and institutional- policies. According to the literature, what is deemed to be a remedial standard depends on a host of factors: (a) remedial standards are most often up to the discretion of admission requirements (Brothen & Wambauch, 2004; Saxon & Boylan, 2000); (b) remedial standards are often defined by different types of standardized tests, including college entrance examines, college aptitude tests, and

institutional placement tests (Boylan, Bonham, & White, 1999); and (c) institutions employ a diverse array of strategies for remediation in specific subject areas based on institution-specific norms, grade-level equivalences, and deficiencies or competencies (Meritosis & Phipps, 2000).

For developmental education, the system is unwieldy. Not unlike the first college entrance exam in 1874 and freshman composition courses thereafter, developmental education answers to state and local systems of ranking university applicants, which in turn answer to national systems of standardization. Developmental education must name the academic skill deficiency only in the terms or labels afforded to them by the institution and the state, and the program must respond to the local and state context. It is the responsibility of developmental education to cater to the problem of basic skill instruction, but developmental programs must respond to a host of other pressures implemented through state and local policies. A host of interested actions define what counts as remedial: national and local legislation, industries of standardized assessment, and the local concerns of the institution, itself concerned with national rank and status. A contextually specific system of differentiation defines remedial standards, and it is to this system that academic support programs respond. This is the context that situates Freshman Connection.

Silent Support Programs

Due to a variety of social, political, and historical values, developmental education continues to be “sporadic, underfunded, and inconclusive,” according to Merisotis and Phipps (2000, p. 75). As a result, public discourse remains “fraught with misconceptions about what remediation is, whom it serves, and how it works” (Boylan, 1999, p. 99). Questions about what remediation is and whom it serves often fuel public fears of remediation. It’s a fear that Fox (1999) and Miller (1991) identify in their histories of composition. It’s a fear I felt in the 1990s when I started teaching basic

writing. In recent years, public four-year colleges have been forced to discontinue or restrict remedial programs, typically as a result of state legislatures or higher education boards (Brothen & Wambauch, 2004, p. 16). .

Brothen and Wambauch (2004) explain that many Research One institutions respond by removing "remedial courses in reading and writing by integrating the development of these skills into college-level courses" (p. 18). Freshman Connection is an example of this move. Its inaugural year was 1996, when national discourse on remedial programs brought a heightened sense of fear toward programs perceived to be remedial**,** something I address in Chapter 1**.** Housed in a public, Research One university, Freshman Connection integrates instruction in skills that are deemed pre-college due the level of aptitude. Remedial skills become embedded in the purpose of the course I teach called "FC Seminar"—a class that is expected to introduce students to university culture and to improve skills needed for success. Likewise, some remedial skill instruction occurs in supplemental instruction (SI). In the descriptions of the FC program, however, what is not said about remediation points to the strategic displacement of the term. While there is no mention of remediation, the university categorizes FC students as "academically underprepared," and students are enrolled through a select and separate program.

A number of scholars in the field of developmental education have spoken out about the paradox of such a system. They argue that campuses are able to hide the remedial component of a developmental program because it supports a relatively small number of "underprepared" students (Grubb, 1999); remediation, then, becomes invisible at some large four-year universities. Saxon and Boylan (2001) explain "for a variety of reasons, institution officials actually understate true cost (and extent) of remediation" (p. 6). In some instances, developmental programs must downplay the presence of remediation because of local and statewide policy, as was an effect of the change to admission policies in the UC and CSU system of California in the mid 1990s (see Fox,

1999). The lack of overt and explicit acknowledgement that developmental programs involve remediation perpetuates the myth that rather than being a stable part of all institutions of higher education, remediation is relegated to less selective, four-year universities and community colleges. Consequently, some programs in selective four-year university systems remain invisible despite their effectiveness (Merisotis & Phipps, 2004; Saxon & Boylan, 2000). Freshman Connection is a typical example of the phenomenon described by Grubb (1999) above. It is invisible.

Cultural Difference and Academic Discourse

As I've said before, Freshman Connection was a curious program. Whereas 9% of first-year students were registered as cultural and linguistic minorities in 2007 in the university, of the 41 students in Freshman Connection, half were registered as such. When I started working in the program, I wondered why so little was said about cultural difference in the staff meetings and in the public documents. In my effort to render some of the values which burden the term "developmental education," I must address cultural diversity as it contributes to ideology saturating the image of support programs.

Like the Bakhtinian history of the terms "developmental" and "remedial," in this section I construct a brief history of how educational research has framed the "support" of culturally and linguistically diverse students deemed to be underachieving and underprepared. First, statistically a disproportionate number of underrepresented minorities are enrolled in support programs. Second, support programs become conflated with the term diversity. Third, issues of cultural and linguistic difference have implications for instruction in academic discourse in the university.

Remediation – a Code for Diversity

The brief history of developmental education (above) is attuned to the multiplicity of social, economic, and political pressures that contribute to the denigration of remediation in higher education. One organizing trope in the regime of differentiation

between “remedial” students and prepared college students centers on the issues of cultural difference. For instance, when economic, political and social forces of the 1960s and 1970s contributed to open admissions and increased access for traditionally underrepresented cultural and linguistic minorities, there was a corresponding increase in remediation[4]. Overwhelmingly, when people speak of remediation, they also speak of cultural difference through labels like “minority underachievement” (Powell, 1997), “the achievement gap,” or “at-risk” (Duncan-Andrade, 2004). The phrases often conjure an image of cultural minorities; in the ideological equation, cultural and linguistic difference becomes equated with remediation. As recent as 2002, Badere and Hardin describe how some universities admit underprepared students from cultural minority groups through alternative admission policies which specifically cater to academic deficiencies.

Watson et al.’s (2002) qualitative study on the experience of minority students in predominantly white colleges argues that “a large number of White students believe that students of color receive special privileges such as lower admission standards, compensatory education, support programs, scholarships, and employment opportunities not afforded to them” (p. 8). According to Shaw (1997), “remediation has become a code word for the evils of affirmative action” (p. 286)[5]. The Institute for Research on Higher Education (IRHE) shows that “minority students are disproportionately represented in developmental education. While only 11 percent of Euro-American students attending college were enrolled in remedial courses, 19 percent of African-American students, 19

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[4] Please see Tom Fox’s (1999) *Defending Access* for a thoughtful analysis of the backlash against such programs echoed in the voices of people like William Buckley, Dinesh D’Souza, and Allan Bloom who lamented the decline in standards as a result of accommodating the underserved cultural minorities. I do not have the space for such an analysis here, but I see these public conversations to be part of the discourse which conflates remediation with cultural, linguistic, and class-based difference.

[5] Boylan et al. (1999) argue that a majority of those enrolled in developmental/remedial courses are white. However, national statistics suggest otherwise.

percent of Hispanic students, 19 percent of Asian-American students, and 15 percent of Native American students were enrolled in 1992" (p. 58). More recently, a study in 2000 reported that in California universities almost 75% of African-American first-year students and nearly 65% of Latino first-year students needed developmental classes (Hrabowski, 2005, p. 135).

Cultural difference is not limited to race and ethnicity: socio-economic class is also a factor. According to a study by the Institute for Research in Higher Education (1999), "among financially dependent students, nearly one quarter (22 percent) of those taking remedial courses reported an annual family income of less than $20,000, while only 14 percent of those not enrolled in these courses reported the same income level. … 43 percent of those *not* enrolled in remedial courses reported an annual income of $50,000 or more" (p.58). Most studies establish the pattern of students coming from a lower socio-economic class to be more likely to need remedial instruction in higher education (Shaw, 1997; Boylan et al. 1999; Merisotis & Phipps, 1999; McCabe, 2000; Saxon & Boylan, 2001). Underrepresented minority students and those from a lower socio-economic background are disproportionately represented in developmental education programs, receiving remedial instruction in the three core areas – reading, writing, and math. Weiner (2002) writes that "many of the students who need or are placed in remedial classes have low incomes and are from cultural and linguistic minority groups" (p. 151). In its history, developmental education has been committed to helping these students, to educating our nation's underserved minority groups and our nation's poor (MacDonald & Bernardo, 2005; Merisotis & Phipps, 2000; Shaw, 1997).

Educational Research on Culture

Much effort in educational research has gone into understanding the problem of "minority underachievement." Starting from the statistics listed above, educational research has focused on the impact of cultural difference on student performance in

formal education. Scholarship focuses on an inequitable educational system contributing to a disproportionate representation of underrepresented minorities in remedial elementary, secondary, and post-secondary education (see Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985; Duncan-Andrade, 2004; Fox, 1999; Gee, 1999/2000; Giroux, 1983/1998; Lam, 2006). According to Weiner (2002), “without acknowledging and working on the vast inequalities that plague our cities and schools, we will fail to alleviate the need for remediation” (p. 151). Even public news media tout this position; Perez-Pena (1998) of the *New York Times* explains that students from low socio-economic community, students of color, and students from culturally and linguistically diverse communities on average “suffer disproportionately more from the failures of city’s public schools” (Perez-Pena, 1998).

While scholars agree overwhelmingly that the achievement gap has much to do with systemic problems in public schooling, two key paradigms for conceptualizing culture as it influences student achievement have evolved in the field. Beyond criticizing the school as a powerful force of stratification, the researchers focus on the relationship between home culture and school culture. According to Lam (2006) the research centers on “deficit-difference” conceptualizations of cultural and linguistic difference (p. 215). Educational research of the past 30 years and have contributed to discussions of multicultural education, culturally-appropriate teaching, and the identification of codes cultural power (Cazden, 1989; Delpit, 1995; Kalentzis & Cope, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; New London Group, 2000; Mahiri, 2004; Ogbu, 1988). The deficit-difference models consider habits of minority groups, such as members of racial or ethnic minorities, those of the working class and poor, and those of linguistic difference, as in conflict with those of the majority group, often referred to as white, middle-class. The definition of culture within this framing “ascribes moral and economic value” to a set of cultural traits (Lam, 2006, p. 215). As such, ways of behaving, like language use, communicative style, child-care practices, familial kinships, orientations of space and

time, are identified in order to show the predisposition for achieving or not achieving in formal schooling (Delpit, 1995; Lam, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ybarra, 1983). This is the premise upon which much educational research begins, and the deficit and difference approaches represent two sides of the same coin, one focusing on the deficits or disadvantages, and the other focusing on the positive relevance of cultural difference.

Deficit-Approach to Cultural Difference

In the deficit approach, the cultural habits identified for the minority group are perceived as lacking in comparison with the dominant group. In the 1960s, research examining the phenomenon of minority group underachievement often focused on the "culturally deprived" (Ladson-Billings, 1994). In particular, researchers examined the perceived consent or complicity with the lower status roles often figured for cultural and linguistic minorities in the educational institution (McDermott, 1976; Ogbu, 1988). For example, McDermott's (1976) term of social "pariah" represented how cultural minorities stood in opposition to the majority culture. While this approach emphasized academic failure as wholly environmental and social, it also situated the problem in the children or their families, as deficiencies (Ladson-Billings, 1994). The models for approaching students from this position adopt an "assimilationist" teaching style, where "the teacher's role is to ensure that the students fit into society" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 22).

Of course, much research went into to showing how behaviors of the "disadvantaged" should be understood in terms of the differential access to power. For example, the oppositional behavior of "social pariahs" could be understood as powerful and important resistance to hegemonic structures of the school (Giroux, 1983; MacLeod, 1987; Ogbu, 1988; Willis, 1977). Paul Willis' (1977) sociological study described how Lads choose oppositional culture as it offers them a direct link to working-class culture. He writes that an individual's "affiliation with the non-conformist group carries with it a

whole range of a more or less consistent view of what sort of people he wants to end up working with, and what situation will be the fullest expression of his developing cultural skills" (1977, p. 95). Similarly, Jay MacLeod's work in Chicago examines the impact of counter-culture in the lives of his participants; he writes, "oppositional cultural patterns draw on elements of working-class culture" (1987, p. 22). Even though Willis (1977) and Macleod (1987) explicate the hegemonic structures influencing the masculine roles boys adopt or take up in and out of school in response to the hegemony, they also contribute to the deficit concept. Research continues to identify the ways in which the members of the minority group adopt negative cultural traits that are counter to school-sanctioned practices. This paradigm, according to Lam (2006), becomes inscribed by an ideology of difference in which deficiency is cast onto minority groups, something she sees visibly apparent in "racial connotations of terminologies such as 'inner-city' and 'at-risk' children (Lam, 2006, p. 216).

A similar understanding of university students exists. I draw from Linda Powell's (1997) concept of discourse of deficit in the essay "The Achievement Knot" to advance my position that some universities not only anticipate the deficiency of culturally diverse students; they perpetuate it. Powell argues that minority underachievement is a product of powerful university discourses in which the material information provided for students of color in effect positions those students as deficient, the discourse of deficit (Powell, 1997, p. 4). White students, on the other hand, receive messages of their own potential, the discourse of potential (Powell, p. 4). A knot becomes the metaphor for describing the binary. This is a systemic relationship in which groups are positioned socially in two divergent trajectories. Often drawing from personal experience as a woman of color, Powell reveals how some university messages in discourse delimit who has full access to the university and who does not, and these messages are embedded in discourse that pretends not to be making such claims. She delineates concrete strategies universities adopt, through different admission packets letters, advising techniques, and grading

practices that dictate the social positions for students of color as deficient. In developmental education the agenda of helping students understand the formally sanctioned conventions and codes of the university in many ways seems to promote students' assimilation to the university; from this perspective students' perceived academic deficiencies are understood as cultural disadvantage. It embraces the "discourse of deficit." Even as universities build a support system for underrepresented minorities into the mission of the university, "the result of such emphasis can mean that individuals from underrepresented groups are encouraged to adapt to the existing, often inhospitable environment of the majority culture on college campuses" (Watson et al., 2002, p. 7).

The Difference Approach to Cultural Difference

The difference paradigm affirms the cultural relevance of minority groups. Instead of casting social interaction, like cultural behavior, language use, communicative style, child-care, and family practices in terms of differences as deficits, researchers emphasize the relevance and strengths of difference. Early research identified the ways in which home culture or community-shared practices have value for students (Au & Jordan, 1981; Cazden, 1988; Delpit, 1995; Heath, 1983; Scollon & Scollon, 1981). Heath (1983) illustrates how African-American working-class and Euro-American working-class children grow up using vastly different language patterns at home than the pattern used at school. She shows how linguistic differences translate into patterns of academic failure. In the same vein, Labov (1972) cites early psychological research which defined the language of African-American children as having "no means for logical thought" (1972, p. 166) which contributed to a host of research that led to the "notion of verbal deprivation" and inferiority (p. 175). Through linguistic analysis researchers were able to show that African-American English Vernacular was no different than other dialects; it "has well-formed rules of its own and forms a distinct linguistic system" (p. 183). While many linguistic studies validated certain linguistic choices, few curricular changes

emerged in classrooms for managing the difference between language styles of students and teachers. Heath (1983) argues that working-class children had difficulty making sense of the white, female, middle-class style of talk. Delpit (1988) similarly explains that linguistic style poses problems in educational environments when the teacher and student have different backgrounds. More recently, Richardson (2003) shows that work with African-American Vernacular English in first-year composition approached the dialect in terms of the logic of error, but little has been done to resolve the pattern of over-representation of African American students in basic writing (p. 13). Clearly how to approach difference in dialect and linguistic patterns in curricular designs is still hotly debated. Freedman and Ball (2004) explain that people use language to establish a social place; as such, "the choice learners make about what types of language to acquire and use are political just as the decisions teachers make about what types of language to promote and accept" (p. 5). Language is a heightened mode of identification in academic settings.

In short, in the difference-paradigm researchers emphasize the positive relevance of multicultural environments. Oftentimes teachers provide explicit instruction on the culture of power or the language of power while affirming the ability of code switching (Cazden, 1988; Delpit, 1995; The New London Group, 1996). In culturally relevant teaching, according to Ladson-Billings (1994), teachers "help students make connections between their local, national, racial, cultural and global identities" (p. 25). In student development theory, the growth-model of supporting students in college transition intersects with the difference paradigm for supporting students outlined briefly above. In particular, Higbee (2001) argues that programs need to adopt Gee's (1996) conceptual framing of Discourse in order to promote multiculturalism in developmental programs. Higbee writes that "By recognizing our students' primary Discourses, we validate the unique configuration of life experiences that each individual brings to the classroom, rather than imposing on our students a sense of themselves 'as the other'" (p. 53). From this perspective, much of the curriculum in the developmental support program identifies

the habits of study they bring; the personal behaviors which keep students organized, managed, and productive; the social relationships that lend to feeling connected and engaged in the culture.

When these two approaches (growth-model and culture as difference) come together to inform the policies of a support program for students deemed underprepared, they promote attributes and characteristics in students' negotiation of the university. However, such an approach can be limited by static definitions of culture as an immutable set of characteristics. It suggests that students can smoothly shift or switch from one community to another because culture is a static feature among communities. In the particular case of African-American students, Young (2006) cautions that such an approach forces "black students … to identify one language as theirs and another as something more standard" (p. 97). Honoring home culture goes only so far, for students still learn which behaviors, which language practices, which communication styles are appropriate for the standard, majority culture. As scholars argue for linguistic code switching (Cazden, 2000; Delpit, 1995; Heath, 1983, Lo Bianco, 2000), others (Freedman & Ball, 2004; Richardson, 2004; Young, 2006) suggest that approaches of appropriation ignore the political conflict inherent in language use. Such a criticism informs current thinking of culture as more fluid than fixed.

Academic Discourse

Importantly, cultural and language differences are central issues in teaching academic discourse, a primary goal of support programs as well as a first-year writing, and rhetoric programs. In the field of composition the focus on helping students deemed to be "basic writers" learn to read and write academic discourse has included a discussion of how to approach differences (Bartholomae, 1985; Bizzell, 1978/1985/1999). Like the move from deficit-models to difference-models in educational research, research on how "basic" writers negotiate the conventions and styles of academic discourse has spanned

over 30 years (Anzaldua, 1987; Bartholomae, 1985; Bizzell, 1985/1999; Lu, 1992; Miller, 1991; Rose, 1989; Shaughnessy, 1978).

Grounded in a social constructivist approach to language in the 1980s (Bruffee, 1986: Faigley, 1989) [6], composition studies contests definitions of literacy as a finite set of transferable skills; rather, literacy involved an intricate system of social and contextual customs related to negotiations of culture but closely connected to cognition. In this paradigm, language acquisition is contextually shaped by social and cultural factors (Vygotsky, 1978). As literacy scholarship extends literacy to include an assortment of practices across communities (Cazden, 1988; Goodman, 1988; Heath, 1983; Moll, 1994; Scribner, 1984), the term "academic discourse" emerges in composition studies. For example, Patricia Bizzell (1978) introduces "academic discourses" as a means for distinguishing differences between discourse communities. With respect to "basic writers" both Mike Rose (1989) and David Bartholomae (1985) emphasize that students are unfamiliar with the conventions of "academic discourse" as opposed to being intellectually deficient. Bizzell (1999) explains that distinguishing "academic discourse" was meant to counter prevalent characterizations of "basic writers" as intellectually deficient. Mirroring research in education on cultural and linguistic difference, composition studies highlights differences as not deficiencies. By the 1980s and 1990s, academic discourse emerged in an enculturation model introducing students to the university as an academic discourse community.

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[6] Historical perspectives of literacy illustrate the theoretical shifts shaping contemporary perspectives of academic discourse in composition through scholars like Goody & Watt (1968), Havelock (1981), Graff (1995), Ong (1982), Kaestle (1985), Resnick & Resnick (1977), Heath (1982), and Scribner (1984). Also, see David Bartholomae and Anthony Petrosky's *Facts, Artifacts, and Counterfacts* (1986) along with Knoblauch and Brannon's *Critical Teaching and the Idea of Literacy* (1993).

Gee's Big "D" Discourse (1996) informs perceptions of academic discourse, defining discourse as social language that includes ways of behaving, thinking, valuing, and interacting with tools, settings and other people. Drawing on Foucault's (1975) theories of discourse as including social practices, Gee highlights the distinction between "primary Discourses" and "secondary Discourses" (p. 137), which distinguishes between social contexts that shape primary uses of language at home for individuals—the primary Discourse—and those secondary language styles in communities students experience beyond their primary home settings—secondary Discourse. In composition studies, likewise, Bizzell (1999) describes an academic discourse community similar to Gee's Discourse; she writes that academic discourse is as able "to 'create' the participants that suit its conventions by allowing individuals no other options if they wish to be counted as participants" (Bizzell, p. 9). The implication is that academic Discourse included identifying oneself as a member and gaining authority in the community. Bruce (1994), drawing on Gee's d/Discourse (1996), explains that university students will interact with academic discourse as secondary Discourses, and some students from non-dominant groups must engage secondary Discourses with which they have little experience. In response, some teachers design curricula to acculturate students to the codes and conduct needed to access and become legitimate members of an academic discourse community, of a secondary, authoritative Discourse (Bartholomae 1986; Bruce 1994; Harris, 2001). In this view, students "have to appropriate (or be appropriated by) a specialized discourse" (Bartholomae 1986, p. 3). For students in transition to the university, the development is "an enculturation process, one that involves initially peripheral and, later, full participation in new communities" (Bruce, 1994, p. 293). Much of the scholarship building from this point of view highlights a process of enculturation for students, particularly those deemed basic writers (Bartholomae & Petrosky, 1986; Bruce, 1994; Harris, 2001; Horner, 1996; Knoblauch & Brannon, 1993; Rose, 1985; and Soliday, 1996).

By the mid 1990s some composition scholars begin to challenge the underlying assumptions of academic discourse, arguing that “academic discourse” over-generalized both “basic writers” and academic communities as a fixed (Harris, 1989/2001). A turn toward conceptions of academic discourse as a multiplicity of genres and language-use conventions emerges. Recent scholarship in activity-theory in composition, likewise, has shown that multiple activity systems inform university discourse practices (Bazerman, 1997; Russell, 1997; Wardle, 2004). Studies suggest that composition courses have incongruous objectives in preparing college writers since writing is situated within a variety of activity systems each with multiple genres across the university (Russell, 1997). Similarly, in the UK, approaches to academic discourse include a model of “academic literacies” (Lea, 2005; Lea & Street, 2008). Academic literacies as a concept highlights the need to situate practices of reading and writing and constructing knowledge within and across institutional disciplines that cater to the discipline-specific fields of practice as well as shared practices of specific universities and departments. Emphasizing how sociocultural contexts shape particular ways of constructing knowledge, Lea (2005) says that academic literacies “offers a critique to the benign view of the novice student gradually moving towards full participation … and engaging in writing practices similar to those of the established academic members of that community” (p. 193). Academic literacies emphasizes issues of power in institutional practices as very much a part of learning to read and write for academic university contexts (Lea, 2004/2005; Lea & Street, 2008). Current composition research, then, counters the static and fixed concept of “academic discourse”; instead, a variety of discourse communities flourish in universities, all instantiated by power relations and identities. Moving from a more static definition of discourse community to multiple discourse communities in the university is connected to current trends in educational research on cultural identities.

Cultural Hybridity and Negotiation

Educational research over the years has moved to legitimize difference as part of daily interactions. Scholars emphasize the benefits of framing culture as sites of hybridization and borderlands (Anzaldua, 1987; Gutiérrez, Baquedano-Lopez, & Tejado, 1999). The emphasis in hybridity and borderlands is an unending process of negotiation, like Bakhtin's dialogism. An agenda in borderland inquiries is to challenge essentialism and static views of culture because discursive spaces of hybridity involve dialogic tendencies that produce cultural practices that are fluid and contextually-evolving. The more individuals engage with communities, the more sites for overlapping (Lam, 2006). A growing literature base has focused on the productive nature of borderland sites where culture is understood less as a stable identity of class, race, or gender affiliation. It is instead characterized by "ways of acting and participating in diverse social groups and the heterogeneous sets of cultural knowledge, skills, and competence that are acquired in the process" (Lam, 2006, p. 217).

According to Lam (2006) in an increasingly global world where participation in shared practices flows across geographic, linguistic, cultural, and class-based boundaries, a fluid concept of culture is necessary. Lam draws from Gutiérrez and Rogoff's (2003) notion of "repertoires of practices" to define how people flow across practices with increased dexterity; culture emerges as "ways in which people's affiliations are dispersed across a variety of social practices, communities, and social geographies and how they develop repertoires of skills and competencies through their engagement in heterogeneous communities" (Lam, 2006, p. 217). Negotiation, like the kind practiced in conscious code mixing, becomes integral to learning (Kalantzis and Cope 2000, p. 123). Rather than force students to assimilate, Lam (2006) conceptualizes culture as processes of group affiliation, which offers a productive frame for thinking about how students perform in a university support program. Negotiation becomes a core part of group affiliation whereby minority and majority groups inter-penetrate, intervene, and mix in

social spaces. Attention to these moments of intervening and mixing is educationally pertinent. Teachers should look for and pay attention to the affective and associative dimensions sometimes compressed in discourse but present nonetheless (Lewis, Ketter, & Fabos, 2005; Teiner, 2005).

Over thirty years ago, Erickson (1987)[7] said that to consider school achievement "is to consider school motivation and achievement as a political process in which issues of institutional legitimacy, identity, and economic interest are central" (1987, p. 341). An effort to de-politicize the classroom was motivated by teachers' needs to effectively navigate the social complexity of borderland areas. But current sociocultural literacy theory reminds us that it is impossible to eliminate affect and politics from classroom discourses, because language is imbued with history, feeling, politics, and contestation. While some of the literature on students deemed underprepared for the university glosses over the politics and affect of difference in these programs, my work is about those forces. In the examination of Freshman Connection, I was interested in borderland negotiations as a means for students to work through difference and chart identities.

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[7] In "Transformation and school success: The politics and culture of educational achievement," Erickson (1987) overviews two paradigms in education in research of low achievement of some minorities, the first is about cultural difference of communication in the institutional setting of school; the second, drawn primarily from Ogbu (1988), focuses on the material effects of the economic market which positions domestic minorities without access.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Overview

This work is informed by the belief that emic points of view are relevant and integral to literature informing policy on university academic support programs. To this end, as a qualitative teacher-researcher, I began a study of Freshman Connection knowing that I would likely shift between the roles of participant and observer while looking into multiple perspectives of the program, a complex task that Chiseri-Strater and Sunstein (2006) describe as "stepping in and stepping out of the researcher stance" (p. 51). The inquiry of this dissertation grew out of my first experiences teaching in Freshman Connection. In this chapter, I situate Freshman Connection institutionally, historically, culturally, and politically to frame the assumptions I brought to the site. I describe in more detail the relationships among context, participants, data collection, data analysis, and my role as a teacher-researcher.

Context

Following research initiatives that call for a close examination of support programs within their institutional contexts (Barefoot, 2000; Engberg and Mayhew, 2007; Meritosis & Phipps, 2004; Saxon & Boylan, 2000; Shaw, 1997), I focused on a support program at a large, public Research One university with a successful rate of student retention and designed in accordance with current literature in developmental education and student development theory (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, and Associates, 2005; Higbee, 2005; Saxon & Boylan, 2000). As a support program, FC served a relatively small number of students on a large campus, and as a result, it offered a manageable venue for examination of the often quiet role of such support programs on Research One campuses. I selected FC as the case to be studied for two reasons (Merriam, 1998). First,

FC was "typical" according to literature on first-year academic support programs on large, Research One public universities, which generally enroll a small number of students deemed academically underprepared (Grubb, 1999; Gutiérrez, Hunter, & Arzubiaga, 2009; Merisotis & Phipps, 2000; Stygall, 1998). Second, as an instructor in the program, I was curious about how administrative structures function in the development and maintenance of support programs. In the following section, I explain why FC presented a promising case.

Freshman Connection: A Support Program

The research of this dissertation focused on a support program at a Big Ten university I call Heartland State Flagship University (HSFU)[8]. A large, Research One public university, HSFU annually enrolled over 25,000 graduate and undergraduate students. It included professional schools in Medicine, Law, & Dentistry. It participated in NCAA Division I intercollegiate sports. Freshman Connection was just one example of institutional support services designed for first-year students. In particular, FC modeled best practices described in the empirical research of student development theory reviewed in Chapter 2, including a required course called FC seminar, which integrated college transition issues and academic enrichment of literacy and study skills. In addition, FC implemented "supplemental instruction" (SI) which provided extra tutoring for the required general education courses of the first-year, learning assistance centers, and a strong academic advising component (Higbee, 2005). Compared to the approximate 4,200 regularly admitted first-year students in the fall of 2007, FC recruited, enrolled, and supported just 41 students. While there were few FC students, they were disproportionately members of non-dominant cultural groups, first-generation students,

[8] I use a pseudonym for the university context, the program name, and most titles that identify the research site by name. Heartland State Flagship University represented the characteristics I found important to the study: a public flagship university in a Midwestern state.

and student-athletes compared to the general population of undergraduate students. For example, at HSFU in the fall of 2007, 8.5% in-coming first-year students were identified as students of color. In FC in 2007, 24 of the 41 students were identified as students of color, accounting for over half of the FC students (58%). As an institutional program, FC was one of many initiatives at HSFU supporting the retention of students from underrepresented groups as part of a mission to increase diversity outlined in the Office of the Provost's long-term agenda.

Following the best practices outlined in the student development literature, HSFU admissions placed students in the FC program based on test scores, GPA, and an admissions index number. The Office of the Provost funded and provided oversight of the program as part of its administration of Academic Student Services. Designed to connect academic development and support services on campus, FC linked core general education courses, supplemental instruction, a freshman seminar and basic skills instruction, learning assistance centers, and advising. The FC seminar course integrated a precollege orientation, combining academic enrichment with an introduction to the challenges of understanding and navigating the often unspoken norms of the university.

In addition to academics, FC had a centralized administrative structure within the academic advising office for scheduling courses and services, which fostered communication between educators and administrators about the progress of FC students over the academic year. Orientation meetings for faculty and staff were required at the beginning of each term. Four study-group tutors received training before the start of each academic year, while instructors of FC seminar had backgrounds working with students deemed underprepared writers—generally having taught a form of "basic writing" or having worked in writing centers. Although the program did not require frequent tests, instructors of the seminar sent required bi-weekly progress reports on student performances. As a result, instructors incorporated frequent assessments evaluating the progress of students in the form of in-class quizzes and formal writing assignments.

Finally, FC was particularly adept at integrating classroom, learning assistance, and laboratory activities, as the centralized structure of FC housed in the Center for Academic Advising scheduled these activities into weekly requirements for students in the support program. On the whole, FC adhered to 12 of 14 best policies and practices identified by Boylan, Bonham, and White (1999) in support-program education.

Over the last decade, FC's success had been noted in Committee reports and intra- and inter-institutional assessments, including a Re-accreditation Committee from 2005 - 2008 and a National College Associate of Athletics (NCAA) Self-Study of Compliance in 2001 – 2003. Reports illustrated that FC produced retention rates equal to and at times superior to the general student population for the years of 1997 - 2007 (Office of the Provost, May 2008). In the first year of the program, the academic year of 1995 - 1996, FC reported the retention of 15 of 18 students. In the second year (1996 - 1997), 27 of the 30 enrolled students remained into the second year of college. The 1999 cohort included a persistence rate of 85% and an average grade-point average at 2.70. Rates of retention in the program have remained above 80% since its inaugural year in 1995. In short, the Office of the Provost consistently listed FC as a successful campus initiative for supporting students deemed to be "at-risk" for academic failure.

According to Watson, Terrell, Wright, and Associates (2002), qualitative methodology is particularly appropriate for examining how students engage "institutional climate, norms, beliefs, and missions," thereby helping administrators understand student responses (p. 27). Examining how students in the FC program negotiated the first year of college might provide insight into important processes of engagement in the FC seminar that played a role in fostering good rates of student retention. Situated through an instructor's experience in the program, this study framed FC as complex site for sponsoring literacy and student success.

The History of FC

In chapter one, I outlined briefly the affirmative action policies of significance in the U.S. political scene when FC was proposed at Heartland State Flagship University. FC apparently began with the support of a cohort of administrators across disciplinary units and in conjunction with campus-level advisory committees in 1995 as a replacement of a summer transition program for students recruited to the university but with limited educational backgrounds. While it was unclear in my research whether the replacement of a summer precollege transition program with Freshman Connection was a direct result of the politics of affirmative-action and remediation of the 1990s in higher education, it was evident that resisting the terms “risk program” or “remedial program” was an explicit agenda of the FC program.

In its first year in 1996, implementation of the FC and its core course, FC seminar, was coordinated among a variety of disciplinary units on campus, such as the Office of the Provost, the Center for Academic Advising, and Athletics Student Support. At the time of my study, the administrative structures involved in FC included the Office of the Provost, Athletics Student Support, Center for Diversity and Enrichment, Student Disability Services, Office of Admissions, and the First-Year Writing Program. The administrative structure remained relatively stable for the first seven years. However, in the fall of 2003, the academic advising center hired an assistant director in the Center for Academic Advising who replaced the former assistant director of Freshman Connection. Just two years later, in 2005, when I began as an instructor in the FC program, the supervisor of the FC seminars, a professor in the College of Education, transferred to a different university. As a result, the FC seminar’s new academic home was the first-year writing program. Already closely tied with student support services, the first-year writing program was a smooth fit for FC. In short, when I conducted this study, the program had evolved slightly due to some of the small administrative changes. I outline those changes in Table 1 (below):

Table 1: Administrative Changes in Freshman Connection

Semester	**Administrative Changes**
Fall 1994	Proposal of Freshman Connection Program
Spring 1995	FC Seminar Course numbers registered through the College of Education
Fall 1995	Initial Year of FC Program
Spring 2003	New Program Coordinator in Center for Academic Advising
Spring 2005	Moved Supervision of FC seminar to College of Liberal Arts
Fall 2005	New Supervisor of FC seminar

History of FC Seminar

One obstacle of implementing the FC program in 1995 was proposing a two-semester sequence of courses in the general education curriculum limited to only FC students—courses that had to be coordinated with other campus units, like the Center for Academic Advising and the academic department identified to house the general education course called FC seminar. Having only a few months to propose and argue the need for these new courses, the Director of Freshman Connection proposed the FC seminar course sequence with the help of a supervising faculty member in the College of Education. As a result, the College of Education became the academic unit sponsoring FC seminar as a legitimate, credit-bearing two-semester seminar. Like the administrative evolution outlined above, FC seminar underwent small changes in the program. For example, in the first year (1995 – 1996), FC seminar was described as a study skills course. However, in the spring of1996, the FC seminar supervising faculty coordinator collaborated with graduate teaching associates to revamp curriculum in FC seminars. The courses fostered an anthropological study of culture in higher education. The curricular

approach to the seminar followed an enculturation model; students were treated as novice members of the university discourse community and were invited to examine the codes and conventions of the community so as to learn what is expected of them (Bartholomae, 1985; Bruce, 1994; Delpit, 1995; Lea & Street, 1998). For example, in the first years, students were described as being assigned to compare non-academic books with college textbooks or to compare "regular" talk with professor talk. The objective was to learn the habits of the culture and to create a process of enculturation while building academic and study skills as part of the curriculum.

Over ten years, maintenance of FC and its core course, FC seminar, depended on collaboration across many units on HSFU, including student support services, admissions, academic departments, and athletics. On a large campus of over 25,000 graduate and undergraduate students, collaboration across diverse campus units created occasions for obstacles, but, for the most part, a concerted effort by the administrators across these units established, maintained, and developed the FC program at HSFU over time. So too, the FC program enjoyed relative autonomy on the large campus, offering a range of academic opportunities and development of various practices during its history. In this study, I focused on perspectives of the FC program during the academic 2007 – 2008 year, and many of the participants of the study were actively working in the FC program during that year. As a result, the study provided a brief glimpse in time into the then-current practices and perspectives of the FC program, which were subject to change in subsequent years.

Participants

In qualitative case studies, researchers typically describe two levels of sampling (Merriam, 1998, p. 64), including the site and the participants. Because I taught in the FC program, I followed a purposive sampling method when identifying the participants of the study. Rather than interviewing all individuals associated with FC, I selected

individuals based on "network" sampling, a form of purposive sampling in which participants helped me identify relevant administrators and recent instructors in the FC program (Merriam, p. 63). The participants of this study were organized into three groups: (a) administrators; (b) instructors; and (c) students. In the administrator and instructor groups, participants had a range of experience in the program while the focal students were all enrolled in Freshman Connection at HSFU during the 2007 – 2008 academic year. In the next section, I describe the institutional roles of the participants.

Administrators[9]

In the administrator group, all six of the participants held positions within specific campus units, like the Center for Academic Advising, but their duties at HSFU spanned a variety of campus-level initiatives including but not limited to Freshman Connection. The administrators who consented to be part of this study were actively involved in the FC program in the academic year of 2007 – 2008, excluding one administrator whose transfer to a different university in 2005 eliminated his supervisory role with FC but with whom I remained in contact after his departure, as did many others at HSFU. However, two administrators were far more involved in the daily maintenance and supervision of the FC program, which I describe briefly below. While all administrators reviewed and provided oversight of FC, there was no administrator who worked solely on coordination of the program. Following "network" sampling (Merriam, 1998), I began with the most immediate supervisors in the FC program, and I followed a trajectory toward campus-level administrators in the Office of the Provost.[10] I selected six administrators with

[9] I use pseudonyms for position titles of the administrators of this study, and I have decided as a researcher to use the titles to distinguish the role of administrator from instructor and student participants who will have first name pseudonyms.

[10] In my data collection, I wanted to capture a sense of how administrative perspectives of FC change with proximity. This purposive sampling continued to inform my analysis of the institutional context of FC. The six administrators offered insightful perspectives regarding the institutional context of HSFU in relation to FC.

varying levels of involvement in the program at the time of the study, the academic year of 2007 – 2008. All administrator participants had extensive obligations beyond the FC program as administrative faculty on a large, public research institution. Other than the Assistant Director of FC, for whom FC duties accounted for approximately 20% of his employment responsibilities, many of the administrators worked in Freshman Connection without receiving much compensation. The participation was often described as generosity on the part of campus-units as well as these administrators. Precisely because these administrators each had a history of excellent contributions to campus-level initiatives, they were clearly trusted with visible and important campus-wide policies at HSFU, including Freshman Connection. I describe the participants in more detail below.

In Table 2, I describe some of campus roles each administrator participated in during the academic year of the study. While it was not an exhaustive list, I wanted to depict the extent to which each participated in campus initiatives at HSFU, including but not limited to Freshman Connection. The list of responsibilities included here best illustrated the array of administrative obligations each administrator juggled during an academic year, which was typical of this large, public Research One institution. What is more, the administrators were fairly involved in a variety of student support services that intersected with the designs of Freshman Connection. Of course, the level of participation in the Freshman Connection program differed for each. For example, administrators working in the Academic Advising Center were far more involved with student support services and therefore more involved in the design and coordination of the FC program. On the other hand, an administrator in the Office of the Provost was involved in oversight, but not the design and coordination of the program. As a result, administrative participants span an array of roles from campus-level down to the specific academic department housing the FC seminar (see Table 2).

Table 2: Institutional Roles of Administrator Participants

HFSU Position	FC Position	FC Duties	Major Responsibilities Beyond FC at HFSU	Service on Major HFSU Committees
First-year Writing Program, Chair Faculty; Associate Professor	FC Seminar Supervisor	Hiring Instructors; Supervising & Observing Instructors; FC Staff Orientation; Freshman Connection Supervisory Committee	Scholarship; Rolling Graduate Seminars; First-year Writing (three courses per year); First-year Seminar (one course);	Council on Teaching, Chair; Re-accreditation Committee; General Education Curriculum Committee; The Student Success Committee; University Relations Committee
Assistant Director Center for Academic Advising, Staff	Assistant Director of FC	Admission Procedures; Hiring/Training Tutors; Hiring Instructors; FC Orientation; Freshman Connection Supervisory Committee	First-year Seminar; Supervising academic counselors/advisors; Liaison to College Transition Seminars	Student Entry & Transition Subcommittee; First-Year Experience Committee; Encourage Student Engagement Committee
Director Center for Academic Advising, Staff	Director of FC	Admission Procedures; Hiring Tutors; Hiring Instructors; FC Orientation; FC Oversight; Freshman Connection Supervisory Committee	Assistant Provost of Enrollment Services in Division of Admissions; Direct Academic Advising; Liaison to Center for Diversity & Enrichment and Honors Program	Re-accreditation Committee; Committee on Next Generation Student Information System; Learning Communities Committee; General Education Advisory Committee; Student Success
Director of Athletic Student Service & Compliance Staff	Freshman Connection Coordinator in Athletics	Admission Procedures; FC Orientation; Communication between Departments; Coordinates Student Support; Freshman Connection Supervisory Committee	Athletics administrator: Academic support services and monitoring, counseling, tutoring, learning center, retention program. Certification & Compliance.	NCAA Peer Review Committees: NCAA Division One Committee for Athletic Certification;
Associate / Vice Provost of Academic Affairs: Faculty Professor	Supervisory Role of FC	Rare Case Admission Decisions; Oversight, & Evaluation of FC program for Provost Office on Freshman Connection Supervisory Committee	Dean of the University College: College Transition; Student Academic Services: Office of Admissions, Office of Registrar, Academic Advising Center, Evaluation	Re-accreditation Committee; Common Academic Experiences: The General Education Curriculum, co-chair; Academic Technology Advisory Council; Center for Teaching;

FC Seminar Supervisor:

The Chair of first-year writing became the FC Seminar Supervisor in the fall of 2005, which included hiring, advising, and supporting FC seminar instructors. Of the FC faculty and staff, she was the most involved with the FC seminar instructors. During an academic semester, she met regularly with the FC instructors and she was a consistent source of support. Her other duties in the first-year writing program, like teaching sections of first-year writing in an academic year, were also pertinent because she had experience with teaching FC students in her first-year writing sections. As administrative faculty and teaching faculty in first-year writing, she offered an important vantage point of the FC Program. In addition to her duties with FC, she conducted scholarship, served on committees, and advised graduate teaching associates (see Table 2, Row 1).

Assistant FC Director:

Joining the Center for Academic Advising in 2003, the assistant FC Director was the first administrator interview I conducted in the academic year. Of the administrators, his staff position as an Assistant Director of Advising at the Center for Academic Advising was very involved in the daily maintenance of FC. About 20% of his work week was allocated to the FC program. The following were his duties as assistant director of FC: evaluating FC student profiles for admission; hiring and training student study group tutors; interviewing and hiring FC seminar instructors; organizing and directing fall orientation for FC students and parents; and coordinating communication between Center for Athletics, Advising, Student Support services, Center for Diversity, FC seminar instructors, and study group tutors. He also taught first-year seminars through the Center for Academic Advising and coordinated duties with academic advising counselors. In addition, he was involved many committees throughout the academic year (see Table 2, Row 2).

FC Program Director:

Having been an integral figure in establishing and sustaining the FC program, the FC Director was an important perspective. As the Director for the Center of Academic Advising, she provided a perspective about the FC program as it related to other support initiatives on the campus for first-year students. Also, she designed the program at its inception. Besides providing a perspective on how FC related to other first-year campus supports, the FC Director described the history of FC from its beginning in 1995. Like other administrative staff in the Center for Academic Advising, she participated in a number of campus initiatives (see Table 2, Row 3).

Assistant Athletic Director:

Also involved with the FC program from the beginning, the Assistant Athletic Director provided a perspective on FC as it related to the support of student-athletes in their first year of college study. He was able to triangulate the history of FC as it had been described by other participants, and he was in the unique position to address the relationship between HSFU and the Department of Athletics. His work with and oversight of NCAA compliance offered an important glimpse into the complex relationship between the institution and the support of recruited student-athletes. As a former student-athlete himself, the Assistant Athletic Director spoke to the acute issues facing first-year student athletes in FC. His administrative staff position in Athletics also involved many responsibilities on campus (see Table 2, Row 4).

Vice Provost:

Representing the point of view of Office of Provost, the Vice Provost of Student Academic Affairs provided a perspective on FC as it was described by the Office of the Provost. As a participant, he had the least amount of on-the-ground experience with FC, but he was extremely capable at situating FC in relation to other HSFU initiatives for supporting first-year students. In particular, the Vice Provost described in detail the

relationship between FC and initiatives for supporting underrepresented student minority groups. Also, I was able to ask about the oversight and evaluation of FC over the past decade. As both an administrator and faculty member, the Vice Provost participated on numerous HSFU initiatives (see Table 2, Row 5).

Former FC Seminar Supervisor:

While the five administrators above were all working at HSFU during the time of my study, the Former FC Seminar Supervisor was not. Having transferred to a different university in the fall of 2005, his perspective was that of a former administrative faculty at HSFU. He provided the history of the FC program and its design in the early years. Like the Director of FC, he was involved from the very beginning, and he triangulated the history of the program as described by other participants. I found his perspective particularly useful as I followed a constant comparative analysis between tracing current perspectives of the FC program with and against the descriptions of its history. Of the six administrators, he provided a particularly frank description of the origin of FC. He was no longer working in FC or at HSFU. As a result, his perspective was limited to describing the history of FC and not the current practices of the program. I did not include the Former Seminar Supervisor in Table 2 as he did not hold current responsibilities at HSFU.

FC Instructors

When I began teaching in the program in the fall of 2005, I didn't have a strong grasp of the program's history. Even with recent instructors sharing their syllabi with me, I struggled to find and articulate the objectives the FC seminar as it related to the larger program. Based on my first year in FC, I was interested as a researcher in comparing how teachers described their introduction to the FC program with my own experience. While I explored the history of FC as a program when interviewing the six administrators, the instructors provided perspectives on the current and most recent practices. Because the

case study of FC focused on analyzing current perspectives of the FC program in the academic 2007 – 2008 year, I selected two instructors currently teaching the FC seminar in the program and three instructors of the recent past, which spanned about five years of service in FC. The three former teachers I had met during my own transition into the program in the academic year of 2004 – 2005. Like administrators, I wanted a sample of instructors with a variety of experience in FC. Some of the instructors described themselves as veteran instructors with a great deal of experience teaching in higher education while others were in their first five years of teaching in higher education. I describe each in brief here:

Helen:

Hired as an adjunct in the fall of 2004, Helen offered a perspective on the program from the vantage point of a veteran instructor having taught in the community college sector as well as HSFU as a graduate student years before. She had a lot of experience with teaching a variety of courses to first-year students. A Euro-American woman in her mid-forties, Helen offered frank descriptions on the FC program during our interview. Her cohorts included Dylan and Betty in the academic year of 2004 – 2005.

Dylan:

Similar to Helen, Dylan, a Euro-American man in his forties, described himself as a veteran instructor of composition. He also taught in the community college sector. Dylan, like Helen, offered the perspective of a teacher who knew the community of HFSU well. Both Dylan and Helen provide the perspective of adjunct faculty in the FC program.

Betty:

Although Betty worked with Dylan and Helen for an academic year, she was hired into the program before Helen and Dylan. As a result, she offered a perspective of

the FC seminar as it had evolved in the recent five years. Unlike Helen and Dylan, Betty was a graduate student when she taught in FC for four years. Her final year of teaching in the program was the academic year of 2005 – 2006, and she helped me tremendously during my first year teaching in FC. I thought of Betty as a link to the past in FC. A Euro-American woman in her thirties, Betty had extensive experience in writing centers and as an instructor of first-year writing prior to her doctoral work. Like Dylan and Helen, she described having a lot of experience in teaching first-year students.

Stephanie:

Also hired as a graduate teaching associate, Stephanie started in the program in my second year as an instructor. Like Betty, she became an important source of professional development, and we frequently collaborated on classroom projects. A Euro-American woman in her mid-thirties from the West Coast, Stephanie had a few years of experience teaching undergraduates, but she did not describe herself as a veteran teacher. Likewise, she did not have experience working in university writing centers or working with community college students. However, by the time of the study, she was being trained in HSFU's writing center. Stephanie provided the perspective of an instructor with a moderate level of experience teaching first-year writing as a GTA.

Lisa:

During the time of this study, Lisa began her first year of teaching in the FC program. Lisa was a graduate student who had recently begun a doctoral program after completing a Masters degree. She was a graduate teaching associate in first-year writing during her MA work. A Euro-American woman in her mid-twenties, Lisa offered an important perspective of a relatively new graduate teaching associate in her transition to the program. Precisely because the FC instructor position was typically a graduate teaching associate position, Lisa's perspective was important considering how new graduate teaching associates respond to the FC program.

I treated these five instructors as offering points of view from various levels of experience and diverse teaching backgrounds, both within FC and in the professional trajectory as instructors or professors. In a related way, the diversity of ages, professional interests, and trajectories in the FC program provided a rich opportunity to compare across the teacher data. Even though I did not systematically probe the other responsibilities instructors had on the campus as I did with administrators above, I was aware of their many endeavors. For example, while teaching in FC, Helen and Dylan had continued to teach at the nearby community college. Betty, by comparison, continued to work on her dissertation project and participated in student committees in her department while she taught. Stephanie began to tutor in the writing center and completed her dissertation. Finally, Lisa started a new doctoral program as she began FC; along with a full course load, she was a grassroots organizer in the community. Similar to administrators, instructors had a lot on their plates. However, instructors were given a halftime appointment for teaching the full year of FC, and as such, they taught fewer students than their colleagues in first-year writing. They had fewer campus-level obligations than administrators. Instructors were compensated for the hours of preparation, teaching, and support associated with FC Seminar. Precisely because they were the group whose pay was allocated solely for FC, I examined the instructors as having more everyday involvement in the FC program than many of the administrators.

FC Students

Finally, the five focal students were enrolled in my section of FC seminar during the semester of data collection and consented to participate in the study. Of the 41 students in FC that year, I taught 13. Because the purpose of my research was to examine *how* students engaged the first year of college through the FC program—itself described as a successful case—I wanted to gather descriptions by successful students about how FC supported them during their first year of university study. Following principles of

within-case sampling (Merriam, 1998), I chose student participants based on what counted as "successful" outcomes in the FC program. Drawn from the public reports about the success of Freshman Connection in supporting student retention for the criteria of successful students in the program, I identified three main criteria:

- Students who persisted into the second year of study at HSFU;
- Students with at least a cumulative 2.5 grade point average at the end of the year;
- Students who earned a high grade in the FC seminar.

The five focal students fit the criteria of best case examples (Merriam, 1998). As a result, the students were revealing as successful cases in the FC program. My interest in the focal students was gathering insight into the complexity of their first year in FC especially for the most academically successful FC students—those who persisted into the second year, those who maintained a relatively good grade point average, and those who earned a high grade in FC seminar. As a result, this study focuses on five focal students called Zach, Ben, Mariah, Tika, and Danni.

Zach:

A nineteen-year-old Euro-American, Zach was a wrestler at HSFU. He was an out-of-state student, but his home state was close by. On the first day of class, when I asked students to introduce themselves, Zach was gregarious and told me that a former student, Adam, told him to say hi to me. I remembered Adam as a nice person but a wrestler who had struggled with academics. Instantly I thought of Zach as fitting a stereotype I held about student wresters—that they didn't work hard academically. On the very first day, I began to cast students into roles, but Zach's trajectory in the class countered my initial biases. Over the course of the semester, I came to regard Zach as willing to work hard. He also forged friendships with the other male athletes of the classroom, and he teased some of the women on occasion.

Ben:

Like Zach, Ben was an out-of-state recruited student athlete. An eighteen-year-old Euro-American, Ben was a football player. From the first weeks of class, I described him as a good student. He did all of his work. He spoke to me when he had questions. He emailed me to verify assignment requirements before they were due. He worked well with others and worked hard in the FC seminar. As the year progressed, Ben was one of the best students, often earning top grades on assignments. Both Zach and Ben offered the perspective of male student-athletes involved in high profile NCAA sports.

Tika:

An African-American woman from the East Coast, Tika did well in the FC seminar. Generally, she produced excellent work in the FC seminar, but she was less gregarious and outspoken. She didn't like to be in the spotlight, and she often spoke to me about feeling nervous. Tika was not a student-athlete, and we spoke at length during the semester about the large presence of student-athletes in the FC program. Though Tika did well on assignments in my class, she showed me that she sometimes struggled with exams in her general education courses, but she persisted in these courses nonetheless. By the end of her first year, however, Tika admitted to me that she planned to change her major due to her academic struggle. Like Mariah, Tika and I maintained a good rapport, and as I report the results, I have occasional email exchanges with her.

Mariah:

A soccer player who described herself as bi-racial, Mariah was the only female student-athlete in my section. During one classroom session, a student remarked that during class we often sat according to race differences in the classroom—students-of-color on one side and Euro-American students on the other. Mariah replied, "And I'm right in the middle." Referencing that incident, she titled her final portfolio "The Tragic Mullatto," which she told me was meant to be a joke. In my field notes, I often described

Mariah as sociable and gregarious. Throughout the academic year, she and I formed a close rapport, talking often before and after class. For example, I knew that Mariah loved to sing, and she wanted to become a singer, like Mariah Carey, which is why her pseudonym became Mariah.

Danni:

An African-American woman who had moved a few times in her childhood, Danni was highly involved in FC seminar. She made friends with many of the FC students. She joined the step team at HSFU, and she started to use the Center for Diversity and the Afro-House as places to study and socialize with other students. She took full advantage of the resources at HSFU for students from underrepresented cultural groups, and she became fairly involved early on in these cultural resources on campus. She often reminded students that the Center for Diversity offered study group sessions and other sources of support. Like Mariah, Danni was a gregarious student who worked hard in the FC program.

Zach, Ben, Mariah, Tika, and Danni offer a representative set of students that were successful in the FC program and continued into their second year of college. I selected these focal students as success cases whose lived first-year experiences would provide illuminating perspectives on how students describe the FC program.

Data Collection and Sources

Fine, Weis, Weseen, and Wong (2000) point to the benefits of multiple methods in qualitative research for locating a plethora of perspectives to analyze. They write that a firm reliance on multiple methods fosters rich analysis of different types of data that produce “a quilt of stories and a cacophony of voices speaking to each other in dispute, dissonance, support, dialogue, contention, and/or contradiction” (p. 119). Following their call for a quilt of stories rich with dissonance, I set out committed to multiple methods. As I explained in Chapter one, I designed this two-part endeavor to capture a variety of

perspectives. First, the study examined characterizations of the concept of "support" in relation to students deemed to be "at-risk" in the FC program. I examined how administrators, teachers, and students characterize "support" and FC students through official university texts, as well as everyday talk, images, and story in the interviews. I examined ambiguities in the perspectives of campus-level administrators, departmental supervisors, teachers, and students. Second, I analyzed how students in the FC seminar class enacted and perhaps resisted prevalent representations of support and of students in FC. This work was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do administrators, faculty, staff, and students characterize support in this program? How do they characterize the mission of the program and the core course academic seminar as part of that support? What language (e.g. metaphors, stories, word choice) do administrators, faculty, staff, and students use to describe FC support?
2. How do administrators, faculty, staff, and students characterize the student population? What language (e.g. metaphors, stories, word choice) do administrators, faculty, staff, and students use to describe FC students?
3. In these descriptions of "support" and students in FC, what terms become stand-ins for what is not said? How do the characterizations match or mismatch?
4. What repertoires do students draw upon in constructing their classroom identities? How are these identities represented in their participation in class sessions and in student-teacher conferences, and in their multimodal and written artifacts?

Data Sources

Part One:

The first part of the study examined how participants characterized FC support and students. I designed the first three research questions to implement the first part of the study, and data sources included:

- Public artifacts concerning FC, including mission statements, news articles, and public reports in the Office of the Provost;
- Materials distributed as part of FC orientation;

- Semi-structured interviews with administrators, instructors, and students.

Before I conducted semi-structured interviews with administrators, instructors, and students, I researched public artifacts concerning FC beginning in the summer of 2007, and I used the public artifacts to triangulate an official perspective of the FC program. These artifacts became the record against which I contrasted and compared subsequent texts and interviews.

Interviews were integral data to the study. I conducted semi-structured interviews with administrators, instructors and focal students. Prior to the interviews, I designed a series of questions about the FC program for the three sets of participants: administrators, instructors, and students (see Appendix A). Since interviews were more like conversations, I treated them as semi-structured interviews mixing "more and less-structured questions" (Merriam 1998, p. 73). I used the set of questions as a guide, but I focused on eliciting stories from participants that were pertinent to the guiding research questions, again seeking a cacophony of voices in the FC program. In these interviews, the questioning sequence highlighted three main components. First, I asked for straight description of FC in terms of its policies and its programmatic structure. Second, I looked for perceptions of the students, inviting participants to describe and characterize FC students. Third, I asked participants to describe the program's mission or purpose. I designed the interview questions as data sources to triangulate with the public reports of the FC program and to explore discontinuities between and among the various perspectives on the program.

Part Two:

In the second part of the research, I focused on student performances in the FC seminar. The fourth research question framed my analysis of data sources described here. As with the first method of the study, I gathered a variety of data sources:

- Classroom observations kept in a field journal;

- Correspondence among administrators and faculty, like bi-weekly attendance reports about progress of FC students;
- Samples of classroom work collected from focal students, including formal and informal writing, personal portfolio, and audio recorded student/teacher conferences;
- Follow-up semi-structured interviews with students (see Appendix A).

In the classroom field journal, I wrote observations of in-class activities. In notes, I focused on the physical landscape of the room, the students' positions in their desks, and the where students sit and by whom. I used the lesson plan written before the session to help describe the organization of the activities and whether or not the class followed the plan. I described what I perceive to be strengths in the class session as well as weaknesses, and I described my feelings. Notes were recorded directly following a class session, and some were audio-recorded directly after class and transcribed within a week.

In addition to the classroom journal, I kept a record of the student-to-teacher conferences over the year. I audio-recorded these discussions for future reference, and students had access to the audio files on our course website. The conferences took place in my office. Students and I discussed classroom performance, assessment, and the main assignments—including formal assignments and a personal portfolio. Although conferences were designed to focus on students' performances in class, conferences sometimes became informal talk about life in general. Similarly, the follow-up semi-structured interviews adhered to the same sequence described in part one of the study. However, I invited students to describe specific classroom assignments and classroom experiences as they related to characterizations of the FC seminar and FC program.

Teacher-Researcher Role

While my role in the program as instructor influenced my perspective on the data, it was also an important facet of the study. Since the purpose was to gather an array of

perspectives at different levels of the program where I taught, I was also particularly attuned to my own perspective as it compares and contrasts with the participants of the study. When teacher-research first appeared in educational research, the stories offered teachers' (predominantly female) voices in response to the administrative (predominantly male) voices presented in empirical educational research that informed policy (Miller, 2005). Claiming that administrative perspectives often omit teacher experience, teacher-researchers responded with accounts that emphasized the realities of teaching in classrooms. As teacher-research blossomed, post-structural, feminist research designs defined by Patti Lather (1986), Michelle Fine (1997), Liz Ellsworth (1997), Janet Miller (2005), and William Pinar (1994, 2005) explored conventions for teacher stories that "re-conceptualize teaching, learning, curriculum, and 'selves' as processes and constructs that are informed, influenced, and shaped by particular discourses as well as cultural, historical and social relations" (Miller, 2005 p. 151). As a result, I followed the models of teacher-scholars before me who have attended to the competing and multiple discourses of the classroom (Chiseri-Strater & Sunstein, 2006; Miller, 2005). I have intentionally heeded the call to identify the particular "cultural, historical and social relations" in this study, paying attention to the cultural and social situatedness of the participants in the FC program, including my role as teacher-researcher.

Informed by a post-positivist feminist stance (Denzin, 2000), my position as a teacher-researcher evolved from standpoint theories which called into question objective, positivist methods, especially as these theories informed research on women (Harding, 1987; Kirsch, 1999). Feminist researchers describe methodology as influenced by the "cultural situatedness of *all* research; that relationships between researcher and participants are *never* neutral; and that research questions are *never* disinterested" (Kirsch, 1999, p. 18). Feminist empirical designs extend and transform fixed roles to accommodate the multiplicity in our role choices (see Harding, 1987; Kirsch, 1999). I followed three key principles of feminist research: "taking care to examine social,

historical, and cultural factors in research sites; foregrounding the research in an analysis of my subjectivity with the theoretical framework shaping the agenda; and thoughtfully framing the representation of others in light of its potential effects on different readers" (Kirsch, 1999, p. 4 – 5). Acutely aware of my own position in the program and within the research, I remained attentive to my biases. This dissertation was not intended to be an objective, distanced ethnographic report of findings. It is personal. It is critical. And it is about my experience in relation to others in the FC program.

Data Management and Analysis

I approached data analysis following principles of discourse analysis, remaining attuned to context and situation (Blommaert, 2005). As I began collecting data in the academic year of 2007-2008, I organized data by making frequent passes across collected data sources with an eye toward the four research questions to find emerging patterns for potential coding categories. At first, for example, I was attuned to my classroom journal, and I formulated initial analytic memos every two weeks that outlined emergent categories. Once I began interviews, I formulated frequent analytic memos, building from early patterns. In the next section, I outline the data management strategies and describe the process of analysis. During analysis, I distinguished between the two methods of the study: (1) analysis of programmatic perspectives of "support" and "students" in FC and (2) analysis of students' responses to these programmatic perspectives in the FC seminar classroom and in their literacy practices.

Data Management

During the academic year of data collection, I organized data through the Nvivo QSR software, uploading files into separate folders in the project and linking analytic memos to data sources. In that process, I organized data sources into categories:

- public documents,
- classroom field journal,

- interviews with administrators,
- interviews with instructors,
- interviews and conferences with students,
- and student classroom artifacts in the FC seminar.

Beginning in the first weeks of the semester, I reviewed the public documents and my classroom journal, and I traced recurrent patterns that related to the research questions. I wrote early analytic memos tracing initial thoughts, patterns, and inconsistencies linked to the classroom journal. Once I began conducting formal interviews with participants, I continued this recursive pattern of constant comparative analysis (Charmaz, 2001; Merriam, 1998) between early data and new data, writing analytic memos and building coding schemes.

Following Merriam (1998), I examined patterns and outlined emergent categorical codes. With each interview, I returned to initially coded data and further verified categories. I continued to build rudimentary categories, and I highlighted passages in interview data, taking phrases or words from the participants to label initial categories as describing types of support in FC or describing students in FC. Through this work, I began to build initial coding schemes which I organized in the Nvivo QSR software. Using Nvivo software to code passages in the sources as either describing support or students in FC, I began to organize data in terms of these topical categories of “support” and “students.” Then, through constant comparative analysis, patterns emerged within each category that led to creating hierarchical tree nodes, which helped me build rudimentary categories for analysis. From the constant-comparative analysis somewhat stable categories gained prominence, which I continued to refine and triangulate with subsequent interview data and classroom fieldwork. I began to confirm the stability of these patterns, and I slowly created a schema (Merriam, 1998, pp. 183) which was guided by relevance to the research questions. I triangulated code patterns by comparing and contrasting frequency of categories across data sources. Specifically, in analyzing

interviews, I continued to examine the range of coding through Nvivo software, charting the patterns across groups of participants (administrators, instructors, and students) and across sources. I shared many of these initial coding schemes with outside readers like my academic advisor and a dissertation reading group. I turned to etic-perspectives drawn from research that helped me refine categories for nuance and complexity. Based on this pattern of analysis I moved between emic and etic levels to ground the data analysis in relevant literature (Charmaz, 2001). In the next section, I focus on how I analyzed data for the key research questions.

Data Analysis

I designed the first three research questions to examine the historical and current institutional context of FC, and I was looking for the relationship between official, macro-perspectives of the program in public reports and perspectives in the everyday discourse of the program from administrators, instructors, and students. While analyzing sources in the early stages with a Bakhtinian frame (1981), I worked toward tracing a plurality of perspectives or voices in the programmatic discourse.

First, I began examining the data as it related to the official description of support provided by public reports that described FC as offering academic and social support. In early analytic memos, for example, I noted a binary distinction between narratives about institutional mechanisms of academic support and narratives about social and emotional support in FC. My initial coding scheme for support, as a result, coded data in terms of this binary. Using the public reports as an “official” perspective, I triangulated across sources the distinction between academic and social support in the multiple narratives of the participants. In comparing narratives across sources, I noted how participants characterized different approaches for developing academic support in FC. Likewise, participants described different approaches for fostering social supports in the FC program. Then I began to compare across sources the variety of perspectives from

administrators, teachers, and students regarding these intentions of support and to trace the many narratives of support operating in the FC program. The data result chapters examine the multiplicity of narratives of support in the program.

I followed a similar process when I turned to descriptions of FC students. First, I began with the "official" reports describing FC students as "academically at-risk" but also showing "promise" of success. I turned to subsequent data, like interviews and the classroom journal, to triangulate the emergence of this binary across sources, and in refining the analysis, I looked for the frequency of stories describing students in terms of being "at-risk," which pointed to a variety of narratives operating in the FC program about FC students. I used the classroom journal to compare initial codes with subsequent data collected on descriptions of students and interactions in the FC seminar. For example, as I began first passes of how administrators described FC students in early interviews, I returned to my classroom journal noting that like interviews, many of my own descriptions focused on FC student as "at-risk." The data chapters that follow examine the characterizations of FC students in terms of the "at-risk" label.

The third question of the research involved analyzing data for dissonance between perspectives and the potential for silence in the FC program. In Chapter 2, I describe Foucault's (1978) definition of silence as something that is never outside of discourse; however, the presence of silence in a discourse can expose relationships between accepted perspectives and resistant perspectives as well as which perspectives have authority. Initially, I set out to identify a comprehensive system of discourse in the FC program through public reports and personal interviews. I was looking for what emerged as prevalent perspectives of support and students and what emerged as less prevalent or marginalized perspectives in the data. While I wished to trace silences in FC, I found that looking at language patterns of ambiguity proved to be more insightful to the HSFU context. I began to focus on "strategic ambiguity" in institutional communication drawing on literature in communication studies (Eisenberg, 1984; Tracy, 2004; Tretheway, 2001).

I highlighted where ambiguous terms emerged and how different participants offered different perspectives or definitions on those terms, such as remediation and enculturation. Looking closely at ambiguous terms in the data illuminated deeply entrenched narratives about the support of FC students. As I made initial passes of the official reports, for instance, I noted that the absence of terms “remedial” and “developmental” in the “official” description of the program. In some administrator interviews, participants said there was no remedial or developmental education at HSFU. Yet some instructors used these terms with frequency, as did some administrators. I began to trace the language replacement, like “support program,” coding the frequency of phrases and making repeated passes across sources for comparison. The pattern of administrator talk, especially from participants most visibly responsible for campus-level policy and initiatives, illustrated a complex multi-vocal discourse system.

In the later stages of data analysis, as I began to confirm and disconfirm emergent patterns, I returned to existing research on mission statements and communication in institutional contexts. Often qualitative researchers follow a bi-level scheme of analysis between etic and emic perspectives (Merriam, 1998; Tracy, 2004). I turned to a literature base on strategic ambiguity in organizational communication (Eisenberg, 1984), which aligned well with research on espoused and enacted missions in university settings (Kuh, et al., 2005). Strategic ambiguity effectively framed types of institutional circumstances that benefit from strategically ambiguous objectives or goals (Eisenberg, 1984; Tracy, 2004; Tretheway, 2001). During my analysis, instead of outlining silence, per se, I traced ambiguity as a strategy with positive and negative effects in the FC program. I was able to cast some official perspective as strategically ambiguous by triangulating responses across participants from high-level administrators to instructors and students. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 explore strategic ambiguity in the discourse about the FC program.

To be clear, I took Bakhtin’s theory of dialogism (1981) as the heuristic for my analysis of programmatic perspectives in Freshman Connection, and the terms I use to

describe language in FC are framed by Bakhtinian theories of discourse. Through out the study, I use the term *voice* to point to a perspective evident in the language of a person or document, drawing on Bakhtin's description of "voice" in discourse. I use the term *narrative* to reference a convergence of similar voices that produce a shared perspective in the context of FC, such as the shared perspective that FC students are "multicultural." I use *discourse* (note the non-capitalized form) to designate language patterned by dialogism, emphasizing interactions of varying socio-ideological thoughts; discourse is anchored in a specific social situation but saturated with historical meaning, such as the discourse of academic support in FC. However, I draw from Foucault (1975) and Gee (1996) to examine specific institutional practices in the context of FC. So, when I move to describe institutional actions, I draw from Foucault to highlight the practice as indexing a social meaning and that it produces power relations. For instance, I describe the practice of designing support through a separate and fairly unknown program for a small number of FC students as producing power effects. Finally, I use Gee's big "D" *Discourse* to emphasize language and social practices that index group affiliation, including roles of status, shared values, and identity construction within an institution, such as a Discourse of "at-risk."

Classroom Data Analysis

By design, the first three questions framed the context of the FC program; they emphasized variety in perspectives of support and defining FC students. The ultimate purpose of the research, of course, was to examine how students responded to the FC context. The fourth question focused on the *how* of student responses in the FC program. The question itself was animated by Gee's definition of "Discourse" (1996), which encompasses an identity toolkit that includes a host of practices and shared values about how an individual fits in a social group. As a result, the focus of the classroom study was identity construction in the literacy practices of the FC seminar.

As with the analysis for the first three research questions, I wrote initial analytic memos while conducting classroom fieldwork. I made multiple passes through the classroom field journal while conducting follow-up interviews with students, and I formulated an early analytical scheme categorizing students' responses to the somewhat centripetal force of certain perspectives traced in the first part of the study. I coded classroom fieldwork and artifacts from the class as they related to emergent themes of the first research questions. I focused on responses of students that seemed to suggest that they had internalized—or were resisting—official "authoritative" (Bakhtin, 1981) discourse. I began to categorize students' responses as echoing, internalizing, and resisting in their coursework and interviews. I noted the emergence of play and creative improvisation as integral themes that related to student identity in the FC program.

In the analysis, I drew primarily from Holland, Skinner, Lachicotte, and Cain's (1998) identity in practice in figured worlds. Holland et al.'s (1998) identity in practice frames "collective and personal phenomena in ways that match the importance of culture in contextualizing behavior with the situating power of social position" (p. 287). I wanted to identify identity in practice as it emerged in the five focal students as they interacted with the figured world of FC through literacy. In looking at classroom identities, I examined students' behaviors as described in my classroom field journal, formal and informal writing, and conferences. Like my research with strategic ambiguity, I also turned to outside research to compare etic perspectives on student engagement in learning environments with the data of the five focal students.

Limitations

Methodologies differ from researcher to researcher and from project to project, and no one method is preferred; rather, differences in method likely illuminate different foci (Fine, et al. 2000). My project followed a multi-method approach to identify a plurality of voices in the FC program which I used for triangulation, a step described by

Denzin (2000) as an alternative validation in qualitative research. While I set out to gather many perspectives, a deep limitation emerged during the study. Freshman Connection has consistently recruited a high percentage of African-American male student athletes. During the academic year of this study, three African-American male student athletes were in my section, but none consented to participate in the study. These students' public profiles likely placed them in vulnerable positions. I was also missing the perspective of study group leaders who worked in the FC program, teaching small group study skills sessions for required general education courses. They were the students who provided supplemental instruction (SI). Like highly visible student-athletes, study group leaders were highly visible "model" students. However, FC instructors had very few interactions with study group leaders; I met them just three times during the academic year. Even so, the lack of these students' voices was a limitation to my study.

Organization of Final Chapters

Chapters 4 and 5 focus on the administrators' macro-level perspectives of FC support and FC students. First, Chapter 4 provides the multiple perspectives on FC support through administrators' voices and public HSFU reports. Second, Chapter 5 focuses on the descriptions of FC students in administrators' voices and public HSFU reports. Chapter 6, by comparison, focuses on instructors and their responses to these narratives of support and students in FC. Finally, Chapter 7 examines students' responses to these narratives especially as they emerge in the literacy practices of the FC seminar, paying particular attention to construction of identities.

CHAPTER IV

PROGRAM AMBIGUITY: FC SUPPORT

In the introduction of the dissertation, I outline definitions of espoused missions and enacted missions according to researchers Kuh, et al. (2005), explaining that an espoused mission is a public representation of a university's goals and objectives. Often in public universities, espoused missions are expansive, addressing wide ranging goals about policy-specific concerns. According to Tracy and Ashcroft (1997), mission statements speak to value-focused policies with social implications, such as commitments to equality or diversity. While value-focused policies have action-specific implications, they do not identify action-specific designs, as the goal is to demonstrate values to be prioritized and shared by an institution. An espoused mission symbolizes shared consensus regarding a social issue that the university is publicly committed to upholding (Tracy & Ashcroft, 1997). Some action-specific campus policies, like admission policies[11], equity programs, and support programs, directly reflect an institution's shared priority on a social issue. Founded in 1996, Freshman Connection was implemented when there was no greater value-focused issue facing public universities than policies affecting the recruitment of underrepresented students identified as first-generation and deemed academically underprepared. As a first-year academic support program, Freshman Connection was an example of an action-specific policy.

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[11] As recent as 2003, the U.S. Supreme Court addressed two cases contesting the legality of race-conscious admission policies at the University of Michigan Ann Arbor: Grutter V. Bollinger and Gratz v. Bollinger (Bell, Coleman, & Palmer, 2005). Heralded as a victory for affirmative-action, the 2003 U.S. Supreme Court decision argued that the educative benefit of diversity efforts in our nation's colleges is compelling enough to merit limited consideration of race and ethnicity in admission policies (Bell et al., 2005; Michaelson, 2005; Schmidt).

An Espoused Profile of FC

University policies regarding remedial programs played a role in defining Freshman Connection as assistance for students enrolled at HSFU who were deemed "underprepared" academically. While the espoused mission of FC did not identify the program as "remedial" per se, recent research in higher education has shown that since the mid-1990s Research One institutions respond to public scrutiny of t remediation by eliminating "remedial courses in reading and writing [and] integrating the developmental of these skills into college-level courses" (Brothen & Wambach, 2004, p. 18). Freshman Connection emerged at HSFU precisely when remedial and development education in higher education endured a heightened level of criticism (Fox, 1999; Merisotis & Phipps, 2004; Stygall, 1998). According to Stygall (1998), "Access to baccalaureate degrees at research schools is often through or enhanced by enrollment and participation in basic writing and academic support programs" (p. 5). While there was no mention of remediation in the espoused objectives of FC, "academically underprepared" FC students were enrolled through a select and separate academic support program.

The official profile of FC as a program was relatively consistent. For example, a report in 2000 by a taskforce on student persistence defined support in FC in a way that justified the program at HSFU:

> There is a chasm separating high school and college, and each year far too many bright but academically underprepared students fall in. *Freshman Connection* is helping these students to make the leap—and to thrive in the new environment.
>
> This innovative two-semester program provides an extended academic transition between high school and college for students who have demonstrated the potential to succeed at the UI, but who do not meet standards for regular admission to the University. *Freshman Connection* was designed to help students develop the knowledge and skills vital for academic success by providing both academic and social support. (Report to the Taskforce on Student Persistence, September 2000)

The report described FC as accomplishing two levels of support: (1) "transition between high school and college" and (2) "develop the knowledge and skills vital for academic

success." The report defined support as twofold, social and academic. However, the kinds of knowledge and skills to be fostered through academic and social support were less clearly delimited. Partly because the report was an example of a public representation of a value-focused policy on underprepared students at HSFU, the report was goal-oriented, not task specific, offering an ambiguous definition of support in FC[12].

According to Trethewey (1999) ambiguities "are the stuff of organizing," and rather than being treated as problems to resolve, they are best studied as typical of institutional communication (p. 142). Eisenberg (1984) writes, "Strategic ambiguity fosters the existence of multiple viewpoints in organizations. This use of ambiguity is commonly found in organizational missions, goals, and plans" (p. 231). Two functions of strategic ambiguity are relevant for missions. First, it holds a plurality of perspectives as part of a unified message (Paul & Strbiak, 1997). Second, it emphasizes goal-attainment over other functions (Eisenberg, 1984; Paul & Strbiak, 1997). Even more, research on strategic ambiguity is an important means for gathering dense and complex understandings of organizational processes (Trethewey, 1999; Tracy, S., 2004) that explore phenomena often overlooked in educational research driven by measurable outcomes, like rates of retention and persistence rate. Strategic ambiguity is a good example of Bakhtin's theory of dialogism (1981) in organizational communication, since strategic ambiguity is open to plurality, polyphony, and heteroglossia. The analysis of

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[12] To screen against public scrutiny of these programs, action-specific implications designed to address the agenda of supporting "underprepared" students are left ambiguous (Merisotis & Phipps, 2000; Perez, 1996; Shaw, 1997; Stygall, 1998). A number of scholars in the field of developmental education have spoken out about the paradox of such a system, arguing that campuses hide the remedial component of a developmental program as it supports a relatively small number of "underprepared" students (Grubb, 1999); remediation, then, becomes invisible at some large four-year universities. Freshman Connection was a typical example of the phenomenon described by Grubb (1999) above. This is the predicament of a program like Freshman Connection, housed on a public Research One university in the Midwest, called HSFU that has effectively eliminated most programs explicitly coded as remedial.

this chapter examines texts and contexts as tensions between centripetal and centrifugal perspectives that "*dialogically constitute* communicative situations" such as the goals of academic and social support (Juzwik, 2004, p. 543, emphasis mine). In the case of FC, I examine the ways in which FC administrators sketched an array of narratives about student support in the FC program that, at times, pointed to fundamental contradictions.

Chapters 4 and 5 introduce perspectives FC program's espoused mission and outlines "official" or macro-level perspectives in FC from the administrators who worked closely in directing, coordinating, and supervising the FC program in the academic year of 2007 - 2008. "Strategic ambiguity" in the perspectives of some administrator voices addressed the larger social, political, historical dialogue on value-focused policies regarding underprepared students[13]. Following Bakhtin's (1981) dictum that "every concrete utterance of a speaking subject serves as a point where centrifugal as well as centripetal forces are brought to bear" (p. 272), centripetal narratives about academic and social support emerged in these data that have implications for how teachers and students interacted in the FC seminar that I explore in Chapters 6 and 7.

Four Narratives of FC Support

A recurrent tone of care and concern emerged in the data about the mission of the FC program in serving the needs of students described as "bright but academically underprepared." The complexity of that endeavor set the context for strategically ambiguous characterizations of support by administrators in FC. As a result and by design, this section presents an emerging profile of FC support from the multiple perspectives of administrators. Some administrative language struggled with the issue of

[13] While this chapter focuses solely on administrators' descriptions of FC support and Chapter 5 examines administrators' characterizations of FC students, the distinctions between the two were not hard and fast. Perceptions of support in FC were inextricably linked to perceptions of the FC students as needing support.

remediation, and their descriptions fluctuated between four facets of support, which organize the discussion in this chapter:

- Support as Academic Enrichment and Enculturation
- Support as Structure
- Support as Community
- Support as Teacher Care

Academic Enrichment and Enculturation

Some administrators described academic support in terms of its connection to specific programmatic designs. While some administrators of FC clearly did not use the terms remedial or developmental as descriptors, others did. In particular, participants considered the function of the FC seminar as the core course of the FC program, and some explicitly denied any remedial or developmental aspects of coursework in the FC seminar. I asked a campus-level administrator to speak to this tension; the Vice Provost, who provided oversight of FC, described the FC seminar, the main required course of the FC program:

> We give credit for it, so you can't, I don't think you can call it developmental or remedial if you're giving credit for it. We're saying we think this is a class that teaches something that is a legitimate part of a college students' education. (lines 411 – 425).

The word "something" stands in for the knowledge and skills the FC program fosters. At times, in the administrator data, some participants described the "something" as remedial and other participants denied the skills and knowledge as remedial, a tension that characterized much of the data about enacting the mission of preparing students who are deemed academically underprepared because of the "chasm between high school and higher education." Administrators characterized different approaches for addressing the chasm.

Academic Enrichment: Not Remediation

The current Program Director spoke about the same issues voiced by the Vice Provost as she explained that FC program was not a type of remedial/developmental support:

> What I was trying to do in pulling this together was to say, what resources and what skills does any student need in order to succeed here? And then how are we gonna provide it? So right away it became academic support as opposed to a developmental program. (lines 59 – 65)

She stated that FC was not a "developmental" program; instead it was an example of academic support. The term "academic support" as a descriptor replaced "developmental" or "remedial." To define resources and skills to be fostered in the FC program, the Program Director introduced a series of questions that referenced the "resources" and "skills"; the skills were labeled as the kind "any student would need." Following two strategies, the Program Director's perspective contested depictions of FC as remediation. Academic support was not remedial because it was called something different, such as "academic support," just as Freshman Connection seminar was not remedial because the university called it a credit-bearing course. Some campus-level administrators adopted strategically ambiguous language to circumvent remediation as a label.

In the data, a narrative of FC as not remedial support emerged in some administrators' perspective. However, when administrators began to describe the particular skills to be supported in FC, some used the term "developmental" or "remedial." When I spoke with the Program Coordinator, who worked in the Academic Advising Office, he explained some of the skills were "developmental":

> I mean the support that every student is going to have is they're going to have an FC seminar instructor. And they're not only going to have *academic developmental work* there, the work in the reading and writing emphasis, but they're going to have these transition issues brought up. (lines 1122 – 1126, emphasis mine)

The Coordinator referenced current growth-oriented models which define developmental education (Boylan, 1999; Brothen & Wambauch, 2004; Higbee, 2005; Merisotis & Phipps, 2000) as offering a continuum of support, including developmental skill (academic enrichment) and other mechanisms of social support. His definition adhered with best practices and policies of developmental education (Boylan, 1999; Higbee, 2005). Even though some administrators seemed to strategically deny the terms "developmental" or "remedial program" to describe FC, the everyday practices matched up with developmental education theory. Two narratives of Academic Enrichment flowed through the administrator talk: FC was not a remedial program, yet it could be perceived as developmental. It was an example of "and/both" strategic ambiguity (Eisenberg, 1984; Tracy, 2004).

Some administrators were in a difficult position when it came to describing FC support as it was positioned in the larger institutional and historical context. Freshman Connection was an example of how an institution like HSFU negotiated the national and public conflict over remedial education. FC emerged as a "support program" in some of the administrators' language, so as to not be considered "remedial." The FC program needed to offer instruction in developmental skills but it also avoided terms, particular words or phrases, in the espoused mission statement.

An Academic Skills Model

While some administrators did not describe academic support as remedial in FC, most administrators delimited the "academic skills" that the program was designed to develop in FC students. Specifically, some administrators emphasized learning to read and write academic discourse in the university environment. For example, the current Program Director described the skills as "an extra dose of rhetoric," which was a required first-year writing course in the university:

> We want some kind of combination that would be like a first year experience, but we think these students are going to need an extra

> dose of reading, writing, and critical thinking. So it would be an extension or an add on to rhetoric or another dose of that, but with more of a focus of a first year experience course (line 96 – 100)

Although Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) argue that academic support in higher education should also include quantitative literacy, the Program Director emphasized reading, writing, and critical thinking, which implied an attention to learning university academic discourses (Bartholomae & Petrosky, 1989; Bizzell, 1989/1999; Elbow, 1991; Harris, 1989).

Similarly, the current Program Coordinator described the academic support in tandem with social support. He referred to reading and writing as the "currency" of the university:

> And so now you're really developing on the two most important fronts. You've got some of these social, emotional kinds of changes over and that enculturation that goes on through that. Plus you've got the currency of the university which is reading and writing. (lines 1126 – 1129)

The Program Coordinator advanced a more specific metaphor of reading and writing as currency. On one level, currency might imply that reading and writing represented the tools people use to make exchanges. Currency could also imply a general acceptance. As a metaphor, currency seemed to imply a finite skill set, like a standardized, national currency. When an American tourist enters a country, for example, she might exchange US dollars for the local currency. The coordinator's use of currency characterized academic discourse in the university as finite: a set of reading, writing, and thinking skills transferable across the university contexts and necessary for students to function.

The metaphor of reading and writing as currency resonated with a widely known discussion in composition studies regarding the need for introducing and defining academic discourse to struggling writers. Bizzell (1999) describes early definitions of traditional "academic discourse" as a finite set of language-use conventions appropriate for the academy. Academic discourse was a "discourse community" that included ideas about standard language-use conventions but also formulas for academic genres and

literacy forms (p. 9). Early definitions of "academic discourse" in composition studies worked to counter labels of struggling academic writers as linguistically and cognitively deficient by illustrating the shared values of academic discourse (see Bizzell, 1999; Lu, 1992; Ogbu, 1989). Bizzell explains that in addition to the language-use conventions and genres, the discourse community takes on a life of its own. A discourse community shapes the way people can respond and be "counted as participants" (Bizzell, p. 9). The early research in composition responded to the "deficit" approach to linguistic difference (see Chapter 2).

In an ongoing debate, however, about how to define academic discourse (Bartholomae, 1985; Bizzell, 1999; Harris, 1989; Lu, 1992), Harris (1989) explains that discourse is varied in the university, and yet in researchers' attempts to define it, much like attempts by administrators of this study to define academic skill, people often return to a perspective of academic discourse as language use conventions: a skills model (see Lea and Street, 2006). In fact, Harris criticizes David Bartholomae's seminal essay "Inventing the University" as reinforcing a limited definition of discourse community, a position quoted here:

> [The] view of discourse at the university shifts subtly from the dynamic to the fixed—from something that a writer must continually reinvent to something that has already been invented, a language that "we" have access to but that many of our students do not. (Harris, p.13)

Harris points to a type of centripetal force in the narrative about academic discourse in Bartholomae's article that functions like the "currency" metaphor offered by the FC Program Coordinator: something you exchange and gain for a new community. Likewise, in the interview, the Program Coordinator was struggling with the same multiplicity of meanings regarding academic discourse; it was both a currency that students gained but it was also a part of enculturation and necessary to function. In much of administrators' data of my study, a similar depiction of academic discourse emerged. A pattern in the data illustrated that academic discourse sometimes emerged as a finite set of neutral

language skills. The voices together formulated academic enrichment as a skills model that Lea and Street (2006) define as transferable skills of reading, writing, and thinking.

The narrative of a skills model in some administrator talk emerged as helping students gain basic, transferable skills of reading and writing. For example, the Athletic Associate Director, whose duties in directing the academic support of student-athletes, provided a specific description of the FC program: “The students themselves come to us with a desire to be here at the university. For the most part they see it as an opportunity. The FC program, for the majority of them, is just a program they would need to do in order to improve their skills. They understand that” (lines 205 – 208). He emphasized a skills model as the key objective of the FC program (academic enrichment).

The Current FC Seminar Supervisor, also versed in composition studies, illustrated the durability of this tension. Like the Program Director, she described the FC seminar as supplementing the typical first-year writing courses required for all first-year students. She explained, “I think strengthening literacy skills is probably the most important thing. I think that's the key to academic success. And not just writing, but reading, perhaps even more importantly reading” (lines 709 – 716). In these interviews, the emphasis on developing core academic skills necessary for success at the university included reading, writing, critical thinking, and speaking skills. However, some administrators didn’t contextualize these practices as diverse and varied across disciplines in the university.

Enculturation

Another narrative of FC support emerging in administrative language was how enculturation functioned as part of academic support. Informed by empirical research on the experience of college transition, growth-oriented models of academic support treat the interplay between factors in students’ personal lives and their college environments as central to transition and persistence in college (Astin, 1993; Boylan, Bonham, & White,

1999; Higbee, 2001; Merisotis & Phipps, 2000; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991/2005; Tinto, 1993). An enculturation model treats the university as a new culture to which incoming first-year students adapt, and the curriculum fosters an anthropological and sociological study at a university. The inquiry includes delimiting, understanding, and adopting the shared practices of a culture (Bartholomae, 1985; Bruce, 1994; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). It introduces students to the expectations of the new culture (Bruce, 1994; Delpit, 1995; New London Group, 1996). Often in interviews in this study, administrators referenced the enculturation model (see Chapter 2). However, the narrative of enculturation included a variety of diverse voices in FC.

For example, the Vice Provost described enculturation as it related to instructing FC students:

> To put on the table that this place has its own norms and traditions and all that stuff. And if you want to succeed here, you have to know them. They don't have to become yours but you have to navigate them. (102 – 105)

He explained enculturation as naming the "norms" and "traditions" that are typical of the university. As he adopted second person, his language was specifically geared toward FC students. The Vice Provost cautions FC students that the norms do not have to become "yours," but students (you) have to navigate them. The Vice Provost described the university as having shared norms and practices, and FC students new to the community must become aware of those norms and learn to work within them. He seemed to be highlighting ways of acting and cultural ways of knowing in addition to language skill conventions.

Likewise, the Program Coordinator, who supervised student tutors and worked in academic advising, said, "I've always liked the idea that this is a culture change and that this is enculturation that we're helping them with. Ya know getting them into this new culture" (lines 1323 – 1325). The Program Director triangulated the Program Coordinator:

> Students need to learn that they cannot continue doing what they did in high school and succeed in college. So that's one form of support. In other words they have to learn what the academic expectations are and how to achieve them, and the goal, for example, behind supplemental instruction is never to quote dumb down the curriculum. It is to show students how to meet those expectations. So true supplemental instruction, our goal, is to help students understand the university as a culture and what the expectations of the culture are and to mark out a clear pathway of how they can succeed in that culture. (398 – 422)

The Program Director explained the initial problem facing students in the opening lines; students need to do things differently than what worked in high school. She clarified how this problem translated into a form of support, focusing on learning university cultural academic expectations and achieving them. Such a juxtaposition, of learning by not continuing to do what you have before, emphasized a subtractive concept. For example, the current Director described the purpose of FC support as helping students "learn that they cannot continue doing what they did in high school," implying that their high school behaviors accounted for the students being underprepared. That is, the problem was in the student. She described facets of support in which students must learn not do what they did in high school and not to rely on the practices they bring; rather the Program Director positioned students as needing to adopt whole the practices of HSFU university culture.

Importantly, within this response alone, the Program Director was struggling with more than one official discourse about support programs at HSFU and in student development theory (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1993). While she started by describing the community and cultural change, she also explained that the supports, like supplemental instruction, should never "dumb down the curriculum." The phrase "dumb down" illustrated the durability of narratives that frame supports for "underprepared students" within a deficit-model (Giroux, 1983; Ladson-Billings, 1994; MacLeod, 1987; Ogbu, 1988; Willis, 1977). The statement illustrated the plethora of discourses flowing in the FC program.

However, according to the Former Seminar Supervisor who was on the committee proposing the FC program in 1995, the intention of the FC program from its inception

emphasized careful support of the cultural resources students bring as part of the enculturation model. He explained designing the FC seminar as it related to that purpose during our interview:

> We wanted them to be able to study that culture without questioning or undermining the cultural resources that they were bringing with them, so the idea of being sort of amateur anthropologists. So the course was set up around a series of questions: what do your professors believe about this community? How do they act? How do they talk? How do they use their time? And what things surprise you? And you write papers about this type of thing, and it worked as a viable model. And so that became the curriculum for the FC seminar. (lines 74 – 84)

Insisting that the curriculum should not undermine the cultural resources of FC students, the Former FC Seminar Supervisor explained the focus of the FC seminar was a series of questions about shared practices, including behavior, talk, use of time, and surprises. The reading and writing focused on these pursuits. This approach positioned students as people becoming experts on a new culture; it didn't place the problem within the student or as a result of their history with poor educational habits. He described a curriculum that focused on building upon strengths the student brought, not on remedying the deficits. Likewise, he treated the university like a "community of practice," focusing on ways of knowing and identity construction (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Gutiérrez, 2008; Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003; Holland, Skinner, Lachicotte, & Cain, 1998; Wenger, 1998).

The Former Seminar Supervisor elaborated facets of enculturation that countered those of the current Program Director. However, evident in his description alone is the residual presence of the struggle between centripetal and centrifugal narratives about academic discourse. The syntactic choices illustrated a pervasive tension. When he asked a series of questions about the university community, he described it as a single community ("this community") where faculty behave the same way, talk the same way, and even use their time similarly. He defined the faculty and university as sharing a uniform cultural way of language use and habits. At times, then, an enculturation narrative in FC included a fixed concept of academic culture. It was one students needed

to fit, like Gee's description of students fit or unfit for school-based Discourses (see Gee, 2000a).

Comparing the descriptions of enculturation in the administrator perspectives illustrated a contradiction. Some pointed to students needing to stop doing what they did in high school, a subtractive approach to support that narrated a story of needing to remedy students' deficits; others pointed to building on the resources students bring, an additive approach to support that narrated a story of building on students' histories of learning and their cultural resources (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2008). The struggle between centripetal and centrifugal narratives illustrated two emergent tensions:

- Some administrators described FC students as bringing poor resources, and the program needed to remediate students from their bad habits. A less dominant narrative approached students as building upon positive cultural resources.
- Some administrators defined the relationship as unidirectional, requiring FC students to change to fit the habits of the university. A less dominant narrative described the university as also changing and benefiting from the cultural resources FC students bring to the university[14].

Strategic Ambiguities

In sum, the descriptions of academic enrichment and enculturation in the data from administrators epitomized an important moment of strategic ambiguity. Administrators characterized FC support following the "and/both" paradigm described by Trethewey (1999). Support included both academic enrichment and processes of enculturation as key support mechanisms in FC. Within each of these facets of support

[14] I have consciously juxtaposed the Current Program Director and Program Coordinator against the perspective of the Former FC Seminar Supervisor to emphasize the present perspectives of enculturation in relation to past perspectives of the FC program. The Former FC Seminar Supervisor offered the lore of the program that has become less explicit in the program. It's typical of larger institutions to evolve based on the losses and gains of faculty.

emerged sometimes contradictory or competing narratives of academic discourse and culture in the university. An effect of the contradictory narratives was the potential for clouding the espoused mission of the FC program. There was a disjoint between how administrators in Academic Advising characterized enculturation from the perspective of administrators who taught and researched the support of "basic writers" in the university, like those supervising the FC Seminar. For example, the Current Program Director and Coordinator echoed the perspectives of administrators working with Academic Advising, informed by student development theory. On the other hand, the Current and Former FC Seminar Supervisor echoed a perspective of academic literacies as socially, contextually informed and expansive in range (Bartholomae, 1985; Bizzell, 1992; Bruce, 1994; Harris, 1989; Russell, 1997). The two fields often commingle in university policy designs, as is clear in Bizzell's (1992) application of developmental stage theories in her early research about basic writers. In the administrators' data, however, there was less clear collaboration between the student development theory and sociocultural literacy theory.

The ambiguity at times sustained a murky description of the espoused mission of academic support, something the Former FC Seminar Supervisor admitted as a problem for seminar instructors:

> Somebody had to be large hearted enough and broad minded enough to take that kind of spacious mandate and then make sense of it. And they had to do it without having a really high profile or high prestige job. I mean teaching in the seminar was not like being an associate in the gen ed lit program or being a leader in the rhetoric department. This was the academic remediation department. (lines 118 – 124)

The Former Seminar Supervisor described instructors as facing two dilemmas when teaching in FC. First, he described the course as a "spacious mandate," implying that the curriculum of the FC seminar was not explicitly delineated. Second, he described the position of teaching as the "academic remediation department." This passage illustrated that within strategic ambiguity, among the plurality of voices, the discourse of remediation, including its historical constructions of deficit meanings, surfaces.

Support as Structure: Monitor & Control

The second most salient facet of support in the administrator data was structure. While academic enrichment and enculturation focused primarily on the curricular content of the FC program and the seminar, structure included the apparatuses of the institution designed to foster support. For example, in the required orientation meeting of administrators, instructors, and tutors, the Program Director described the FC program as "invasive" (field notes, August, 21, 2007), which she elaborated on during our interview:

> The one thing I would say is that we're seeking structure because what you lose when you come into college is structure. And time management is the hardest thing students have to learn, and so by providing a little more structure, providing some of that study time, by modeling how you study in your study time what's necessary. That, that regardless of what their test scores were or anything else coming in we knew they needed structure and so that's built into it. (lines 482 – 491)

The Program Director explicitly stated that "we" (FC administrators) sought structure in the program. She emphasized "time management" as key to student success and failure. She then defined structure as "providing some study time" and "modeling how you study in your study time." She concluded by describing FC as having structure built into it.

Physical Control

In some administrative narratives of structure, participants were more likely to present the macro-perspective of the HSFU, which means to see how the programmatic design intervenes to help FC students. Some narratives about structure in the administrator data emphasized institutional mechanisms of "invasive" support. Structure included a system of monitoring that some administrators described as purposefully intrusive, a "best practice" empirically verified in student development theory as a successful mechanism for increasing retention and persistence, especially for students deemed "underprepared" (Boylan, Bonham, & White, 1999; Brothen & Wambauch, 2004; Higbee, 2005; Merisotis & Phipps, 2000; Saxon & Boylan, 2000). For example, the Vice Provost explained that a program like FC that caters to non-admissible students

needs to be effective; otherwise the intentions of the university in admitting these students would seem dubious. As I asked the Vice Provost about other initiatives on campus similar to FC, he offered a clear metaphor for the function of FC and similar initiatives on campus in supporting students:

> There's no point in identifying them unless you're going to act and the actions are probably going to have to be—they're certainly going to be intrusive. They're *gonna have to go ya know and grab students by the collar*. And they're probably going to have to be intensive, too. So I guess what I'm thinking is that we may evolve something or develop something that's more like Freshman Connection. It's hard for me to imagine that we would be creating FC seminar again and ya know spreading that more widely, but maybe we'd be trying to get some of the same functions going. (lines 188 – 196, emphasis mine)

He began by defining the institution as needing to act intrusively when designing support efforts for students identified as needing help. Second, he used a metaphor, describing structure as being able to "grab students by the collar." The image depicted a person forcefully taking hold of students by the collar and getting them through the first-year.

Likewise, the Associate Athletic Director echoed the Vice Provost's view of structure as a physical presence in the lives of students. He compared support for FC to how the athletic department supports student athletes:

> A: So it's this balance for student athletes, and it's also FC. It's a balance between helping somebody fulfill their potential while also helping them with whatever risk, right?
>
> AAD: That's right.
>
> A: It's maneuvering across those very objectives.
>
> AAD: And you gotta play that very carefully and be true to your calling too ya know. Some schools want to cut corners. You don't want to get into that. You gotta build a solid base and not have a hollow a ship. That's what I always say, you know, have substance in what you do. (lines 401 – 410)

I co-constructed the response here by inviting the Athletic Coordinator to confirm that support focused on fulfilling student potential and assisting with risks. He confirmed that the program supported students in two ways, to promote promise and to reduce risk.

However, he elaborated how schools needed to follow a clear plan of intervention, presenting some institutions that "want to cut corners" as examples of what not to do. In contrast, he described the supports at HSFU when he turned to the second person. The Athletic Director used a metaphor of building a ship. Building a solid base was like building substantive mechanisms that provide support. The image of support was physical control, like a ship carrying its freight across troubled waters. It emphasized the role of the programmatic interventions in directing the progress of students—packaging a freight of students through their first year.

Monitoring: Fodder and Grease for the Mill

Images of structure as a physical force in the lives of FC students related to descriptions of FC programmatic designs for monitoring the progress of students across administrative units. In the FC program many disciplinary units collaborated in a vast, laborious monitoring system to support FC students: the Program Director called it "complex and labor-intensive." She referred to the collaboration across units as extremely unique for a campus of this size, large and broad in its mission:

> I think what is very different about this program, at a large institution you have silos, you have people who are operating in different, different venues and in this one, in this case you would have students who were being advised here who had an academic counselor at the support service programs now the center for diversity and enrichment. But ya know maybe they're working with student disability services and has someone there that they're working with, and then a student athlete will be working with someone over there and maybe student disability services. ((breathes in)) So what we did was create a coordinator that funnels information that we wanted to provide a lot more intervention. There's the mid-semester standard report, but we wanted to do a lot more and that was one of the hardest things to do because at the time. But we had to convince people that we could at any twenty-four hour period get those and turn them around and get information out to them. So we ended up taking about three months to develop the form that got everybody information they wanted in the format they wanted and a system down for sharing information among offices. (lines 178 – 198)

She began by describing collaboration across units. Different venues collaborated in the FC program to work as a team in supporting FC students, including academic advising, student athletics, student disability services, and center for diversity and enrichment. The system of support worked across purposes and venues while at the same time merging them for interventions. She explained that funneling information provided a means for effective intervention because it connected multiple, disparate services into one system of communication. Freshman Connection connected multiple constituents as part of a monitoring system of FC students. The Program Director provided oversight of this laborious monitoring system while being director of Academic Advising, and other campus duties, as is true of most of the administrators. Intrusive support needed to be efficient as well as effective.

Central to the monitoring system was the FC Program Coordinator who received and then transmitted information between departments. The director of FC called that position "the cog in the wheel"—i.e. the Program Coordinator. In my interview with the Current Program Coordinator, he explained the significance of information transmitted through the monitoring system of FC students:

> Our advising with FC students is more intrusive than it is with our other students because we get so much more information on our students. Everything you send to me, I send to them. Everything my study group leaders send and you see goes to those advisors as well. *So there's going to be a lot more fodder and grease for the mill there.* If somebody hasn't been coming in for study groups for three nights in a row, you've got that. That's information that you kind of couple with what you already know about them. But that's probably the big triangle of support. (lines 1143 – 1164, emphasis mine)

The "more intrusive" system of monitoring FC students allowed the program to intervene when necessary. Kuh et al. (2005) refer to this as "an early alert system" (p. 39). The Program Coordinator, similarly, explained his role in transmitting information from the ground level—the teachers and tutors—to the administrative level—the Academic Advisors, Student Athletics, or the Center for Diversity. A close look at the metaphor

revealed the connection to the physical tropes shared above: the mill seemed to be the FC program, as an institution that operates in a routine way or turns out products in the manner of a factory. Fodder was a resource, the material you need to keep the mill going. Grease was used to facilitate the progress. In the metaphor, the FC program was a factory that used information to turn out products in a routine way: students were the products in this metaphor. All of the communication functioned as "fodder and grease" to keep the mill going; to routinely produce student retention.

Like the terms "invasive" or "intrusive," the Current Program Coordinator provided a portrait of structure as a factory. Those administrators who represented the macro-level perspective of the program from the Center for Academic Advising the Office of the Provost offered a narrative of structure as a factory for monitoring that produced apparatuses of intervention. Communication was the key ingredient. The system resembled Foucault's panopticon in *Discipline & Punish* (1975). Foucault outlines the corpus of knowledge from which discipline and control derive their effectiveness institutionally. Through the example of the prison and the school, he ably charts how a corpus evolves from the discourses of law and discourses of science that methodically establish a way of "knowing." As the individual body becomes the course of study, Foucault points to systems of observation, identification, assessment, and interventions that measure and rank individuals. A power/knowledge construct functions as control of prisoners and students by maintaining a constant system of surveillance, one that is effective through knowledge and information, not through physical punishment. Students and prisoners, as a result, regulate their own behavior as they submit to the invisible apparatus of surveillance. In the case of FC, information between various administrative departments creates a laborious system of surveillance that observes and measures FC students. The system of surveillance provides a way of knowing FC students that can foster "intrusive advising" and interventions. Although the intrusive nature of advising follows best practices in student development theory, the same

mechanisms for creating a built-in structure of monitoring give rise to a system of normalizing students in the institution, of a factory producing products.

A Catch-22: Counter-Narratives

While images of structure in FC included mechanizations of intrusive monitoring and control, some administrators who worked more closely with students on the ground offered a counter narrative about structure as invasive support. In fact, Current Program Coordinator in the Center for Academic Advising who offered the metaphor of fodder and grease for the mill explained that FC can feel overwhelming to students:

> PC: While the students you may say support and they say I'm not sure that's support. But it is because it's moving them in the direction they need to go.
>
> A: I think one told me I don't feel like an adult.
>
> PC: No, no it would be hard to, yeah, at certain times. I mean I tell these students you're probably gonna have more people trying to help you than you're gonna need and you've got to over time figure out the two or three people who are most valuable in this process and lean on them. And get what you need there, but you can't disregard people. You can't be dismissive or rude. I mean those don't get you anywhere either, just try to operate within this system. (1174 – 1188)

He explained that FC students may respond by seeing the system as over-support. However, he based the effectiveness of the structure of support on what the system was able to accomplish with FC students, described as "moving them in the direction they need to go," which I triangulate with the images of intrusive control like a freight carrying students through their first year or grabbing students by the color. The dominant trope of intrusive structure positions FC students as passive objects. In the end, the Program Coordinator explained the goal of the intrusive structure was to teach students how "to operate within the system." Students learned how to act in HSFU. Such a perspective triangulated an "assimilation" narrative of enculturation. Students, as products, needed to assimilate to the HSFU system.

Throughout the data some administrators alluded to a paradox implied by the Program Coordinator's description of FC as "moving [students] in the direction they need to go." For example, the current FC Seminar Supervisor described the situation as a Catch-22:

> It is really a Catch-22 because you put all these systems in place and all these structures in place in order to support them and hopefully help them too, but then they become reliant on the structures and the systems. (lines 1033 – 1037)

The administrator's perspective was informed by her experience with FC students as a professor in the first-year writing program. She identified the "structures" as a Catch-22 because "they become reliant on the structures and the systems." Trethewey (1999) describes such an organizational phenomenon as a paradigmatic paradox, in which the rules of the organization place participants in a double bind (neither/nor) situation. The "pragmatic paradox," according to Trethewey (1999), is communication in which "two mutually exclusive alternatives evolve over time" (p. 145). For example, Trethewey examines social work with welfare recipients for whom the messages on the wall ask them to "take control of their lives," but in submitting to the assistance of the organization, clients have ironically given control of their lives over to the organization (p. 152). She writes, "Through the manifestations of these incongruities, an organization which claims to foster self-sufficiency often encourages clients to view themselves as deficient and dependent" (p. 152). The current FC Seminar Supervisor described the FC structures in terms of a similar paradox, where students become dependent on the FC structures rather than becoming self-sufficient. Couple the potential to become over-reliant on structures and the pull in some administrators' voices to narrate the institutional role of support as intrusive, and the cumulative effect is disciplining students by accentuating conformity to the system of regulation, at times undercutting the cultural resources students brought with them. Structure and assimilation as narratives seemed to coincide to position students as passive recipients.

How much structure was too much? At what point would an FC student become complicit and passive in the system? Trethewey (1999) writes that organizational paradoxes can "enable (largely patriarchal) systems to continue to maintain themselves unfettered, despite the consequences those paradoxes may have for members or clients of the organization" (p. 144). Even though most administrators described the intrusive nature of the FC structure as a benefit, the structure paradoxically carried a potential for undermining the self-efficacy of FC students. Like the ambiguity in narratives of academic enrichment and enculturation, narratives of structure added another layer of complexity in the programmatic discourse. Instead of positioning students as active agents, the monitoring of FC students sometimes defaulted to positioning them as passive objects in a system of knowledge that maintained order and control (Foucault, 1975).

Community: Friendship and Safe Haven

The paradoxical monitoring and controlling was particularly significant for two narratives of support as Community and Teacher Care. While structure was a frequently cited reference in administrative talk, so too was the notion of community. The Program Director, for instance, explained that when designing the program, administrators began to ask key questions, "How do we provide academic but also how do we provide affective support? How do we help students build community?" (lines 78 – 80). In this sequence of questions, the first thought after asking how to establish "affective support" was how to help students build community. Emerging as a salient theme across all data sources, references to community support occurred 52 times compared with the 55 references to structure. In contrast to the narrative of structure in FC, Community emerged as a student-centered endeavor.

Friendship and Caring Relationships

First, narratives of friendship were frequent in descriptions of supportive Community in FC. According to the Program Director, an important component of the

program was “that the students would really form as a group and that would help them form a community and become friends” (line 116). Similarly, the Associate Athletic Director described relationships between students:

> A: And that’s something that my students are quick to remind me of, right. Even when I say well it doesn’t seem like you’re getting along they say oh no, no Aimee we like each other.
>
> AAD: That’s right, that’s right they like each other and those, the relationships that develop from the first day and that’s on going. Some develop into strong relationships, others fade away, but you know people and those relationships are life long and that’s important too. (136 – 143)

The Associate Athletic Director described the relationship between the students using the phrase I introduced, “they like each other.” He explained that the students developed “strong relationships,” and some would become “life long.” In both cases, these administrators described students as active subjects in the process. Similarly, the Program Director emphasized the importance of “peer-to-peer” relationships in fostering support in FC, another empirically verified facet of support (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Unlike the data sources focusing on the intrusive structure of FC, facets of community positioned students as active subjects who established, developed, and maintained productive student relationships.

The Current FC Seminar Supervisor, who was closer in proximity to the FC seminar and could witness in part the social dynamics of the seminar, provided a similar description of community in FC:

> A: What is the sense of this new understanding of what kind of support that is helpful for students?
>
> FCS: I think personal connections. Personal connections with people who are older and wise. You know, caring connections. I think that it's difficult for students. (895 – 903)

She described support as “personal connections,” and she clarified by describing connections with people “who are older and wise” but also introduced “caring connections.” The image of affective and social support included an element of “caring

relations." The "caring connections" countered perceptions of the structure narratives of regulating student behavior. In fact, the narratives of community sometimes contradicted the narratives of structure in the FC programmatic discourse. Structure and community emerged as an enduring tension in the voices of administrators, instructors, and students in this study, something instructors speak to in Chapter 6.

A Safe Haven

How to foster caring relations was a concern for FC, and facets of community also responded to that need. For example, some administrators described community in terms of being a safe haven for FC students. The Vice Provost elaborated the point during our interview:

> VP: It's a safe haven.
>
> A: It's a safe haven, and is that one of the designs of the program?
>
> VP: Community is certainly part of the design whether ya know, ((breathes)), I don't know how much explicit thought in the design went into the fact that we knew a lot of the students would be students of color. I'm really not sure. The notion of this as a safe haven community is I think it's really important. It's something that we lack in general on campus for students of color. Ya know, we don't have an extremely functional set of cultural centers which can serve that purpose, we don't have a really strong set of student run organizations in that realm, and so Freshman Connection for those select few students is pretty important. (132 – 149)

The Vice Provost introduced safe haven and clarified that safe haven seemed to be related to the support of students of color. There were two effects of this definition. First, he depicted safe haven as protection for some students who would need the support of "cultural centers." Second, he emphasized the need for student-run support networks. The two voices resonated with the work of Mary Louise Pratt's (1991) description of "contact zones" and "safe houses" in culturally diverse settings in the academy. While Pratt describes the benefit of contact zones in constructing new meanings, she also advocates for safe houses as important opportunities for building trusting relationships between students from non-dominant groups as a reprieve from the contact zones. A safe house is

a place for students with similar cultural backgrounds to gain a kind of strength as a group. Similarly, Canagarajah (1999/2004) calls for university programs as safe houses for the support of students of color[15]. The term safe haven was akin in spirit to "safe houses." On the HSFU campus, described as not having "a strong set of student run organizations in that realm," the Vice Provost considered that the FC program might have been designed specifically as a means for safely supporting students from non-dominant groups. The metaphor of FC as a safe haven added nuance to community. I found this important for describing the function of the FC seminar, the main course of the program, because seminar was the most visible representation of FC for students. FC seminar discursively placed FC students in a classroom. So how did safe haven relate to the seminar?

The Former FC Seminar Supervisor clarified the function of the FC seminar as a component of the FC program that fulfilled the "safe haven" function; he said, "We started thinking about the FC seminar as sort of academic home room where you go off into the world and then come back and say okay this is what's going on in my life" (115 – 117). The design of the seminar, then, was to be a place where FC students come together and process "life" in college. Moreover, he said, "What we're doing is we're bringing kids in what we call a safe space, and we're saying you can tell us anything because we can't help you unless you tell us anything" (lines 231 – 234). The image of the FC seminar, then, was as a place where students would discuss any issue. So as the FC seminar provided shelter, students actively participated in the process. It was an open mandate. The Current FC Seminar Supervisor concurred. She explained, "I don't think this is the kind of program that you can just run by a rigid template, and I really think it's

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[15] Literacy scholar, Young (2006) disagrees with the Canagarajah especially as it codes African-American students and their language practices as separate and isolated from the mainstream community, which he describes as "separate-but-equal" (p. 121). Please see his chapter "Casualties of Literacy" (pp. 105 – 123).

a program that has to be responsive to the students and to all kinds of differences" (lines 397 – 399). The narrative of community as support in the administrator language emerged as the need to respond to FC students' needs. The Current FC Seminar Supervisor, however, offered a perspective of the student community in FC as full of differences.

The narratives of community support as responsive and open to the students directly contrasted the rigid system of structure—the monitor and control—which was an equally salient narrative in the administrator's data. In fact, both narratives emerged as enacted missions of the FC program. The contradictions between the two narratives became another instance in which strategic ambiguity best accommodated the dual purposes, describing the importance of both "academic and affective/social support." Each warranted a set of programmatic practices. Likewise community as support in the administrative language emerged as dual voices:

- Some voices about community as support characterized FC seminar as a home room, situated in the HSFU community.
- Some voices about community as support described FC community as a safe haven as happening in isolation between trusting and similar FC students, as in Pratt's (1991) notion of safe houses.

The struggle between these voices pointed to the varied perspectives of community as support. What is more, a paradigmatic paradox between facets of Structure and Community emerged. The seminar was described as a place where students were allowed to say anything, but the teachers of the seminar participated in the technologies of the monitoring system; they were part of the intrusive structure in FC. Instructors were rays of surveillance who transmitted information to the mill and fostered an environment of caring support that depended on the seminar as a trusted, safe climate for students. How to support across these purposes was a concern for instructors of the FC seminar.

Teacher Care: Being Flexible & Responsive

The final narrative of support emerged because administrators frequently referenced the importance of FC teachers to the efficacy of the program. What is more, most administrators described teachers as "on the ground" or on the "frontline" dealing with FC students. The sense was that FC seminar teachers were doing essential work in the FC program. As a result, Teacher Care was a salient feature in the administrative data. Throughout constant-comparative analysis, characteristics of teachers and their role in the FC seminar revealed shared values about teaching in the administrator language that informed narratives of Teacher Care as integral to support in the FC program[16].

Some administrators explained that seminar instructors spent more time with students than any other service support individual, such as academic advisors, department administrators, athletic advisors, and support people in student services. Also, seminar instructors worked with the same FC students for the entire academic year. Student tutors, on the hand, who also worked closely with FC students didn't necessarily work with the same FC students all year long. The role of FC teachers emerged as one of the integral components of the FC support system, as explained by the Current Program Coordinator in Academic Advising:

> I mean because the care that you guys give to those students is so important and vital that we don't want to make it anymore difficult than it has to be. We don't we don't want them to be like rhetoric sections with twenty-two people in a section. That's just too many for what you're trying to do. It's not easy to juggle kids who don't have their homework in on time and all the reporting you have to do. That takes more time. And they need that standard of care. (lines 1046 – 1053)

The Program Coordinator described teaching as "care" in the first line, which at first emphasized a personal relationship with students. He also pointed to the need for a

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[16] In this section, I focused on the perspective of the Current Program Coordinator in academic advising, and the Current and Former FC Seminar Supervisors because they worked closely with teachers in the program and supported them.

smaller student-to-teacher ratio by contrasting FC seminar with a rhetoric course. Care became linked in the sequence of statements to more time and attention with FC students, such as “juggle kids who don’t have their homework done” and “all the reporting.” He explained that FC seminars have low enrollment, so FC seminar instructors can manage a standard of care that is time-consuming and seemingly heightened.

The Current Program Coordinator above described the peculiar instance of FC seminar instructors in an analogy—it was like “foster care”:

> It’s almost like if I was a parent. It would be like you know I want the best for my children and I know I can’t provide it. So I need to foster them out, and I need to give them to somebody who can. So I’m kind of like a bad parent. A bad parent who has like a heart of gold and who wants to be sure that everybody gets what they need and knows they can get it better from somebody else. (lines 1240 – 1246)

In the simile, he described himself as a parent and implied the FC students were his children for whom he needed to provide support. The “bad parent” represented the academic advising office, and perhaps the regular academic system, as less equipped to offer all of the support FC students need; they need academic enrichment, development of the currency of the university such as reading, writing, and critical thinking, which was not the expertise of his office. As a result, the Program Coordinator entrusted the FC teachers, as foster parents, with providing what cannot be handled well in academic advising. In comparing, the FC seminar with foster care, he assumed was that instructors knew what kind of academic support to provide[17]. The “Foster Children” analogy also underscored the sense that something had gone awry for these students, and they were in need of rescue. It was an example of how the FC program discursively situated FC students in HSFU: the image of foster children seemed to emphasize the regular academic system as terribly broken and inadequate.

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[17] Instructors respond to this assumption in Chapter 6.

Related to the need for the development of skills, instructors were described as being in charge of creating curriculum because the FC seminar was designed to be more like an "academic homeroom." In some administrator descriptions, there were less explicit guidelines for classroom practice. For example, the Current FC Seminar Supervisor described the situation of the FC seminar as not having a clearly defined curriculum because it was designed to be responsive to a diverse array of students and their needs:

> A: Do you feel like you're, you have specific guidelines you expect from the seminar class, like assignments you hope they're doing?
>
> FCS: I, because the instructors are pretty carefully selected, I place a lot of trust in the instructors. I feel like you folks know better than I do what are the appropriate assignments and the pacing of the class. So I always enjoy talking with you and brainstorming about what will work with this group of students, as well as hearing you talk about the students because that helps me know who the audience is for the class. So I don't feel like I really impose any guidelines. But I sort of listen to what you folks say are realistic expectations. And try to help you try to figure out ways to meet those expectations. (lines 268 – 284)

The FC Seminar Supervisor explained that teachers were entrusted with being able to assess students' needs and how to respond appropriately to them. The guidelines for the course were ambiguous so as to leave multiple interpretations and to allow for a variety of styles of teaching. The emerging profile confirmed the description given by the Former FC Seminar Supervisor; it was a "spacious mandate." The strategic ambiguity allowed teachers to assess FC students individually and to identify "realistic expectations" for them. However, it seemed for first-time instructors the spacious mandate emerged as a tension to negotiate, which I address in Chapter 6. Nonetheless, some administrators described the instructors as valuable and especially well-prepared to teach FC students.

Teacher Qualities: Flexibility and Uncertainty

In addition, narratives of teacher care also included specific teacher qualities. For example, the Former FC Seminar Supervisor, who helped to design the FC seminar in 1996 and supervised it until 2005, emphasized teacher interaction with FC students:

> I was looking for people who were first of all comfortable with uncertainty and who were comfortable with working with students who didn't already know the rules. So you had to really stretch your conception of what a college student is and what they should know. You can't say this student isn't ready for college. You have to say this student is who she is, who he is and now we have to help them become ready for college. (lines 91 – 99)

The Former FC Seminar Supervisor, someone who worked in a Teacher Education Department, described qualities of tolerating uncertainty and working with students who "don't know the rules." He sketched a broad directive for being responsive to students, no matter where the student was academically. It's a mandate that Kuh et al. (2005) describe as extremely successful in creating good conditions for student success, using Fayetteville University's philosophy of "meeting students where they are" as the mission for the main support services (p. 35).

Likewise, the Current FC Seminar Supervisor described instructor qualities as being flexible: "I think one of the really important characteristics that an instructor needs to have is flexibility." For example, she described Stephanie, a second-year instructor, as an example of a teacher selected:

> I chose her because I knew, first of all, she was very interested in student support. And I knew her as a very nurturing and supportive instructor. I also knew her to be somebody who is very open to innovation. I just saw her as somebody who was able to sort of adapt and adjust and to just carry on despite problems. (lines 402 – 407)

Through the example of Stephanie, this administrator outlined characteristics of FC seminar teachers: nurturing, supportive, adaptive, and persistent. Later in the interview, she explained that teachers also needed to have "boundaries" and to set clear objectives.

Part of the narrative about teacher flexibility suggested that instructors had the freedom to approach the course differently based on individual teaching styles. For example, during the academic year, the Current FC Seminar Supervisor met frequently with teachers (including me). As part of our supervision, she asked us to share samples of student work in folders. She responded to the folder with a letter commenting on the patterns she observed in the way an instructor responded to student writing. She also met with us to discuss our approaches. During our interview about the FC program, she referred to the student folders to describe the variety of teaching styles across FC seminar teachers:

> I saw that when I looked at your student folders. You each had your different ways of interacting with your students in writing. I mean every teacher has to do that. You have to find your own way of, you know, forming relationships with your students. (lines 1010 – 1014).

In this exchange, she described the variety of approaches to evaluative feedback on formal essays evident in the three instructors teaching that year, Stephanie, Lisa, and me. She then broadened the discussion to explain how teachers find different ways of interacting with students. She concluded by highlighting the importance of forming relationships with students. Instead of mandating specific curricular choices in FC, the administration described the significance of forming relationships. She met with us during the year so that we could reflect on a variety of strategies for working in the FC seminar and to gather a sense of practices that seemed fruitful to draw on in future teaching opportunities, whether in FC or other departments.

Like the narratives of community, teacher care focused on caring relationships which contrasted the surveillance structures of monitor and control in FC. An effect of strategic ambiguity in administrator talk was that both purposes were accommodated. The program can be both a mechanism of control and a place of care. However, teachers faced the difficult task of negotiating across those purposes in the classroom.

In Sum: Strategic Ambiguities

The six administrator perspectives at HSFU revealed four narratives of support in the FC program as a support program. Administrators' perspectives revealed programmatic tensions that situated the FC seminar; while strategic ambiguity allowed for a diversity of voices about the four facets of support, it also revealed contradiction and paradox. In the four narratives different voices struggled. For example the FC program was sometimes described as remedial (or developmental) and other times not remedial (or developmental). According to Bakhtin's dialogism, tension and struggle in communication is not a problem. Yet ably delineating the presence of authoritative discourses in relation to marginalized discourses is fundamental for speakers to gain a sense of one's own discourse borne out of the voices of others (Bakhtin, 1981). Administrator discourse in FC importantly portrayed fundamental tensions, the struggles across perspectives, that instructors and students also negotiated on the ground in FC. In the end, the farther one was from personally working with FC students, the more one relied on the language offered by the university's official profiles of supporting FC students. This chapter shared the plurality of macro-level programmatic perspectives, including the tensions emerging among them.

In the data, some narratives of support in FC gained a centripetal, unifying force of significant durability in the FC program. For example, academic discourse often emerged as a finite set of transferable skills. Second, varied voices describing enculturation included both a description of assimilation and a depiction of building on students' cultural resources. Third, narratives of community often described FC students as a homogenous group of students forging personal relationships that helped them integrate with the larger HSFU community. The varied voices pointed to these enduring contradictions:

- In narratives of academic enrichment, some administrators defined "a skills model" of reading, writing, and thinking (Lea & Street, 2006) that eclipsed socio-

cultural perspectives of literacy as a social set of practices associated with a different domains of life that relate to power relations of the institutions and are historically situated (see Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Gee, 1996; Hull & Schultz, 2002: Lankshear & Knobel, 2003; Luke, 1994; New London Group, 1996). Counter narratives of academic enrichment described development of academic discourses as social practice, but few administrators described power relations and identity in relation to literacy practices in academic discourse.

- Narratives of enculturation included a constant struggle to define academic discourse and university culture (Bizzell, 1992; Freedman and Adam, 1996; Haas, 1994; Harris, 1989; Prior, 1998; Russell, 1997). Sometimes, narratives posited enculturation as subtractive as opposed to the additive perspective of growth-oriented approaches of support (Tinto, 1993). The subtractive perspective reinforced a deficit-model to instruction of FC students (Giroux, 1983; Ladson-Billings, 1994; MacLeod, 1987; Ogbu, 1988; Powell, 1997; Willis, 1977).
- Narratives of structure and community as supports fostered contradictory perspectives: at times the institutional structure regulated students, treating them as passive recipients. At other times, students were described as forging a community, emphasizing the student role as active in FC.

The interplay of the four narratives in the data illustrated how some narratives merged and comingled gaining a kind of centripetal force that contributed to unspoken beliefs that Kuh et al. (2005) describe as an “enacted mission.” For example, some administrators described structure as invasive control. These mechanisms, however, seemed to emerge as technologies for normalizing students, akin in spirit to Foucault’s characterization of individualizing and controlling subjects. The structure narrative included students conforming to the institutional apparatuses, and administrators often described student roles as passive rather than active. Coupled with narratives of academic enrichment as a “skills model,” a theme of treating students as assimilating to the

institution gained a kind of force. Together these two narratives characterized the FC programmatic designs as a delivery system of skills which remedied student deficits.

The counter-narratives of centrifugal support emerged in some descriptions of enculturation and community. For example, some administrators described enculturation as students building upon rather than fixing students' cultural resources. In narratives of community as support, some administrators described students as actively involved in building friendships that became important sources of social support. Some administrators emphasized peer-to-peer learning, which also emphasized students' active roles (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1993). These counter-narratives struggled with the centripetal forces in the programmatic discourse of FC as a delivery system of skills and tools which remedied student deficits.

A series of tensions emerged in the models of support in the FC program. The program was both rigid and flexible. Controlling and responsive. Restrictive and open. Strategic ambiguity was part and parcel of the FC program. However, when strategic ambiguity gives way to paradigmatic paradoxes (Trethewey, 1999), fundamental contradictions have the potential for harmful effects. Drawing from Foucault (1978), Trethewey explains that:

> Organizational paradoxes are locations where power relations lie hidden and unexplored. These hidden power relations provide a critical point of entry for scholars who wish to critique and offer alternatives to oppressive organizational discourses (p. 153).

I am not arguing that strategic ambiguity was the problem of FC; on the contrary, it was useful strategy to allow for a plurality of perspectives responding to the social and cultural context of an academic support program sometimes perceived as remedial. However, strategic ambiguities that become paradigmatic paradoxes might be a symptom of pervasive power relations. With that in mind, in Chapter 5, I turn to the administrators' perceptions of FC students as a critical point of entry because perceptions FC support entailed programmatic narratives of FC students.

CHAPTER V

PROGRAMMATIC AMBIGUITY: FC STUDENTS

Overview

As I began teaching in Freshman Connection during my second year of doctoral study, I described it with the language I often heard: "It's a program for at-risk college readers and writers," I'd say. Anna Quindlen (2008)[18]aptly describes the term *at-risk* as "edu-code." Quindlen uses the example of the students in *Freedom Writers* (2004) to show how at-risk is often edu-code for "poor, minority, have chaotic home lives, and are likely to drop out." Edu-code is language that constructs social meanings in specific contexts. Certain phrases become so familiar that we forget they signify a host of meanings. Like many programs designed to support the needs of incoming students edu-coded as academically under-prepared, at-risk, under-performing, or with uncertain skills, Freshman Connection was defined via its students and the labels used to describe them. The remainder of this chapter focuses on ways the programmatic discourse coded FC students in increasingly meaningful ways. In order to do so, however, I first review how "at-risk" emerges as a durable code in public and educational discourse, gaining a centripetal force in the FC programmatic discourses.

Student development theory also plays a role in the social dialogue about at-risk students. First, federal TRIO guidelines for higher education admission and support provide descriptions of student groups to target for support, thus locating "risk" in specific students. TRIO programs identify, rank, and name particular groups of incoming

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[18] While Quindlen may rightly refer to the term as coded, she seems less aware of her own complicity with that code and that her language participates in the public perception of "at-risk" students as facing chaotic lives. I, too, unwittingly participate in coding certain students within a discourse of deficiency (see Lam, 2006; Powell, 1997) when I invoke the term early in my career with the FC program.

university students more likely to fail and therefore deserving of support. Federal TRIO programs are designed as outreach and support programs at universities "targeted to serve and assist low-income, first-generation students, and students with disabilities to progress through the pipeline from middle school to post-baccalaureate programs" (Kuh et al., 2005, p. 35). Similarly, the field of developmental education describes its mission as the commitment to helping the underserved poor and underrepresented minority students access to higher education (MacDonald & Bernardo, 2005; Merisotis & Phipps, 2000). Together, federal TRIO guidelines and the mission of developmental education locate "at-risk" students disproportionately in terms of class, cultural, and linguistic differences.

The social dialogue about "at-risk" students is saturated by verbal ideological thought (Bakhtin, 1981) about supporting these students. As I explain in Chapter 2, the history of labeling students deemed at-risk or underprepared for the university rests on cultural-, ethnic-, and class-based differences (Badere & Hardin, 2002; Boylan, 1999; Fox, 1999, Merisotis & Phipps, 2000). Institutional practices in universities of targeting "at-risk" students then unwittingly participate in reinforcing labels of deficiency along these cultural, ethnic, and class lines. For instance, Watson et al.'s (2002) qualitative study of the experience of minority students in predominantly white colleges argues that many of the Euro-American students believe that students of color receive special treatment "such as lower admission standards, compensatory education, support programs, scholarships, and employment opportunities not afforded to them" (p. 8). Describing support programs as special treatment illustrates the way that social dialogue constructs social meanings about the students in these support programs.

A Deficit-Model

Educational literature on students deemed "at-risk" or "underprepared" first imposed the discourse of deficiency on particular communities identified by differences in culture, behavior, language choice, communicative style, and family practices (Fassett

& Warren, 2004; Fox, 1999; Gee, 2000a; Lam, 2006; Rose, 1989). The discourse of deficiency associates the problem of academic underachievement with problems of the home community, describing the culture of the student as deficient and deprived (Giroux, 1983; Ladson-Billings, 1994; MacLoed, 1987; McDermott, 1976; Ogbu, 1987; Willis, 1977).

According to Skinner, Bryant, Coffman, & Campbell (1998) by the mid-1990's research in education introduced "at-promise" notions of student performance to challenge the discursive construct of at-risk discourse which "has made risk synonymous with particular groups and has located it in particular places" (p. 298). At-promise discourse focuses on affirming the cultural and class differences of students as strengths. Therefore, differences in behavior, language choice, communicative style, child-care, and family practices are treated as relevant strengths in which home culture or community-shared practices have value for students and the educational environment (Au & Jordan, 1981; Cazden, 1988; Delpit, 1995; Heath, 1983; Scollon & Scollon, 1981). At-promise notions of students emphasize accommodating the home culture of students and focus on how the institution organizes learning in order to delineate which practices perpetuate failure and which practices maintain student success. The FC program is an example of an administrative initiative that followed a similar trajectory in seeing students as at-promise instead of at-risk in the 1990s, and FC focused on establishing educational policy that supports success for students arriving on campus with varied histories.

Situating FC Students as At-Risk & At-Promise

In the mid-90s, precisely at a time when many programs perceived to be remedial or developmental risked considerable public scrutiny (see Stygall, 1998)[19], the FC

[19] At the time FC was implemented, "remedial" programs were under attack in national and state-wide legislative campaigns (Merisotis & Phipps, 2004; Perez-Pena, 1998; Saxon & Boylan, 2000; Shaw, 1997; Trow, 1997; Weiner, 2002). Many universities responded by removing "remedial" courses from the undergraduate curriculum and implementing a new system

program was designed not to be perceived as a "risk" program. For instance, the Associate Athletic Director who helps coordinator supports for student-athletes in FC, a former student athlete himself, explained, "The one thing that we had to work hard at is to not have the students feel they are targeted or labeled in writing the description of the program." As I began looking closely at how administrators in FC describe students in the program, I noted the frequency of risk imagery in the stories, despite the Associate Athletic Director's description that the program worked hard to not label students as "risks" in the larger programmatic narrative. Researchers Fassett and Warren (2004) maintain that everyday talk by university students and instructors reveals persistent, stereotypical educational roles for students (p. 27). They argue that:

> educational identities—what it means to be a teacher and a student (and the success or failure of those performances)—are products of strategic manipulations of power buried deep in our everyday talk regarding education. In this way, the success or failure of students—for example, their identities as "good" or "at-risk"—is a product of carefully repeated and directed strategies (p. 36).

With respect to Freshman Connection, in the administrators' perspectives, while stories about FC students included references to students as at-promise, at-risk imagery became a durable anchor. In the FC programmatic discourse narratives of risk were imbued with the socio-ideological baggage associated with "at-risk" students and the programs designed to support them outlined in Chapter 2 and above.

Rogers et al. (2006) explain that Bakhtin defines discourse "as a social event originating in and functioning as part of an intertextual social dialogue" (p. 205). In the

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of what Gail Stygall (1998) refers to as "turbo" courses of intensive and smaller basic instruction courses. At the same time, the political anti-affirmative action campaigns of the 1990s made famous in California, Washington State, and Michigan (Fox, 1999; Merisotis & Phipps, 2004; Stygall, 1998) helped to dismantle programs designed for attracting, recruiting, and admitting underprepared students, especially at public, Research One universities (Stygall, 1998). As a result, FC is an example of how a Research One campus attempts to resist political bad faith efforts in national- and state-wide legislative acts like California's Prop 209 (Fox, 1999) that deny access to higher education for particular groups.

administrators' data, intertextual social dialogue emerged as a unifying discourse of "at-risk" students. The coalescence of at-promise and at-risk images of FC students represented a struggle between authoritative unifying discourses and resistant, dis-unifying boundary discourses in the FC program. Even though the official description of FC students was created so as not to default to the at-risk discourse of deficiency, characterizations of FC students in the data emerged as a continued struggle between centripetal narratives of "at-risk" and centrifugal narratives of "at-promise." "At-risk" as a type of edu-code solidified across FC narratives, establishing a durable construct, drawn from stereotypical identities available in educational settings (Fassett and Warner, 2004). In the social dialogue, a dominant discourse of deficiency surfaced, unified, and took hold (Gee, 2000a; Lam, 2006; Powell, 1996; Skinner, et al. 1998) because the dialogue of FC participants was connected like a chain of utterances to larger social and historical understandings about at-risk students, often delimited in educational research as well as those specific to our university and of the FC program as an "invisible" form of remediation or developmental education.

An official profile of FC students as a group was relatively consistent. In the following excerpt, for example, the Academic Advising Office, which housed the program, presented an official university profile of FC students:

> Freshman Connection students are generally inadmissible according to the admissions index, under-prepared and at-risk, but they are usually recruited on the basis of academic and/or extra-academic talent and/or superior motivation. The conditions these students must meet for unconditional admission have been incorporated into a program of support under the auspices of the Academic Advising Center. FC students are admitted for the academic year, beginning fall semester.
> (Retrieved 22 May 2008)

In the first line, FC students are positioned as the subjects and then defined through three subject-complements which characterize the deficits of FC students: inadmissible, under-prepared and at-risk (lines 1 – 2). The first three lines, as a result, emphasized the problems the students face as not fully prepared and at-risk, though it did not explain

what FC students are at-risk of doing[20]. The coordinating conjunction "but" in line three of the excerpt designated a shift in the compound sentence where the references to talent were positioned in contrast to references to risk in the first three lines. The syntax of the sentence placed the two images as compound equals: two ideas connected together with a coordinating conjunction. FC students were both at-risk and at-promise simultaneously.

As is evident in the official HSFU document describing FC students in the introduction of this chapter, references to the perceived problems of FC students coalesced with references to perceived talents. Like a yin-yang iconic sign, risk/promise was the most prevalent tension in characterizations of FC students. In brief, these were the distinctions:

- "At-promise" included images of students possessing extra-curricular talents, like athletics, music, art and academic achievement, as well as references to positive behaviors, like being motivated and engaged. It also included references to students as having resources and being resilient.
- "At-risk" included images of students with academic deficiencies, learning disabilities, emotional problems, and/or socio-economic disadvantages as well as problem behaviors, such as students as resistance, reluctance, lack of motivation and resources, and incompetence. It also included images of students as victims, positioning students as passive receptors of education rather than active participants.

In many cases, like the official university profile in the introduction to this chapter, the distinction between at-promise and at-risk images of FC emerged within a single sentence. Likewise, administrators often described students as both at-risk and at-

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[20] In the context of the sentence, it's obvious that at-risk indicates academic performances as opposed to other risk behaviors associated with college students, like binge drinking, promiscuity, or issues of mental health, which were typical risk topics of the university (see Seaman, 2005).

promise in the same story. While the data examples were representative of an emergent phenomenon in the data, the voices in the data excerpts were connected intertextually with larger sociopolitical dialogue about university students deemed to be academically underprepared and "at-risk" of academic failure. Three salient narratives about FC students emerged:

- Underprepared but Talented
- Recruited Talent as Code
- Strength and Weakness of Character

Underprepared But Talented

The first descriptions of FC students emerging in some administrator voices echoed the official language in the program described FC students as academically "underprepared" but possessing talents from which the university can benefit (above). For instance, according to the Vice Provost, the admission academic profiles of FC students were generally lower than regularly admitted university students, but FC students were described successful nonetheless:

> So one important thing to note about them is that they, on all traditional predictors of success, they're lower than our normally admitted students, but their success is remarkably high given that. (lines 90 – 92)

While he described FC students in terms of "their success," he also qualified their success in relation to their low scores on predictors of success—"remarkably high given that." "Success" in the Office of Provost was measured "through a variety of indicators including measures of learning, persistence, graduation, engagement, health and well being, and opportunities after graduation" (provided by Vice Provost, May 2008). However, the Vice Provost didn't specify which measures he used to define "their success." Rather, it was more important that their success "was remarkably high given that." Importantly, *that* designated a key characteristic of FC students: they had lower scores on traditional predictors. Two voices emerged; he described FC students as having

a high level of success in spite of their potential risk—their low scores on traditional predictors like placement test scores and high school GPA. While he emphasized FC student success, he did so by naming their academic risks. He echoed the official profile offered by the Office of the Provost: successful despite being at-risk.

The Program Coordinator in the Center for Academic Advising defined the traditional predictors of success as college placement test scores, grade point averages in high school, and class rank at graduation, which combined to formulate an admissions index number. He said that FC students fall below the minimum admissions index number for regular admission to the university:

> These students have applied to the university and their standardized test scores and such don't combine together to give them an admissions index number that's high enough for admission and so they fall short in some way. (lines 237 – 240)

Repeating phrases of the official university profile of FC students, he explained that the students were inadmissible because their combined scores were not high enough. In the administrator talk, specific measures identified FC students as at-risk, like placement test scores, cumulative grade point average, and class rank at graduation. This perspective was informed by educational research that empirically establishes a strong correlation between these predictors and persistence into the second year of college (Barefoot, 2005; Ishlar, 2005; Ishlar & Upcraft, 2005; Kuh, 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Students who score lower on these predictors are identified as needing extra support.

Besides images of FC students as more likely to struggle with retention, a lower admissions index score conveyed an image of FC students as lacking academic preparedness. For example, the Former FC Seminar Supervisor described the lack in skill:

> They are lacking, either because of learning disabilities or missing educative experiences early on, the academic skills they need to survive on their own, and so these are students that have been selected by the university who need support in their academic endeavors at least for a year. (line 183 – 187)

The administrator defined enrollment in the FC program as due to lacking "academic skills they need to survive on their own." He speculated the reasons for academic underpreparedness might be due to learning disabilities or missing educative experiences. As is evident in this description, defining the reasons for risk was often part of the stories about FC students, which will be addressed in more detail below. In part, however, statistics available for admission profiles about FC students limited what administrators could describe about them, as the Vice Provost suggested, "I've only seen statistics about them." Compared with perspectives of those on the ground floor, like instructors and the FC Seminar Supervisors, some administrators were limited to the official statistics available to them about FC students.

Nonetheless, there was a centrifugal narrative about FC students that described their great promise as "talents." For example, the Associate Athletic Director explained that FC students were academically talented: "There's a number of students who come out of there making the Dean's list and a three point GPA." Similarly, the Vice Provost said that FC students were admitted with the same expectations of regularly admitted HSFU students: "we've tried to admit for success and get students who will graduate, and we think the same way about FC students." Some administrators identified specific FC students as "high flyers" in some narratives.

While some voices described FC students as having academic talent, another more frequent narrative about FC students focused on their "extra-academic" talents. The Vice Provost explained that HSFU admitted some FC students because they showed an extra-academic talent:

> VP: A special admissions case is somebody who doesn't meet our requirements for admission but does bring special talents to the university that we think makes the university a better place. And so they need a holistic review. The question that I think we always focus on is, is there reasonable belief that the student will succeed here, given what we can provide in Freshman Connection and other things? And if so and if they're bringing in talents that we value then we can admit them
>
> A: okay and what are talents typically?

> VP: Typically the most common are music and athletics. But there are other just unusual ones but mostly music or athletics. We'll also consider special admissions sometimes if it adds diversity to the class in some interesting way (lines 36 – 47)

He identified athletics and music as talents. The talent in these instances fit with the "extra-academic" phrase provided by officially sanctioned reports (above). What is more, diversity was a "talent" because it "adds" to the university in an interesting way[21]. In this excerpt, talent was depicted as athletic/artistic abilities or cultural diversity.

Similarly, the Current Program Director in the Center for Academic Advising described talents typically associated with FC students based on the scholarships they receive as applicants to HSFU:

> In point of fact only the departments and athletic teams are considered departments for this purpose, who offer scholarships upfront. So it's fairly limited to athletics and music and dance could—They have, we've had dancers, but we haven't had dancers that have been recruited by dance in FC. We had people go on and major in dance. We had the talent part of it, but they weren't recruited. So, other departments give students scholarships further along but not coming in, but music is one of the big ones that give scholarships coming in. (line 32 – 47)

She identified departments who offer scholarships to illustrate which HSFU departments "recruit"[22], echoing the language in the official document excerpted above ("we had the talent part of it") and triangulating the Vice Provost's perspective above. In particular, athletics and music were defined as the most prominent scholarship providers, as the recruiters. She located "talent" to mean extra-academic interests like music, dance, and athletics, but she did not refine how FC students adequately garner these talents as

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[21] The complexity of the political issues surrounding cultural diversity and Freshman Connection warranted its own discussion. The discussion of diversity in terms of promise adds a layer of nuance to that issue. I will show in the next section that diversity as student promise cuts both ways as it benefits the university as much as the student.

[22] The term "recruited" in this excerpt repeated the official report in the introduction of this section. Although it warranted some discussion here, I focus on the term "recruited" in the next section as I decipher the term as a strategically ambiguous stand in. Recruited became a code word that gets defined by multiple participants.

evidence of their success in FC or on the HSFU campus. How extra-academic talents helped the students and HSFU was less clearly described.

Talent emerged as a strategic ambiguity in some administrators' language. Importantly, the term "talent" was linked to the word "recruited" in the official texts describing FC students, and the term "talent" was repeated consistently by some administrators in campus departments that deal with admission, like Center for Admission, Center for Academic Advising, and the Office of the Provost. The term "talent" in student development theory is frequently used to reference the development of students with "diverse backgrounds" (Kuh, et al. 2005, p. 78). In fact, Kuh et al. describe Fayetteville State University's espoused mission as "working with students with diverse backgrounds and talents" (p. 78). In FC, the terms "recruit" and "talent" became linked in the chain of FC narratives. In the next section, it will be evident that "recruit" emerged as code for student-athletes and students from non-dominant communities, forming distinct meanings for "talent" in FC students.

Recruited Talent as Code

In conversations with FC participants, a clear pattern emerged. There were two ways of being recruited: First, the university offered scholarships through specific departments, like athletics or music. Second, the university offered admission to some non-admissible applicants because they were identified on their application as members of one of the TRIO groups, first-generation, low-income, students with disabilities, and underrepresented student groups. In FC, the most visible TRIO group were underrepresented cultural groups, African-American, Latino/a, Asian-American, and Native American. At the time of this study, the Provost's agenda for enhancing the experience of undergraduate education included increasing the representation of underrepresented minorities in the student population and in the faculty population. Called the "HSFU Promise," the diversity agenda was one of the top ten missions of the

university. “Recruited” in FC referenced a complex set of identifiers. The most familiar connotation of the word “recruited” was providing scholarships to individuals with extra-academic talents, students who were accomplished athletes and musicians. However, “recruited” in FC also referred to non-scholarship students. I asked the Vice Provost to explain:

> A: And so, I just want to confirm or triangulate. I’ve heard the term recruited. Can it count for the talent as well as the underrepresented cultural diversity?
>
> VP: Yeah I guess that is our technical term is that they’re recruited students. (lines 48 – 54)

In this exchange, I co-constructed with the Vice Provost the meaning of term “recruited.” He confirmed that “recruited” was a technical term. Later in the interview, however, he elaborated on how the term “recruited” functioned in the public HSFU discourse, which pointed to the purpose of the FC program as a campus initiative for diversity at HSFU (see Chapter 1):

> VP: I mean that’s one, that is one of the geniuses of FC, is not making it for athletes, not making it for students of color, making it for recruited students. There’s an integrity to thinking about it that way and it’s politically very protective.
>
> A: Yeah very protective. But it doesn’t mean that, and as you have pointed out inevitably people will start to say why are there so many students of color here? How come they’re all taking this course?
>
> VP: Right, right. I think -- I mean there are, you have to be realistic and think about what the political risks are. Suppose that we’re teaching it for 200 or 400 students. Then that question of is this a remedial course would be elevated (598 – 609)

The Vice Provost explained the term “recruited” in the FC discourse as meaning student-athletes and underrepresented cultural minorities on campus, and presumably musicians. Further, he explained that the word “recruited” was strategically employed in the description to screen against political objections, something referred to as “politically very protective.” He described the highly charged political atmosphere at HSFU

regarding diversity initiatives and recruiting highly visible athletics (see Merisotis & Phipps, 2000; Stygall, 1998).

"Recruited talent" as a code related to the larger social dialogue about the perceived value of student-athletes and culturally diverse students; HSFU clearly had to address the larger social dialogue, and FC was an example of how HSFU responded to the issue of recruited student-athletes and non-dominant student groups. Tracey and Ashcroft (1997) define value-specific policies as those that confront cultural and symbolic issues of equity. Value policies respond to "symbolic injustices [that] are about whether and how certain kinds of people are to be recognized or respected" (Tracey and Ashcroft, p. 299). Policies about diversity in systems of higher education are prevalent value-focused issues garnering significant attention in universities. As recent as 2003, the U.S. Supreme Court addressed an issue of diversity initiatives on university campuses by ruling on two cases contesting the legality of race-conscious admission policies at the University of Michigan Ann Arbor: Grutter V. Bollinger and Gratz v. Bollinger (Bell, Coleman, & Palmer, 2005). The 2003 decision effectively argued that the educative benefit of diversity efforts in our nation's colleges is compelling enough to merit limited consideration of race and ethnicity in admission policies (Bell et al., 2005; Michaelson, 2005; Schmidt, 2004). While the 2003 U.S. Supreme Court landmark decision upheld the educative benefits of diversity, it also articulated limitations to such efforts in admission and remained vague in terms of other university programs, like financial aid and remediation. Policy analysts Bell et al. warn universities to "define their diversity goals and exhibit a demonstrable commitment to them, with support from the highest levels of the institution. If, in legal terms, such goals are to be 'compelling,' they had better reflect the institution's overall mission and be put into effect through sound strategies (p. B9). After the U.S. Supreme Court 2003 decision, universities have been struggling to define diversity policies (Bell et al., 2005; Bollinger, 2007; College Board, 2006/2007; Schmidt, 2005/2006). When the Vice Provost pointed to the need to be politically protective with

respect to the students in FC, he was pointing to the larger legal and political battles about diversity efforts in higher education in our nation at the turn of the 21st century.

To be sure, the Vice Provost illustrated the need for strategic ambiguity in value-focused policies in espoused missions for the benefits of diversity on a campus like HSFU. He described the strategy as "not making it" for student athletes or students of color specifically. "Not making it" denoted the nondescript qualifier "recruited" as it remained ambiguous about which students were recruited and why. It did not draw attention to the issue of diversity, so as to be politically protective, and it screened against public concern over student-athletes. However, as became evident in strategically ambiguous narratives of support in FC, the strategic ambiguity seemed less effective as a strategy for contesting durable stereotypes. As a result, I examine how "recruited" signified FC students in meaningful ways to tease out the variety of narratives flowing in the FC program. A pattern emerged across sources by which administrators characterized FC students as fitting one of two groups (or both): student athletes and underrepresented cultural minorities. 124 references were coded in this category, 68 references to FC students as student-athletes and 56 as references to FC students as culturally diverse.

Recruited Athletes

While being an artist, musician, or dancer had been mentioned as possible talents of FC students, only musicians were defined as recruited through an academic department, according to administrators dealing with admissions and advising. A close look at the data, however, illustrated that a majority of references described FC students as simply student athletes. Likewise, in my own FC seminars, typically at least half of my students were athletes. Through these data, a tight connection between FC and student-athletes emerged.

First, the Program Coordinator of FC in the Center for Academic Advising explained: "Our connection with athletics is probably tighter and more time intensive. It's because we have so much information available and the students that we have are probably their most at-risk group. We work pretty darn close with them to kind of keep track of those students" (lines 53 - 156). As part of the connection with athletics, he described the FC student-athletes as the "most at-risk group." The concern for FC student-athletes interrelated with the discourse about FC students as "at-risk." Also, in the data, another prevalent narrative emerged describing student-athletes as at-risk because of the pressures of their visible and public roles as student-athletes at HSFU. The Associate Athletic Director explained that the FC student athlete experienced unbelievable stress:

> It is a busy time for 'em because they're gonna be pushed physically probably harder than they ever had before in their lives. They're gonna be pushed academically probably harder than they ever had before in their lives. They're gonna go through some mental anguish because a lot of these students come to us being stars in high school, and now they're gonna be regulated to second team or not playing at all. (lines 306 – 310)

He described the experience from the perspective of a former student-athlete and as a coordinator who worked closely with counselors assisting student-athletes in his department. As he described students facing a host of problems, listed in rhythmically combined simple sentences of similar syntax, the repetition of the same subject pronoun and verb phrase emphasized the actions described as happening to student-athletes. The struggles of FC student-athletes included physical stress, academics, and mental anguish. He described athletes as having few rewards they had experienced as "high school stars." The first-year student-athlete had a lot of pressure and very few rewards. Later in the same interview, he responded to my statement that being an athlete was like a job:

> It's a full time job, and you still do the studying and still do you know and which is a benefit to the service and the public service activities. So they're involved in that too a lot more than a majority of the students on campus. So the other big part is that the general students are not in the public eye the way student athletes are and they gotta watch themselves. One thing may happen maybe not even here, but across the country, but they look at our guys and

> say boy you, it's happening here too so that's a constant and we do have some who go astray and they just magnify. (lines 365 – 374)

In this excerpt, the responsibilities of student athletes on campus were described similar to having a job rather than a talent or asset. The connotation of "job" was not so much career responsibilities but adult pressures.

What is more, the Associate Athletic Director explained that beyond the pressures of a fulltime job, the student-athlete faced constant public scrutiny. In the final lines of this passage, he offered a particularly apt description of dominant discourses in the national media, referring to student-athletes who became visible in the public as a result of indiscretions. For example, in July 2008 ESPN.com published a story reporting that in the last five years, 46 Penn State football players have faced 163 criminal charges (Lavigne, 2008). Similarly, the Associate Athletic Director described the "constant" public narrative about the trouble with student-athletes on college campuses. He admitted that some student athletes in the program "go astray." This narrative, prevalent in larger sports media, the local state media, and the university community, adds to the pressure on student-athletes: "they gotta watch themselves."

The description of the student-athlete emphasized the pressures student-athletes face, the pressure from media scrutiny, the image of student-athletes in trouble with the law, and submission to these pressures. While some administrators described student-athletes as driven and having promise, throughout the data there was less attention to the strengths student athletes bring, such as motivation and hard work. The story of the student-athlete emerged as primarily a story of risk. Instead of emphasizing the promise of student athletes as public figures with opportunities to become role models, administrators more often focused on the "risks," drawing on the public perceptions of student athletes as contributing to constant pressure. The narratives of student-athletes, then, were instantiated by the social dialogue of concern and "risk." As such, athletic "talent" as narrative of promise became imbued with the durability of the "risk" discourse in the data.

Recruited Underrepresented Students

Like references to student-athletes, some administrators also spoke about cultural diversity as an example of student-promise in FC. The Current FC Seminar Supervisor, for instance, described FC students as “an anomalous population” because “there’s a much higher percentage of minority students and first generation students.” In general, participants of this study readily described the benefits of diversity. For example, the Program Coordinator described the diversity as a great strength of the program:

> A: Like you said cultural background, one thing that students point out to me is that this is the most diverse class they have, you know. It’s very, it’s markedly different from another general education course.
>
> PC: Oh at this university, ((sarcasm)) absolutely.
>
> A: Absolutely.
>
> PC: You know what I mean? And it’s great because of that though, it’s just wonderful I think. Yes it’s good for everybody. (lines 495 – 503)

While the Program Coordinator and I co-constructed the idea that diversity at HSFU is a great resource, neither of us provided substantive reasons for diversity as a resource. It was an example of how we failed to define specific strengths of diversity as an educative promise. Calling diversity a “talent” without defining the educative benefits of the diverse students in FC to the larger university seemed to effectively undercut the educative benefit of diversity as an espoused mission. However, the Program Coordinator was responding to the social dialogue. His intertextual response included screening against the perceptions that FC was a diversity initiative. As the Vice Provost aptly explained, diversity as an educative benefit in FC was politically risk. The counter voices describing the educative benefits of diversity in the FC program were less formidable. The “at-promise” narrative of diversity as benefit became marginalized. As has been outlined above, legal and political risks associated with diversity-related admissions also

influenced what was said about diversity in the FC program. Here the Program Coordinator and I struggled to define the educative benefit of diversity explicitly.

In these data, the FC program emerged as designed in part to cater to the needs of underrepresented, non-dominant cultural groups because such groups often contain a disproportionately high percentage of students in “remedial” or “support” programs (see Chapter 2). However, the benefits of the cultural diversity to HSFU through the FC program were less explicit because the program was itself politically at-risk. By contrast, the narratives about FC student diversity that emerged frequently focused on adequately supporting FC students of non-dominant cultural groups. The main issue for non-dominant student groups was the HSFU community, which was described as a predominantly Euro-American and homogenous. Offering support to students from non-dominant groups was central to the FC program. For example, the Program Director, herself a Euro-American woman, compared the FC classes to the rest of the university:

> Because so many of these students are also first generation or minority students (2 seconds), what, one thing it does, one thing this program does is that these are really multicultural classrooms. The FC seminar, the study groups are true multicultural places and that’s a huge difference from where a minority student may go into each of his or her classrooms and be the only minority students there and feel like why am I here or not feel like they are really a part of. So we wanted them to feel welcome, and we wanted them to feel like they were part of the institution. And I realize there’s that sort of thing where well you know you are in a program, but we, nobody knows about the program. (lines 424 – 433)

The Program Director’s speech illustrated subtle moves that positioned FC students as separate from the mainstream HSFU student population. First, the Program Director described minority students as feeling like they were not “really a part of” the campus and claimed that regular, general education classrooms at HSFU contributed to their feelings of difference. She explained that, in response, the FC program wanted to make the students of non-dominant groups feel welcome, as Pratt’s “safe houses.” However, the double bind for the FC program was that it also isolated FC students; it remained a program that “nobody knows about.” Secondly, some word choice in this passage

positioned students in a particular way in FC: the use of the first personal plural pronoun "we" placed the HSFU institution, including the Program Director and me as Euro-American women, as a uniform entity in contrast to the positioning of "minority" students in FC as "them." Thus, the syntax positioned "minority students" as not part of the "we" peopling this institution. The Program Director's statement was an example of how sometimes FC students were discursively positioned in the everyday language of FC as separate but equal in a support program that nobody knows about. The larger sociopolitical dialogue about diversity in higher education circumscribed what the Program Director could say about the FC program, a program that nobody knows about. This was an important struggle to which instructors and students responded during the academic year of 2007 – 2008 (see Chapters 6 and 7).

The description of FC as a support program for non-dominant student groups should not be perceived as an isolated institutional practice. It was not just HSFU that recruited some students through an academic support program. Linda Powell (1997) criticizes institutional practices across the nation that isolate and separate students of non-dominant communities into "risk" programs. In an analysis of these separate but equal support programs, Powell defines the concept of "discourse of deficit" (p. 4). The distinction of "discourse of deficit" and its counterpart, the "discourse of potential," outlines a binary set of trajectories Powell sees imposed onto university students (p. 4). In official discourses, the disparity of those who belong and those who do not belong in official discourses has significant implications for students of color and their positions in relation to the university:

> The worry about incompetence is projected unto students of color, via the discourse of deficit. While this diminishes the potential of these students and privileges their deficits, it preserves the university's sense of value. The students become the only ones with possible incompetence. Likewise, White students are supported, empowered, and affirmed, via the discourse of potential (as though they had no deficits) and it feels just like "they earned it." (Powell, 1997, p. 4).

Powell illustrates that risk becomes unanimous with cultural difference. Second, programs designed to address the "risk" of students of color become evidence of the university's good will, "a sense of value." The phenomenon of discourse of deficit includes the effect of discourse of potential in which Euro-American students are affirmed as having potential. Powell's deficit/potential binary discourses relates to current debates over cultural difference and literacy practices in education. In her analysis of *Literacy and Racial Justice*, Prendergast (2003) defines an economy of literacy as "White property," an ideology she locates through a historical examination of educational research, legal battles, and race-specific legislation in education and work, including affirmative action programs. Prendergast argues convincingly that "literacy becomes White" (p. 113), and that economies of literacy as White property emerge in legal battles over affirmative action in our nation's history. Like Powell, Prendergast illustrates how university culture can become uniformly White property.

At the HSFU campus, just 9% of the student population (over 29,000 students) was identified as "minority" students. As the Program Director and Coordinator explained, an FC student might be the only person of color in a general education course at HSFU. In contrast, at least a third of the FC students were identified as underrepresented cultural groups. In a small classroom, like my section of just 13 students, it was a visible difference. What is more, because literacy study was an objective of the FC program, the curriculum of the FC program was rife with the social and political struggles outlined by Powell and Prendergast. The placement of far more students from non-dominant groups in the FC program in contrast with regular general education courses at HSFU discursively connected being "at-risk" with students of non-dominant groups.

The larger sociopolitical dialogue, as a result, affected greatly how administrators could speak about the FC program. Their words were amid a chain of utterances historically and politically situated (Bakhtin, 1981). Being careful to screen against

politically risky language, administrators seemed to use strategic ambiguity, like "speaking code" through a term such as "recruited." For example, the Former FC Seminar Supervisor described the phenomenon:

> A: Was that part of the program the idea that this was going to be a diversity initiative?
>
> FSS: It's a good question because I think it was, but it was not something anybody said aloud. That's part of the political good faith bad faith issue. When we talk about recruiting underprepared students, we're speaking code for students of color most of the time, but we don't say African-American students. We don't say minority students, we don't say students of color, we say underprepared. It's the way we talk about diverse classrooms meaning. (290 – 303)

In this exchange, I asked the Former FC Seminar Supervisor if the program was designed as a diversity initiative in an effort to triangulate what had been explained by campus-level administrators about the term "recruited." He presented the problem to which both the Vice Provost and the Program Director alluded above—nobody can say out loud that FC was a diversity initiative. Further, the term "recruited" stands in place of directly referencing students of color, as does the term "underprepared." In this exchange, the administrator identified the cultural discourses beyond the local context of our university that influenced how the FC program located and positioned FC students. He defined what can be said as "underprepared" and what cannot be said, which included references to students as having a minority status ("African-American, students of color, minority students"). Moreover, in the syntactic choices, like the Program Director above, the plural first person pronoun "we" positioned university administrators, faculty, and staff as speaking code. Supported by the literature cited in Chapter 2, scholars note that "risk" is often cast onto communities of cultural difference (Delpit, 1995; Fox, 1999; Heath, 1983; Ladson-Billings, Lam, 2006; Rose, 1985; Prendergast, 2003; Powell; 1996). The unifying economies of risk as non-white property (to draw from Prendergast above) emerged in the discourse about FC students.

Importantly, there was no reference to cultural diversity in the FC profile I shared in the introduction to this chapter. However, in the data, "underprepared" came to mean more than academically underprepared; it carried ideological baggage about cultural difference and an "achievement gap." According to Lam (2006) these labels carry "racial connotations of terminologies such as 'inner-city'" (p. 216) that signify difference in social, cultural, and meaningful ways, which emerged as insights in the data analysis:

- The at-risk narratives emerged a discursive marker which inscribed cultural deficiency disproportionately onto minority groups (see Delpit, 1995; Erickson, 1987; Fox, 1999, Ladson-Billings, 1994; MacLoed, 1987; Mahiri, 2004; McDermott, 1987; Rose, 1989). Prendergast's analysis of economy of literacy as "White property" best anchored how the unifying narrative of the national political climate influenced what the administrators said[23].
- Some institutional practices at HSFU, such as identifying and separating out FC students, functioned to label these students within a discourse of "risk" (Foucault, 1978).

As a result, some administrative voices established a narrative of "risk" for students from non-dominant groups which also mingled with the narratives describing HSFU university culture as homogenously Euro-American. As some administrators began to tease out the distinct categories for identifying FC students, that is, a pattern emerged in which "risk" signified deficits beyond academics that the FC support program was designed to address.

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[23] Moreover, FC was implemented precisely at a time when anti-affirmative-action campaigns gained a unifying force in the national political discourse effectively revamping many university admissions policies and remedial instruction policies (Stygall, 1998).

Strengths and Weaknesses of Character

While the term "recruited" emerged as an important data finding, participants of this study also characterized behaviors of FC students, focusing on character strengths (at-promise) and weaknesses (at-risk). Often administrators pointed to the strengths of students while in the same sentence they remarked on the risks.

Being "receptive" was an attribute of FC students that emerged frequently in the administrators' perspectives, and it was described as a willingness to participate in the FC program. The Program Coordinator, for instance, emphasized how important it can be if a student was "receptive" to help. He said for a student being receptive meant everything; "it just made a huge difference because he just was not reluctant to work with people." Likewise the Associate Athletic Director described the strengths of students when they use the resources being provided by the program. In the interview he said, "It has to be a two way street. The commitment has to be from both sides" (lines 154). For him, the FC program worked when students used the resources because the program was designed around the promise the students possess. He said it's important to tell students "we see good in you" (lines 100). The Athletic Associate Director explained that for students to participate, the program had to do its part in the relationship and communicate to FC students that the program and the university found good in them. "Seeing good" in FC students was a narrative that flowed in the FC program and countered the durability of risk narratives. Yet it was a constant battle in the data, saturated by the verbal ideological thought outlined thus far.

Victim Narratives

Despite the desire to tell FC students that the FC program found good in all of them, some administrators, often inadvertently, drew from risk descriptions of FC students when characterizing FC students' lives. That is, some administrators described narratives of FC students facing disadvantage that affected their ability to do well at

HSFU. For example, the Program Coordinator, who worked in the Center for Academic Advising and worked closely with the study group leaders, offered a perspective of the FC students from someone who received a lot of information about them via the vast system of monitoring described in Chapter 4 as well as being an academic advising counselor himself. In our interview, he described FC students as facing difficult issues. In the following excerpt, he summarized some of those difficult issues and then offered an example to illustrate his point:

> They have personal issues and family issues. They continue to not receive much support. We have students who'll come in and tell their advisor well my—and they probably tell you some of these things—well I'll be the first one of my family, but nobody thinks I can do this. All my friends and my neighbors have said, "what are you goin' up there to that school for? You can't do that. That's not you. You think you're smarter than we are or you're better than we are." So they get a lot of things subtle and not so subtle that could work against them. And it's hard, and we had a student this year who had to drop out of FC after a week. The mother lost a house, isn't or wasn't employable, was going to live with a brother who threw her out, so she's back kinda on her own. He had to leave and get a job and take care of his mother and a little sister. It's just those kind of things that's hard for some of them to escape. (lines 277 – 299)

He began by describing FC students as having "personal and family issues." The language identified issues as problems that emerge as obstacles for FC students. Then, FC students were described as being disparaged by peers for choosing to attend to college. Program Coordinator echoed a chorus that he described as the voices of FC students' families and peers, illustrating the presence of others' discourses in the lives of these FC students (Bakhtin, 1981). The reported speech in this passage illustrated the chorus of voices: "All my friends and my neighbors have said 'what are you goin' up there to that school for? You can't do that. That's not you. You think you're smarter than we are or you're better than we are.'" In this sentence alone emerged layers of voices, like chains of utterances, that the Program Coordinators said students heard, but he associated these voices with FC students' home community.

What is more, the Program Coordinator was able to point to the circumstances facing a specific FC student in the fall of 2007. In the final lines of the excerpt above, the Program Coordinator described an FC student whose family undercut his progress. I remembered the student well, as he was in my section of FC during the first week in the fall of 2007: a young, Latino man from Chicago who wore a White Sox cap during the first week of classes. I also remembered the email he sent about his departure from school. I had replied to his email, explaining that I was concerned about him especially since deciding to leave after one week of school seemed premature. In his reply he indicated that he needed to attend to family problems and thanked me for caring enough to ask.

Both the Program Coordinator and I had brief interactions with this student. However, the Program Coordinator's narrative, built from a chorus of voices, illustrated how risk Discourses took a strategic effect in the everyday talk. The story about the student from Chicago included main characters representing the home community: the FC student, the single mom, an uncle, and the little sister. The setting was the economic disadvantage illustrated in the "loss of house" and the mother's job loss. In the story, characters represented narratives about "deficits" in students of cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic differences traced in the "at-risk" social dialogue. For example, the mother lost her job and her house (economic disadvantage). Her effort to find housing failed through because her brother kicked her out (family chaos). The FC student must return home to care for his mother and his little sister (family burdens). The disadvantages of his life were described as "hard to escape." The story of this FC student from Chicago was not one of promise. Instead, it became one of peril in which the characters, like the single mom, the uncle, and the little sister, became obstacles for the tragic hero, the FC student, to negotiate. He was characterized as a victim of economic disadvantage and a family discursively situated as "hard to escape." The narrative of risk became overwhelming. A portrait of damage emerged.

Later in the interview, the Program Coordinator returned to the story of the young man from Chicago and said, “had his mom had a job and had he not been concerned about his little sister, that’s just not a worry that many kids don’t have to have.” He continued, “that got in the way of his college for one year and we’ll see if he can eke out four years.” The obstacles this FC student faced were described as different from regular students admitted to HSFU. Further, the family created a major threat to the student’s progress, so much that the Program Coordinator described the situation for the student as tenuous. The verb “eke” connoted a dire strain or immense effort. Even though this FC student had illustrated a desire to return to campus, to cope with the difficulties, and to remain committed to college, the narrative presented about the student emphasized the problems in his family.

Versions of the same story of the hero student against all odds emerged across the sources. At times, the programmatic narratives emphasized tremendous damage while ignoring some of the strengths. For example, in the case of the Chicago student, the Program Coordinator might have emphasized in the story that the student had committed to return in the next academic year. The Program Coordinator didn’t describe such tenacity as an example of resilience. The focus on the FC student as a victim of his chaotic and unfit life emerged as it was connected to a chain of authoritative discourses about “risk” students that set the tone for the expectations of FC students once they were labeled “at-risk.” The turn to “victim” discourse, according to Fassett and Warren (2006), is a consistent strategy in institutional rhetoric. The Program Coordinator’s narrative was layered with the discourses of risk struggling against discourses of promise in FC students.

In a related sense, the Program Director illustrated the pervasiveness of the narrative of FC students as victims. During our interview in late January (2008), she described a couple of FC students who were having trouble registering for spring classes,

and the problem was that spring semester began in just two days at the time of our interview:

> PD: Our program coordinator has been spending hours this week because two students are not registered, and we don't have the technology in our enrollment system, a way to hold those classes past Monday, and you know. So he's been on the phone with people all week, um trying to make it happen and trying to get in contact with students. So we hear that they're coming back but we can't get in touch with them
>
> A: Nobody can get in touch with them, oh.
>
> PD: So you know that's all part and parcel you know of you know a lot of these students are first generation students as well. They don't have um parental support who know that you have to file these kind of forms and who know that you know. (2 seconds) You know that the certain paper work and have you done this and have you done this? It's because they don't know. (lines 372 – 386)

The Program Director was talking about a practical concern in her office, the Center for Academic Advising at HSFU, which involved helping unregistered FC students. Their office could not hold the courses for FC students any longer. In the last lines, however, her language becomes saturated with others' discourses, including the pervasive risk discourse evident across the data and intertextually linked with the social dialogue on "at-risk" students. For example, the phrase "part and parcel," meaning common place, delimited these kinds of behaviors as common for FC students. In this case, registering for spring semester was presented as too challenging for some FC students. Further, the problems with home life as they influence FC students emerged in the phrases "first generation students" who lack "parental support." The FC students and parents were described as people who just "don't know." Gee (2000a) describes the relationship between students' home culture and the values of the school setting: some "fit" while others don't, which can be called "unfit" in educational settings (p. 54).

Overall, a pattern developing in these data illustrated how the profile of FC students sometimes took up victim narratives, including lack of support at home, emotional problems within the student, and an absence of resources. "At-risk," as a

result, became discursively formed to include a home culture unfamiliar with academic ways, tremendous personal disadvantage, and stereotypes of individuals without resources. Disadvantage formed into an increasingly more damaged and broken profile of FC students as experiencing chaotic and unfit lives. Gee (2000a) explains that the discourse of fit versus unfit outlines a binary trajectory similar to that described by Powell (1997) above. Focusing primarily on differences in socio-economic class in education, Gee explains the prevalence of "unfit" as cast disproportionately on students of cultural, linguistic, and class differences in educational settings.

In Sum: Risk Edu-code

Defining FC students seemed directly related to the support the university was able to provide, according to the Vice Provost:

> So they are students who with the right kind of support can succeed, and that typically means that they're engaged. And I think that's one of things Freshman Connection does is force them to be engaged in their class work but not just in their class work. So I guess I would describe them as engaged students who with the right kind of support um succeed. Without the right kind of support, we'd be very dubious about it. I mean we wouldn't admit these students without a support system. (line 90 – 97)

The Vice Provost pointed out the purpose of FC was to "force" the engagement of FC students. The force and the engagement go hand and hand. Extrinsic motivation led to intrinsic motivation. The relationship between the support system and the student was characterized as necessary, but it also discursively positioned the FC students as less active in the experience. The Vice Provost described students as "forced to be engaged in their class work but not just in their class work" by the FC program. As the Current FC Seminar Supervisor administrator puts it, Freshman Connection was "designed to help students know how to be students." In the FC program, larger cultural meanings that reproduce beliefs of difference as deficiency in terms of culture and class shaped programmatic views of FC students. Further, it was in the language about FC students as isolated and experiencing life differently either as student-athletes or as members of non-

dominant cultural groups. Simultaneously, the local context of HSFU as predominantly Euro-American contributed to discursively positioning students of color in FC as at-risk. The HSFU community contributed to the discourse of difference as a symbol of FC student risk. The many voices of the programmatic discourse showed the presence of a powerful portrait of damage, of victims at-risk of academic failure that was imbued with the social dialogue regarding effective support of these students.

Certainly, administrators' characterizations of FC students were influenced by the administrator's position in the FC program because the farther one was from working closely with students, the more distant her or his vantage point. For example, when I met with the Vice Provost who provided auxiliary oversight of FC in specific admissions cases, he confessed that he didn't have much interaction with the program and its students. As I asked him to describe the students of FC as a group anyhow, he remarked, "I've never met them personally, so I've only seen statistics about them."

In general, administrator data illustrated how the FC programmatic narratives struggled with the pervasive edu-code (see Figure 1 below):

- At-promise discourse in FC became cast as extra-academic talents like being a gifted musician, or, most frequently, athlete. Other talents were vaguely defined with few specific examples of academic strengths.
- At-risk emerged as a Discourse in FC with a cumulative portrait of damage. FC students were described as academically underachieving, victims of socio-economic and personal issues, and unfit (Gee, 2000a).
- "Recruited" student athletes emerged as facing tremendous pressures and public scrutiny, building a victim narrative.
- "Recruited" students of color became coded with the discourse of deficiency (Powell, 1997) contrasted against "normal" university culture coded as Euro-American, or White Property (Prendergast, 2003).

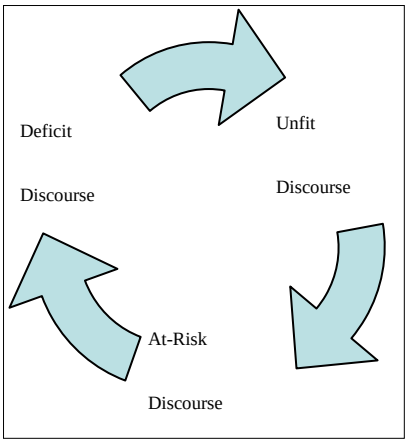

Figure 1: FC Student Narratives

Importantly, in these data, the description of FC students as at-risk and at-promise was intertextual, instantiated by the socio-ideological thought in the public, in student development theory, and in educational research on “at-risk,” like a chain of utterances (Bakhtin, 1981). However, in the administrator talk much of the stories about promise emphasized the retention rates and grade point averages. It was also clear that more stories of promise were needed to adequately illustrate the success of the FC program as doing more than remedying deficiencies. In their qualitative study, Watson, Terrell, and Wright (2002) explain that “events can go astray at institutions when the students and public become confused about the mission and values of that college” (p. 105). In the example of Freshman Connection, some institutional messages fostered strategic ambiguity that led to instances of contradiction. The next chapters turn to the perspectives of instructors and students in FC in response to contradiction.

CHAPTER VI

INSTRUCTORS RESPOND TO PROGRAM AMBIGUITIES

Overview

As an instructor in FC, I found the trail of bread crumbs leading me to straightforward and explicit objectives of the FC program was less and less obvious when I began in fall 2005. Thomas Reynolds (2001) warns instructors that "We work within institutions with deep histories and administrative structures that we ignore at the risk of being defined by those forces" (2001, p. 44). In FC, my ignorance of its history had left me equally naïve about how structures of the program defined what counted as support and our perceptions of the students needing extra support. In this chapter, I examine instructors' responses to the FC program. Being a former instructor during the writing of this dissertation and an in-service instructor during data collection enhanced my vantage as a researcher and shaped the analysis. While Chapters 4 and 5 introduced administrators' macro-level perspectives of the FC program, this chapter outlines instructors' perspectives from the middle, as people who mediated the espoused and the enacted missions as well as FC student responses on the ground. In this research, instructors were uniquely positioned to describe this interplay.

While contradiction is part and parcel of missions, explorations into sites of contradiction often expose dialogically constituted communication. Based on scholarship on contradiction in communications studies, Tracy (2004) argues:

> It is not contradiction or paradox, per se, that is productive or unproductive, good or bad, but rather, that employees can react to contradiction in various ways. (p. 120)

According to Tracy (2004) responses to strategic ambiguities in institutional organizations vary, depending on how tensions are framed and reacted to in practice (p. 123). Recent scholarship on strategic ambiguity highlights the strengths of holding a plurality of perspectives as part of a unified message (Eisenberg, 1984; Paul & Strbiak,

1997; Trethewey, 1999; Tracy, 2004; Tracy & Aschcroft, 2001). Bakthin's (1981) concept of the dialogism frames sites of contradiction in the espoused goals of FC as a complex chain of communicative interaction (Britzman, 1998; Juzwik, 2006; Rogers, Marshall, & Tyson, 2006). In response to the social dialogue in FC, instructor data was framed as intertextual, drawing from voices outlined in the administrators' data and the larger historical conversation about supporting "at-risk" university students. In the context of FC, it was prudent to explore instructors' responses to contradiction and incongruities in the programmatic objectives.

In Chapter 4, narratives of support emerged as sometimes congruent and other times incongruent. In this chapter, instructors pick up on the strategic ambiguity and respond to the complexity with discomfort and uncertainties. First, instructors at times echoed an "and/both" strategically ambiguous narrative of academic enrichment and enculturation like some administrators, but facets of enculturation featured less prevalently in instructor language. At other moments instructors offered a ocio-critical profile of community care and support, drawing from their personal experience working on the ground with FC students. Instructors had their own implicit narratives of support. Second, Chapter 5 outlined the at-risk/at-promise binary characterizations of FC students. Instructors sometimes struggled with stereotypical at-risk labels of deficits and difference that marked FC students as damaged: in some cases instructors took up the risk Discourse as deficit, and in some instances instructors offered counter narratives. Instructors described the paradigmatic paradox in the FC programmatic narratives of FC students as perpetuating stereotypical profiles of "at-risk" students. Instructors revealed a bricolage of implicit, intertextual narratives of support in the FC seminar.

Incongruities in FC Support: Instructor Voices

The instructor descriptions of support were framed according to the four narratives presented in the administrative interviews: Academic Enrichment and

Enculturation, Structure, Community, and Teacher Care. While most of the participants of this study spoke to these umbrella ideas during our interviews, the instructors described problems they faced in negotiating across these facets of support in the FC seminar. Some administrators anticipated this dilemma; for example, the Program Director in the Center for Academic Advising described instructors' responses:

> This is hard for instructors I think because you know professors, instructors, are really out there one on one, and with Freshman Connection you're really part of the program. And that's a harder concept I think for instructors sort of to wrap their minds around. That you really are part of a program. (lines 566 – 573)

She identified a contention emerging in the instructor data, which was the ability for instructors to work as part of larger programmatic designs when the larger program was not visible to them. Some the instructors spoke about the dilemma of working in a program but not having adequate information about its purpose and function in the larger HSFU campus when they prepared to teach in it. A recurrent pattern in the instructor data, for example, was that many of them could not explain how the FC seminar related to an espoused mission of the FC program. As a result, instructors spoke about negotiating sometimes contradictory objectives in the FC seminar that, more importantly, had not been explicitly outlined for them. In the following section, instructors speak to the four narratives of support introduced in Chapter 4: Academic Enrichment & Enculturation; Structure; Building Community; and Teacher Care.

Strategic Ambiguity Continued: Academic Enrichment and Enculturation

The five current and former FC seminar instructors of this study echoed administrators' perspectives of the FC program as fostering the two complementary features of academic enrichment and enculturation. They saw it as both development of skills and examining the university community. Some instructors, in fact, referred to the seminar as a hybrid—a course for strengthening skills (academic enrichment) and for

college transition issues (enculturation). For example, a former instructor who taught in the FC program for four years during her doctoral study, Betty described the purpose of FC seminar:

> FC Seminar, in my conception of it, is a hybrid of what I was told when I first taught in the program, which would've been years ago, and my ideas. What I was told about the program and the course was that it should or it was intended to be, it was created to be an ethnographic exploration of university for students in the Freshman Connection program who were classified as academically at risk or as academically underprepared for college study. (lines 2 – 7)

At first Betty described the enculturation model of the program, defining it as an "ethnographic exploration of university." As the veteran instructor, Betty echoed one perspective of enculturation, adopting phrases present in the description provided by the Former FC Seminar Supervisor (see Chapter 4), who was her immediate supervisor when she worked in FC from 2002 - 2005. Later in the same interview, Betty clarified the reference to "my ideas" in the third line (above), which delimited the hybrid components of the course:

> It's my understanding that seminar is supposed to be a course in which students will receive instruction and support for building, strengthening, enhancing, improving, whatever verb you want to use, some of the foundational skills they will need in order to be successful at the college level. Although those skills have never been specifically enumerated for me, or outlined for me, based on my training as a developmental educator, based on my experience in teaching developmental education classes, I identified those skills to be reading, writing, speaking, listening, and thinking. (lines 76 – 84)

Betty described the hybrid as including an ethnographic exploration of the university for students deemed academically underprepared and strengthening or enhancing foundational skills, which she defined as "reading, writing, speaking, listening, and thinking." Foundational skills focused on discourse, or language-use, as was evident in some administrators' descriptions. Betty's use of the term "hybrid" illustrated how she blended two dominant narratives in the FC programmatic discourse which crafted an implicit model of academic support shaping the FC seminar curriculum.

Similarly, another former instructor of the seminar who had taught in the program for two years, Helen, described the FC seminar as twofold:

> The role of seminar, as described to me as I started this job, was it was twofold. One was to help the students develop sufficient levels of reading and study skills to succeed at a university level. And the other was, and this is the one I love, assimilate them. Assimilate them into the culture of college. (lines 7 – 13)

Like Betty, Helen described the objectives of the FC seminar as a twofold endeavor, skill development (academic enrichment) and introduction to college culture (enculturation). Helen's phrase "assimilate" didn't match up with the official term "enculturation," but it did match up with a voice present in the administrative discourse on the narrative of enculturation that positioned students as needing to rehabilitate their bad high school behaviors and gain the appropriate behaviors and tools of the new culture—Helen called it to "assimilate them." Helen was a little skeptical of this facet of support, a point she made later in her interview. But why would Helen use the term "assimilate" while Betty used the term "enculturation?" These two instructors in the program taught at the same time. That Helen did not repeat the term "enculturation," as Betty did, pointed to a mismatch of terms, which was addressed in Chapter 4. Enculturation as a narrative of support emerged in the spoken words of administrators I interviewed, but it was not explicitly described in official reports or supplemental material provided to instructors. What is more, there was not a strong consensus on enculturation as a narrative of support among instructors. Helen seemed to show how instructors who worked in the program for a short time span were less certain about the narrative of enculturation as support[24].

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[24] Helen's use of the term "assimilate" suggested that she wasn't aware of the literature and research informing a model of enculturation, a process of appropriating cultural resources that is additive (Bizzell, 1999; Lu, 1992; Harris, 2001). Assimilation, on the other hand, is subtractive in tone, implying a loss of something in an effort to fit in. I have shown that sometimes administrators reverted to a subtractive model of enculturation in their description (see Chapter 4). Even scholars in composition studies sometimes refer to the process of negotiating university discourses as one of assimilation; noted scholar, for example, Bizzell (1986) described learning to write academic discourse in the university as a process of adopting a "common stock of knowledge" (p. 36) in her early work. Later, however, even Bizzell admitted to the consequences

The slight differences between Betty and Helen illustrated a pattern in the instructor perspectives. They didn't always match up. The lack of consensus among instructors seemed to be a result of the ambiguous terms used to define the purpose of the FC program and the students. In fact, some instructors spoke specifically about the lack of concrete information about the purpose of FC as support. For instance, Betty said, the skills she was expected to teach "were never specifically enumerated for me or outlined for me." Likewise, current instructors in the program described not being able to get information about the objectives of the FC program from official sources.

A General Reticence

It's probably an ill-advised anthropomorphism to characterize the FC program as a reticent person unwilling to talk, but it aptly captured the way instructors expressed bewilderment during their attempts to find straightforward information about the purposes of the program. For instance, a woman I interviewed during her second year as an instructor and with whom I collaborated as an instructor for two years, Stephanie, described rarely finding clear-cut information about FC. In the spring prior to her fall appointment beginning in 2006, she interviewed with the Program Director and Coordinator in the Center for Academic Advising about teaching FC seminar. Although she tried to find information about FC to prepare for the interview, she found just one web page. As an experienced graduate teaching associate in the English department and Women's Studies, she prepared for the interview by drawing on experiences with the

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of this narrative as it treated acquisition of academic discourse like a process of "inculcation" (p. 27). Harris (1989) critiqued Bizzell's early work as presenting a "conversion almost" (p. 16). While more recent work with academic discourse has drawn an expansive and robust definition of academic discourses and literacies (Bazerman, 1994; Gee, 1996, 2001; Gutierrez, 2008; Lea & Street, 2006; Russell, 1997; Wardle, 2004; Young, 2007), there is an ongoing debate about which practices best foster the transition into university academic discourses

first-year courses she'd taught in English and Women's Studies departments. During the interview, however, she described not understanding the FC seminar as a course:

> Finally the director says, "Do you have any questions?" And I said, "What is the FC program?" I had not a clue. And then the director was like, "Oh well did you see our website?" And I said "Well I found one page online, but I don't understand what I'd be doing." And I get this kind of, looking back I don't think I ever knew what I was doing until I met with you for the first time. ((laughs)) Because literally at that point your name was brought up. That I should touch base with Aimee Mapes because she has taught with the program. I was told it was a support program, but I didn't know what that meant. Again it was reiterated that I would have underrepresented minorities, first generation college students, and lots of athletes. That's what I was told, and that they would need support at things like time management. And so I was like, "Is this similar to rhetoric in the format of papers and speeches?" I still didn't understand. And he said "Well you can kind of do whatever you want, but we like to strengthen the writing if we can and their adjustment to college." I think he mentioned several times words like "adjustment to college" and "transition." I figured I would like the job because the population sounded like who I wanted to work with, but I still left there not knowing what I was teaching. (lines 75 – 107)

Stephanie described the information about the program in the interview as ambiguous. When she finally asked the administrators to clarify the purpose of the program, they referred to it as a "support program"—a label that Stephanie said she did not understand. She described the Program Director and the Coordinator as emphasizing college transition issues (enculturation) and strengthening reading and writing skills (academic enrichment). However, she did not describe the administrators as specifying the term "enculturation." When she asked if the course was like teaching rhetoric, the Program Coordinator explained that she could do whatever she liked. Yet, Stephanie described herself "not knowing what I was teaching" after she left the interview.

Stephanie's story represented two key tensions about the espoused goals of the program. First, the open mandate from the administrators offered teachers an unusual freedom to approach the course in their own ways. Second, it left ambiguous the course objectives. So while Stephanie liked the open mandate, she described a feeling of uncertainty about what to do with the course. As a result, Stephanie, like Helen,

illustrated how the strategic ambiguity sometimes didn't adequately define enculturation as a facet of support for designing the curriculum of the FC seminar. In fact, with no person of authority in the administration explicitly defining the enculturation narrative of support in FC, new instructors were less able to describe it as a clear objective. Helen referred to it as assimilation while Stephanie described it as college transition, a term often linked to developing specific study habits and behaviors, like time management. Stephanie reported that the interview had not elaborated the narrative of enculturation.

A similar story of administrative reticence emerged when I interviewed Lisa during her first year as an instructor in the program, a woman with whom Stephanie and I also collaborated throughout the 2007 - 2008 academic year. As the only first-year instructor I interviewed, Lisa offered an important perspective on the program. Lisa's description captured how first time instructors negotiated "the general reticence." Also an experienced graduate teaching associate, Lisa became interested in FC because she liked the opportunity to work with the same students throughout their first year. However, compared to teaching in first-year writing, Lisa explained FC was very different:

> A: Like I mean you said, I don't know the curriculum for seminar. What is FC seminar?
>
> L: I don't know. What you say it is Aimee. ((laughs)) I don't, I can't even remember what the official blurb is. I mean I think it's really hard to find information about seminar. If you go to the website or if you even go to register the class, it says you must have instructor's permission. It doesn't tell what the class is. And you can't find an FC homepage, which is sort of creepy and weird. I think it's like our dirty little class, which no wonder people think it's for dumb kids, ya know? The secret remedial program that nobody wants to talk about and nobody's ever heard of except the people who teach it. So I think that it, one way, one reason it's hard to know is because nobody will tell you or talk about it. Nobody is conversing about it. Rhetoric is talked about all the time. What do we do? What do we do every year? We have to redefine what we do and there's a whole book and a website that tells us what we do and with FC seminar it's like well study skills, reading and writing for college. (lines 436– 457)

In our conversation, I asked Lisa to describe the FC seminar, and at first she stumbled, and said she didn't know. Like Stephanie, Lisa directed the conversation to me, as the

teacher perceived to be the veteran. Further, she triangulated Stephanie's perspective that information about FC was hard to find. She stated a felt anxiety: "The secret remedial program that nobody wants to talk about." More importantly, Lisa illustrated how quickly instructors revert to naming FC a "remedial program" absent a framework explicitly contesting the label. In the final lines of this passage, she described it as "study skills, reading and writing for college." Even though administrators described the FC seminar as credit-bearing and therefore not remedial, instructors who hadn't been explicitly informed of the enculturation narrative of support were likely to perceive the curriculum as a study skills course, as remedial. Lea and Street (2006) say that teaching writing and literacy for the academy should be conceptualized through the overlapping of three perspectives: a study skills model; an academic socialization model, and an academic literacies model (p. 369). They point out that the aim of a skills model is to remedy skill deficiency, and orientations toward learning in this model revert to remedial courses and a deficit approach. Academic socialization, on the other hand, is similar to enculturation, and orientations toward learning include supplemental instruction and contextualized instruction in social practice. Lisa described the FC seminar like Lea and Street's skills model, with remedial aims. Both Lisa and Stephanie described the development of skills in FC in which language-use and literacy emerges as a fixed set of transferable skills that neither can trace to a specific source as providing information. Both illustrate how unspoken understandings about skill development reinforce the label of remedial in the context of FC. Strategic ambiguity did not adequately address the construct of remediation.

Instructors Respond to Strategic Ambiguity

Lisa's description identified a fundamental dilemma as a result of administrative strategic ambiguity that arose in the classroom. While in the FC program there was an open mandate, giving instructors the freedom to approach curriculum design

independently, ambiguity did not address the tricky narrative of remediation as it surfaced. For example, Lisa told a story about her experience teaching in the FC seminar:

> I remember like the first day, or maybe it was the second day, talking about the syllabus and the FC program, and one of my students said ((lower voice)) "So we're in the dumb class?" And I was completely, I had no idea what to say to that. I mean, kind of. That's what the perception of the program would be, ya know? And he was right to sort of put it out there, but how do I say yeah but not really, and ya know I really struggled with how to respond to that and I ended up talking to him about it like ten weeks later at conferences and having a great conversation. (lines 184 – 192)

Lisa's story illustrated the classroom tensions in the FC seminar. While not much information was available about the FC program, according to instructors, somehow students received a message that the seminar was a remedial course—i.e. the "dumb" class. Lisa's student named the stereotype associated with remedial or developmental classes. The institutional placement of some students in an isolated, separate program of "support" discursively cast them in the "remedial class" even when that language was not used in the program (Foucault, 1978). FC as an institutional practice looked remedial to Lisa's student. And Lisa's struggle with how to respond related to the over-arching tension of the program. The program wasn't remedial, but the narratives for describing academic and social support were varied, a cacophony of voices in which some gained a centripetal force saturated by the historical and sociocultural influences at HSFU. Over time, Lisa described how she negotiated the tricky issue with the student through conversation and one-on-one interaction. But the anxiety of that moment lingered; it remained in the atmosphere. Lisa's story was not an anomaly. It's a story that repeated itself when a first-time teacher entered the FC seminar classroom. All five of the instructor participants described similar moments. I experienced it. It recurred.

Despite the efficacy of administrative strategic ambiguity (and/both talk) for neutralizing political risks associated with remedial or developmental instruction at HSFU where there couldn't be "remedial" courses, the ambiguity was bittersweet for teachers. Without a careful introduction of enculturation as a facet of support, some

instructors didn't describe it as an explicit objective and, it seems, were less prepared to respond to discursive constructions of the FC seminar as remediation at HSFU. While ambiguity offered instructors an open mandate for negotiating differently the curricular designs of the FC seminar, it also left teachers, especially in their first years, vulnerable, anxious, and less sure of curricular expectations and how to respond to students' perceptions that the FC program was "remedial."

Structure: Surveillance & Discipline

Recall that in Chapters 3 and 4, "intrusive advising" was introduced as an empirically verified best practice in student development theory in higher education that FC campus-level administrators described as central to support in the FC program. Specific technologies for monitoring and control involved seminar instructors. FC program required students to take supplemental instruction (SI) as part of the FC seminar course. Designed as small group tutoring that met twice a week with a student tutor, SI enrolled FC students in a study group that covered material in one of two general education course options that FC students took, like Sociology or Introduction to Physics. Oddly, the SI content focused on the material of the general education course, but it was assessed as part of the FC seminar. So, FC students were required to attend study group sessions for a general education course, but attendance and participation in the study group became a component of the students' grades in the FC seminar. Twenty percent of the seminar grade depended on attendance of study group sessions. While the connection between seminar and the SI study group was not seamless, according to instructors, they described the participation and attendance of study group as part of the FC seminar grade.

In an effort to establish and maintain communication between SI tutors and seminar instructors, the FC program mandated that instructors and SI tutors distribute bi-weekly performance reports that describe and assess FC students' progress. Study group leaders submitted reports about students to the Program Coordinator (see discussion of

"Structure" in Chapter 4). He distributed these reports via email to FC instructors and some academic advisors. Also, similar to study group leader reports, FC seminar instructors kept a record of students' performance and wrote bi-weekly performance reports about the progress of each student in the seminar. We sent the performance reports to the Program Coordinator to be transmitted to other administrative units in the program, including athletic advising, academic advising, and student services.

According to instructors, the performance reports were the key ingredient of the system (see Chapter 4). In general, a report included information about student attendance, participation, graded in-class activities (like quizzes or in-class writing), and larger sequenced assignments (such as formal essay projects) as well as the general well-being of a student. Performance reports were a detailed assessment of each FC student every two weeks. In a given semester, for example, I wrote lengthy reports about students. While administrators described the need for the information as an important facet of the FC program, instructors viewed the system with some suspicion.

Instructors Sound Off: Draconian Control

The system of surveillance realized through the performance reports was in line with best practices for developmental education (Boylan, 1999). FC teachers described discomfort with becoming part of the FC monitoring system. For example Dylan, a colleague of Betty and Helen, described his initial feelings about the system:

> In the week before semester started, FC had a meeting with all the FC people from academic advising and also from athletics, and they, you could tell in the stories, they all had sort of stories to tell about past students, and they had, they were like ((mimicking a deep voice)) "We're not going to let that happen again," right? I mean there was a lot of that, like this time for sure we're really gonna lay it down hard. The moment there's some kind of sign of trouble, we're gonna get right on it, and we're gonna keep this kid from going down the tubes. Great they're really trying to rescue kids. But I could tell what they were presenting was a stereotype, and it was a stereotype that seemed to be based on the worst students that they had had, the students who had failed utterly, and so they were installing a kind of a systematic surveillance

> structure. Surveillance in every aspect of the kids' lives, and I became one of those surveillance structures. (lines 141 – 155)

Dylan described the objectives of the structure as a means of retention, "keep this kid from going down the tubes." He echoed voices of support outlined in FC administrators, like the Vice Provost describing the need to "grab students by the collar" (see Chapter 4). However, Dylan criticized the surveillance system as "based on the worst students," so the system defaulted to stereotypes about students as troubled rather than emphasizing growth-oriented models that enrich a students' strengths. Dylan expressed some concern about becoming part of the surveillance system, echoing Foucault's (1975) description of the panopticon in *Discipline and Punish*. The surveillance was at "every aspect of students' lives." Lisa concurred with Dylan's observation during my conversation with her. She said, "I mean it seems really Draconian and bizarre. The surveillance is like they're not going to get their work done if they're on their own, which isn't necessarily true" (lines 407 – 425). Referencing a Draconian system of forceful governing, Lisa's description of structure included images of forceful control.

Lisa described the surveillance structure as a mechanism of discipline. She spoke about two students in her seminar who were a constant subject of inquiry in the reports from the SI student tutors and the Program Coordinator:

> The match up between the surveillance, which is supposed to help them succeed, and what I think they need to help them succeed I think is totally off. I guess also the study group leaders are people who play a role in this too. This semester I had two students a boy and a girl who were really close. They weren't dating, but they're like best friends B.F.F. They sit next to each other all the time. They help each other all the time. The girl is a sort of high achiever. The guy is a football player, and the study group leader really perceived this to be a problem. She thought that the football player was overly benefiting from the assistance of this girl, and that the girl was doing too much. That it could potentially cross lines, and I mean they sit next to each other in my class, but I hadn't perceived this to be a problem at all. I mean they're helping each other. They're doing some great strategies here. And this just kept coming up and coming up. Their reports, they were like "I think I might have to separate them." This is a social relationship that has very little to do in my opinion with their work in my classroom and to have all this attention, people wondering if they're dating. What is the nature of this relationship? And I talked

> to them about it in their individual conferences, and I was like I don't care if you're dating. I don't want to know if you're dating. I don't even really think this is any of my business, but how is it going with all this attention? And you know they just acted really annoyed by the fact that they were being questioned so much. (lines 314 – 345)

The story of the high achieving woman and the male student-athlete football player as BFF's illustrated the way surveillance became disciplinary. Lisa described her students as responding with discomfort. In the BFF story, the constant reporting between the study group leaders about the behaviors of two students, according to Lisa, amplified an issue instead of mollifying it. For example, in the first lines of this passage, Lisa expressed concern about the system matching up with what she perceived as support for her students. She described the discussion in the FC program as presenting students as problems to discipline and control. The worry about the students was that they were misbehaving, cheating, and not following appropriate conduct in the FC program. However, from Lisa's perspective, the two students illustrated an effective strategy by collaborating and working together. Like Dylan's description of the system as basing its operations on negative stereotypes, Lisa's story described a perspective of the surveillance structure as a disciplinary mechanism for controlling deviant behavior, like cheating or romantic relationships. The performance reports, as part of the system, established and maintained a corpus of knowledge about these two student that became a mechanism of control (Foucault, 1975). The reports between the instructors and student group leaders became technologies for controlling risky behavior like cheating, failing, or engaging in romantic relations.

A Catch-22 Revisited

Instructors expressed resentment of the surveillance system for multiple reasons, but all participants discussed the paradox of FC's surveillance and control. That it maintained student dependence on the FC program rather than promoting student self-

efficacy was often described as a Catch-22. It was a prevalent voice in the program. Dylan offered a good discussion of the paradox:

> At the beginning of the semester, students had all kinds of meetings. They have like a week of meetings, it seemed like, with the program, with one person after another talking at them. And I'm sure all kinds of really important things must have gotten said, but the problem is that the students are actually in shock. They're wandering around in shock and they're not hearing anything. I mean they were taken on a tour to find all of their classrooms, and on the first day of classes they didn't know where their classes were. Why? Because they weren't finding the classes. They were being led to their classrooms. They were just wandering around like cattle. They weren't being allowed to try to find their classroom. Screw up, get it wrong, not find it, ask for help, find it. They were just sort of shown this. Now let's walk over to Smith Hall. Shown this, right. They just followed the crowd and walked around. It's not helpful. (lines 228 – 240)

Dylan's story captured the tension of offering intrusive mechanisms of support that reinforced students as dependent. The structures of the program positioned students as more passive, or Dylan described it as being herded like cattle, shepherded across the HSFU landscape. Dylan highlighted the contradiction by describing the benefits of being able to learn from mistakes. That is, like the Catch-22 described by the current FC Seminar Supervisor in Chapter 4, if students relied on the structure, they were less likely to gain a sense of self-efficacy. Lisa described the FC surveillance structure as "hand holding" that reinforced passive roles for students. She said, "Ya know, like it's time in a room devoted to study, but does that help students understand they need to spend time studying? Is that actually productive to them?" (lines 407 – 409). How to negotiate the Catch-22 paradox emerged as a constant question for instructors.

In all, the seminar instructors revealed a contradiction in enacting the structure facet of support in the FC seminar. First, instructors called the structure a system of surveillance which emphasized negative stereotypes of FC students. Second, instructors described surveillance as overtly disciplinary. Finally, instructors worried that the overall effect of the surveillance contributed to a paradox in which students learned to become passive and reliant on the structure, undermining efforts to foster student self-efficacy or

to build on the cultural resources students bring with them to the university (see Trethewey, 1999). Structure as a feature of programmatic support, as a result, became a central problem for instructors. Likewise, it became particularly significant for the final two narratives of support in the FC program: Community and Teacher Care.

Community: Friendship and Participation

Facets of Community as support emerged with the same frequency for administrators, teachers, and students. The participants of this study expressed the significance of community in supporting students in FC; most identified its importance to the efficacy of the program in ensuring student success. For instance, Helen and I discussed the social component of the FC program during our conversation:

> You hear community articulated very early in the beginning. When the director is particularly describing the program to us, she'll make reference to all of those studies that say that students do better in school if they are socializing and have extra-curricular stuff in common with them. So you hear it once and then it disappears. But I also see that it happens. So it's working. (lines 100 – 113)

Helen described building community as a dominant narrative of support in the program. The "studies" Helen referred to is the empirical literature in student development theory on college student persistence (Astin, 1991; Higbee, 2005; Kuh, 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1993; Upcraft, 2005). In particular Tinto (1993) argues there is an inherent value for students to engage in rewarding social and academic interactions with support systems on campus. Based on Tinto, studies have verified empirically the need for social engagements to support college retention (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Although Helen reported that "you hear it once and then it disappears," she agreed that the social part was working. Yet Helen was less able to describe community beyond admitting that it happened. While some administrators narrated building community in terms of friendships and creating a safe haven, some instructors extended the friendship narrative.

Friendship as Caring Relations

Administrators described personal friendships as important sources of support in the FC program. Instructors concurred, and they described it as important to the classroom dynamics. For example, Lisa focused on how students interact: “Because I know them so well, I know I could rely on certain people to kind of let the dynamics work out” (line 928). Similarly, Stephanie expanded on the importance of social dynamics as it developed between students by focusing on her student Germain:

> Actually last year Germain was an athlete and was also very intelligent. He did not socialize with FC people as much as now, but he did make like two lifelong friends, like really good friends. And he said to me in an email last summer, he hated FC. He didn’t think he had to be there. He felt like he wasn’t stupid. That’s what he said, but he made really good friends with Derrick and Lyle. Did it serve a function? I think in terms of transitioning and culture right. He has these two good friends now where he has similarities, and he would have maybe made friends with them on the field, but he wouldn’t have had the same more intimate experience. (lines 571 – 583)

Stephanie offered Germain as an example, a student she described as somewhat resistant to being in FC because he felt he didn’t need the seminar; “he hated it.” She said that Germain described feeling like he “wasn’t stupid” which implied that some how the program discursively labeled FC students in this fashion, where it was student interactions or other institutional practices. However, despite his resistance, she explained that through FC, Germain forged intimate, lifelong friendships with Derrick and Lyle. Like some administrators’ characterizations of friendship, community pointed to the similarities between some of FC students. Germain, for instance, made good friends with two other African-American football players, and the interactions in the FC program fostered more engagement: Stephanie said, “He would have maybe made friends with them on the field, but he wouldn’t have had the same more intimate experience.” The caring relation was significant to Germain’s support, according to Stephanie.

Participation: A Place to Screw Up

However, the instructors didn't echo the safe haven narrative of community in FC. Some instructors described the FC program as a place to make mistakes and learn from them. Some instructors described it as a "safety net," like a space to catch a student if they fall. The metaphors of safe haven and safety net cohere, but instructors extended the narrative of safe haven. They emphasized the FC seminar class as offering the space to risk making mistakes both academically and socially. The seminar was a space for trying out different approaches. For instance, Dylan described it as a place to screw up:

> What we need to do is let them make the mistake, but don't let them go too far down the mistake road. I mean like they need to make mistakes, and they need to like recognize it was a mistake, think about it, check with their peers. Well how are you doing this different? Because that's how you learn stuff. I kind of feel like that sometimes it, especially the athletic department but it might be the whole FC program, is wanting them to just sort of not, not screw up at all. So they need to, they're first semester freshmen. It's their job to screw up a little. Does that make sense? (lines 76 – 84).

Dylan's "place to mess up" metaphor focused on learning from mistakes. He described allowing students to make mistakes because mistakes prompt reflection, checking in with students, and gaining different strategies. Dylan's description implied a contradiction between the surveillance structure as a facet of support and creating community. The surveillance structure prevented students from making a mistake, which undermined the potential to learn from mistakes in the safe space because it promoted conformity and becoming passive in the institutional structure.

In a related way, Stephanie described how she saw students use the FC seminar community as an opportunity to try out a social role, to test it strategically. She told the story of her student Theresa as someone who "came out" in FC:

> I'm thinking about Theresa this year. I think that FC has served as a place for her to come out. And a place for her to challenge black men as a black woman and come out, and at some level she has to have felt some level of safety, but she's also, I think that she kind of uses it as like a testing ground. That like this is a small class, but she did it in front of all three of our classes and since then has

> more friends in our classes. She has a little group she sits with now where she used to sit completely alone in the back. I mean I think she has used it in a way that is helping her transition not only to college but into her sexuality and all kinds of things which is cool. And there was a comment a few weeks ago. Someone said well we only have three girls in here, and there was four because Theresa was seating there. And Lisa goes no there's four, and this guy goes, I'm thinking, oh it was Abe, so Abe goes, no there's three, and Lisa goes, no there's four. And he's all, there are three girls in here, and I'm telling you there's all these guys, and Theresa just laughs. She just sat there and laughed, and then I go Abe there's four girls in here. Look around, and he was like oh damn. Like all of sudden, and he was like, oh I didn't see you and Theresa just laughed, so somebody in my class said, oh yeah, don't recognize the dyke. Like it was funny, but it was said almost like lovingly. It was almost like standing up for her. And so there was this moment like, uncomfortable and then laughter, and then just almost like love or respect or something and everybody was fine. And Lisa and I were kind of like, okay, they've just negotiated this situation and they did it so well. (lines 619 – 657)[25]

Stephanie's story about Theresa illustrated three main points. First, she presented Theresa as a student whose sexuality marked her as different in the FC program. Yet, Theresa chose to come out to the students in FC seminars during one of our grouped activities. Stephanie identified the FC seminar as a place for Theresa to take such a risk with identity in the classroom. Second, Stephanie's story about the exchange between Theresa and Abe focused on how the students learned to negotiate differences. Students' interrelations enabled them to work through differences productively, according to Stephanie.

In a relevant study of safe houses in university programs, Canagarajah (2004) described that "students are testing out safe and strategic ways of constructing identities" (p. 133). To be specific, Holland, Skinner, Lachicotte, and Cain (1998) argue that creative improvisation is an important feature of identity construction as individuals negotiate the social and cultural calls of a "figured world," which includes the ideological configurations of a context (see Chapters 1 and 6). Constructing identities in figured

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[25] This event occurred during the Spring of 2008 when all three FC seminar sections collaborated on projects, including a Song Mix Presentation, a course blog, and literature circles.

worlds involves the arrangement of self through the orchestration of others' voices. Importantly, play and creative improvisation, as an "opening out of thought," productively allow individuals to "reshape selves" (Holland et al., p. 236). Theresa, in relation to Abe and other students, began to reposition her performance of self in the FC seminar on that day. Stephanie described it as taking a risk, but she also pointed out the negotiation of difference as significant to student learning. Likewise, that a student made a joke to Abe, poking fun at him, saying "oh forget about the dyke," illustrated a spirited repositioning of students to align with Theresa. Stephanie described the student who said "oh forget about the dyke" as lovingly protective. The cumulative experience, as described by Stephanie, seemed to support Theresa's identity play. However, Stephanie did not take credit for the effectiveness of the incident. She said "they" negotiated it, emphasizing how the students managed the learning moment. As a result, community as a facet of support included the freedom to try out identities, negotiate cultural and social issues of difference in a caring space where students actively engaged and nurtured each other. Stephanie's story exemplified the nuances of community support from the perspective on the ground. Without such a vantage point, some administrative narratives of friendship as community support seemed to eclipse discussions of difference as productive sites of interaction in the FC program. Making mistakes and trying out identities included a healthy patience for conflict as it arose in the personal relationships of the FC students. Stephanie's story added an important voice to the programmatic narrative of community, and the perspective on the ground offered insight into the significance of conflict and improvisation in FC, a theme echoed by students too (see Chapter 7).

In sum, instructors at times echoed the narrative of friendship as community support, offering nuanced views of the classroom as a supportive community in the programmatic discourse. Dylan's story, another perspective from the ground, described the supportive classroom as a place to mess up. Likewise, Stephanie's story about

Theresa best illustrated that instructors offered a close-up vantage point for narrating Community as a facet of support. Theresa's story represented how students use community to try out identities and negotiate differences. The negotiation emerged as the means through which students actively fostered caring relations. In addition to the concept of "safe haven" for alike students, as some administrators described the FC seminar, instructors characterized FC seminar as a place:

- to make mistakes,
- to try out identity construction strategies,
- and to negotiate differences.

The instructor perspectives highlighted the significance of using FC as a place to mess up, trying out identities, constructing them in dialogue with others, a portrait more akin to Bakhtin's dialogism.

To be clear, facets of community introduced by Dylan and Stephanie were not phenomena that happened quick and fast in the program. Theresa's coming out occurred during the spring semester. Instructors pointed out that the features of community as support was an effortful cultivation. Some administrators seemed less able to describe the process from their macro-level vantage point; they had no grammar for the student-led engagement other than calling it friendships. Some instructors extended the friendship narrative, emphasizing conflict, negotiation, and improvisation with identities as functions of community.

Teacher Care: Ethical and Political Action

Not surprisingly, teacher care emerged as the single most frequently referenced facet of support in the instructor data. While administrator data instructors described instructors as nurturing and flexible, in the instructor data, counter voices emerged that criticized the dominance of these qualities in teacher descriptions. Instead, instructors pointed to the tensions that developed when working to establish appropriate caring

relations with students in the FC seminar and simultaneously serving the intrusive structures of monitoring and control in the FC program. This section captures how teachers described care in the FC seminar, and it will end with a discussion of the tension between institutional narratives about structure as support and the personal connections teachers forged with students.

Echoed Voices: Teacher Qualities

Like the administrators' descriptors for FC instructors, teachers described the need to be sympathetic, nurturing, caring, and flexible with FC students. However, some instructors interpreted these needs as obligations to be "nice." For example, Lisa described that FC program seemed to set teachers up to act nice: "I definitely feel like I'm the nice teacher. I mean I think they think of me as having on a vest with apples with perfect handwriting. You know writing a note about Adam. Like a mother to the boys." Likewise, Dylan described the instructor role as being an adult for FC students, an older wiser expert on the subject of college, echoing what the Current FC Seminar Supervisor described about caring relations with older people. Some instructors expressed how expectations of the caring role as teacher in the classroom influenced their reaction to the FC seminar. For instance, Dylan explained he didn't feel like a normal classroom teacher:

> I also have taught at a community college, and in a way my community college students are like FC. Some of them are there because they can't afford this university, but could do well here. But a lot of them are at community college cause they didn't qualify. They didn't get in. So there are lots of things that I do with my community college students while I'm teaching certain subjects that I'm just doing along the way. Kind of to help them adjust, and not just adjust to school but to living on their own. And they really struggle with a lot of adjustments that are just sort of like extra-curricular parts of my job in a way, but they're stuff ya gotta do. You wanna get this kid through school. Like if they don't keep track of their electricity bills and their electricity gets turned off, then they're probably gonna do badly in their composition class. Somehow these things are all connected. In some ways I'm accustom to these other aspects, these other things. It's part of what I do, what it means to be a teacher. And in FC, it's almost like I kind of have a distilled, purified form of that, cause I'm not a classroom teacher in a normal sense for them. I don't have this

> specific curriculum. I'm just trying to help them in all those ways, so it kind of forces me to boil down what the hell do I do? What I normally do with my community college students and I try to do that tenfold with these students. (lines 207 - 225)

In our conversation, Dylan compared FC students to his community college students. He emphasized the extra-curricular kinds of care that he develops as part of working with them. He defined extra-curricular issues as related to adjustment to college and adjustment to living on their own. He traced the connection between a student's home life to the work a student produces for a classroom. That is, Dylan portrayed students as individuals with multiple roles and interests. Admittedly, much of his description presented students as inept, like not figuring out to do their laundry, or not paying attention to their utility bills for so long that the electricity gets shut off. Even so, Dylan described his role in the seminar as a distilled form of the extra-care he usually takes with community college students. He described the FC seminar as not having a "specific curriculum," and so the open mandate of the seminar "forces" him to focus on adjustment issues and extra-care "tenfold."

The difficulty of knowing how far to go with this extra-care, however, emerged in instructors' descriptions of their roles. For example, Stephanie described how the "constant knowing" about students required by the bi-weekly performance reports in effect made teachers focus on personal care, but she described the program as wanting to police the personal care:

> Yes and there's this emotional stuff that is somehow policed. It's not that we can just write straight out "I am really worried about, John." I'm really worried about John because he's been really late. I think he's been out partying. His coach seems upset. It can't be because if you do that, you're too intimate. So there's like this policing going on somehow that I feel, but I couldn't point to you and say see that's the moment right there when I am being policed or this is being looked at. Instead it's that how am I going to articulate this, so John turned in his draft and ya know it was decent, however I'm a little concerned because like it's always trying to keep a distance at the same time that I think we're expected to be immersed cause we're expected to know. (lines 239 – 254)

In our conversation, I introduced the topic that writing these reports involved articulating a number of things. Stephanie elaborated the number of things, including the emotional piece of knowing reasons why a student like "John" might be struggling. What is more, she described an element of programmatic policing of the emotional support in the reports. Somehow she had felt that teachers can be too intimate, too personal. In a nutshell she said, "you're trying to keep a distance at the same time we're expected to be immersed."

While Stephanie didn't have an example to illustrate the policing of the personal in the FC program, I made notes of one such instance during the required, introductory department meeting in August 2007. At the meeting, a group of administrators met with instructors and study group leaders to prepare for the academic year. In my field journal, I noted the presence of administrators showed up from the central departments associated with FC: Center for Academic Advising, Student Support Services, Student Disability Services, Center for Diversity and Enrichment, and the Department of Athletics. During that meeting we briefly discussed the purpose and requirements of performance reports, and a counselor from Athletics warned against getting too personal in the reports. In fact in my notes, I described the gist of her argument:

> She said: "I get to know the whole student. I don't know you. I just know you through the performance reports. It's best if you stay away from the personal in the reports." The Director also said that the program was designed to be "intrusive." I should examine this more. Be intrusive but don't be personal. (excerpt field notes, August, 21, 2007)

I spoke up in that meeting to say that it seemed to be part of our job to know the personal problems facing students so as to support their ability to negotiate them. The Program Coordinator agreed, but there was not a clear consensus regarding what was too personal. There wasn't a clear message about what was considered to be appropriately intrusive. After that meeting, Stephanie said to me that she felt like the athletic counselor directed the message about being too personal to her (field notes, August, 21 2007). Stephanie

articulated how a teacher constantly walks a fine line. When was it too distant, and when was it too intimate?

One of my participants, Betty, described how she approached dealing with the ambiguity. She described her role as not like a mother, or a friend, but as one person among many in a large system of structured support:

> First of all, I recognize and I acknowledge to students that I am one of many support persons that they have on this campus. I mean first of all, I know the literature on retention, and the literature on retention suggests that students need to make a meaningful connection with one individual and that will be a contributing factor in terms of retaining them through semesters one to semester two and semesters two through three. But I recognize, because at least a third of my students are student athletes and because the rest of the students also have interests that go beyond this particular classroom, that I am one of many potential support persons on this campus. I acknowledge to them that they can seek me out for support, but I also encourage them, actively encourage them, to seek out support from their academic advisors, from their advisors in the athletic department if they have people that do that for them, from the people who work in new dimensions in learning who can provide tutoring support or academic needs support. I'm very careful about making the boundaries of my position clear to them. (lines 251 – 264)

Betty described the process of catering across the two prevalent narratives of teacher care and structure as support with dexterity. However, Betty's perspective differed greatly from those of the other four instructors whose responses were marked more by anxiety and uncertainty. She described an entire system of support across the administrative units at HSFU facilitated by the FC program. Her approach echoes the literature in student development theory, defining mentors in terms of institutional relationships rather than in personal terms, as Dylan and Stephanie do (above). She described an understanding of the FC seminar slightly different from Dylan's above. While Dylan described an open mandate for seminar as a course without a curriculum, Betty spoke at length about the intricate connection between FC seminar and the larger programmatic structure. Like Dylan, Betty explicitly described students as having "interests that go beyond this

particular classroom," and she also said that care for students should be initiated by students. Likewise, she described the importance of establishing boundaries.

Working Boundaries: Counter Narratives

My conversations and work with Stephanie, on the other hand, revealed the difficulties some instructors might face as they try to reconcile being intrusive with not being personal. One incident illustrates this tension with particular clarity, involving Stephanie and Germain, a young, African-American man from out-of-state. In the spring of 2007, Germain needed to cash a cashier's check sent to him by his mother. The university's website identified a local bank as an appropriate place for students to cash checks because of its affiliation with the university. When Germain went to the local bank, the teller refused to cash the check due to a recent increase of fraudulent money orders. She explained that because of the increased restrictions on money orders, she could not cash his check unless he already had an account with them. He left without cashing the check even though he needed the money. Later in class, Germain described the incident to Stephanie in front of some of the other students in her FC seminar. After class, Stephanie went to the bank with Germain and proceeded to speak to the bank teller who had denied Germain service. During our interview, Stephanie described to me what happened that day:

> In retrospect I could see how other people would think I crossed the line because Germain and I got into my car. We drive up the hill to the bank, and I walked in with him. He's like behind me, like my son, he's like a step behind me. I walk in the door I turn to him and I go "which one?" He points to this woman, and he goes "It's her." And she immediately saw, she registered something of fear of some sort. I walked right up to her. I don't go in the little line. I walked right up, and I said, which is funny, because I said my student apparently had some trouble cashing a check with you, and I need to figure out what's going on. And she immediately did the, well we've had some trouble with stolen money orders. And I said well this isn't a money order. Like I just was very minimalist with her. This is not a money order. So you need to get a manager cause we need to get the check cashed. I could see that white people immersed in privilege would not say this was a racist thing. All I can say is I could see it on her face. It was written on her face

> that she had not cashed this check because this was a black guy without an account. I knew it. So the manager comes over, and I said this same story again. Germain did not say a word. He did not say a word the whole time. And then the manager said, we have had some trouble. And I said, please don't tell me about the money orders again because this is not a money order. And you're affiliated with the university. You're supposed to cash these checks. And I was just pissed and I'm thinking in my head I hope they don't check my account because I don't have any money in my account ((laughs)). At which point the manager completely backtracked. He turned to Germain and said do you have an ID? Germain gave him the ID. They wrote on the back of the check my account number and they cashed the check. At which point Germain turns around to walk to the door, and I said to the manager, so there won't be a problem again, right? And the manager was like well, no I mean it'd be easier if he had an account. And I said no there won't be a problem again because he's affiliated with the university, right? And no there shouldn't be a problem he said. So we left and I was walking toward the door and Germain goes you are a bad ass, and I was like, I was loud Aimee. I was like it makes me so mad! (lines 1086 – 1131)

My presentation of Stephanie's story doesn't adequately capture the emotional turmoil she felt with the situation, something she mentioned during our interview a year after the incident in the spring of 2008. She still expressed discomfort and bewilderment about the bank incident, in part, because she had personally experienced similar obstacles as a young adult: needing money, being denied access to it by institutions and feeling isolated. As a researcher and a co-teacher, then, I wanted to honor her voice and to present it as an illustration of the very common ways teachers care in the FC seminar. I do so because it's a story with legs. That is, it became pretty well-known in the program. For example, I heard about it from my students. Study group tutors heard about it. Administrators heard about it. And Stephanie told me that the Program Coordinator, in the Center for Academic Advising, emailed her to discuss it Stephanie said that it was never explicitly stated, but she felt that "it was inappropriate without being told it was inappropriate." Again, the August 2007 meeting was a moment in which Stephanie described feeling like the warning against getting too personal with students was directed toward her (field notes, August 21, 2007). However, when I asked some administrators about this incident,

none explained to me that she had acted inappropriately. So what about the bank story had made Stephanie feel so awkward?

Stephanie explained during our conversation, a year after the bank incident, that she wouldn't do anything differently. Stephanie described it as a teaching moment:

> I felt like this was a moment with Germain which for me was a teaching moment. It wasn't just about being mean to the racist white people at the bank. It was a teaching moment for him because I felt like I was learning too, but also he was learning how to deal with people who are presenting him with a problem. (1163 – 1166)

I examine the bank story here because it epitomized the over-arching conflict many teachers faced in the program: what kind and how much teacher care was appropriate? What exactly was teacher care in this rigid but also flexible classroom? The bank story illustrated one way that Stephanie cultivated a caring relation with a student. I mentioned to Stephanie that I wouldn't have chosen to go with Germaine to the bank because I would have been too nervous. Stephanie expressed grappling with the same questions. What kind of care? Should I have put him in my car? Yet Stephanie described the bank incident as a teaching moment with two objectives: First, taking the matter back to the bank on that day allowed Germain another opportunity to cash the check and get the funds he needed. There was a material benefit. Second, she described the bank incident as an opportunity to generalize strategies for future cultural-related issues at HSFU. She described the bank incident as representative of "White privilege" that he would face again in the predominately Euro-American HSFU campus (see Prendergast, 2003 and Chapter 5). She conveyed her desire to help Germain recognize ways to "deal" with similar episodes in the future at HSFU. She was nested Germain's experience within the institutional context, as a sociopolitical issue.

Did Stephanie go too far? Did she overstep boundaries? Such questions are not isolated to the bank story. In the data and in my experience as a teacher in the program, similar dilemmas troubled all of us. Dylan told me that he purchased Italian olives for one

of his students who he described as terribly home sick. Helen described a student athlete coming to her in tears, needing to talk to someone about his stress and about dealing with pressures for athletic achievement. Lisa described the BFF situation as an enduring conflict in her interaction with the students and the program where two African-American students received heightened programmatic scrutiny.

Subversive Narrative

Stephanie described the "bank story" as a teaching moment to help student Germain, an African-American male student-athlete, gain competencies for future negotiations of cultural difference and institutional power relations. She emphasized an important thread of support in the FC program often narrated by instructors: a socio-political engagement with students that included attention to political negotiations with various university communities and their institutional affiliations. In many ways, Stephanie described attention to power relations in institutional social practices that include student roles and status. Another current teacher, Lisa explained that sometimes instructors outlined an agenda with FC that was different than the some administrators in the FC program:

> I think the administrators see this as kind of like a super college transitions course where we talk a lot about study skills and time management and empowering students to be in charge of themselves using that *On Course* textbook. I think they see that like kind of the work we do it's sort of like psycho-motivational stuff plus practical study skills with reading and talking about maybe issues of diversity in this sort of really PC, not really kind of way. They would say read some things like about students who succeeded in college, and they were students of color, but they made it and its great, acknowledge their challenges that they can over come. And I think the reality of FC is that it's messier than that because they're not all the same. They are in the room for a lot of different reasons. It's not like we know they all come from the inner city and they're not all black and they're not all poor achievers on test necessarily. So the diversity of the classroom is I think different than it's perceived by the administrators, and I think that the way it plays out in terms of what we do is really different. I think the instructors would say I think it's a little more subversive. Isn't this interesting the way that these issues of race are getting worked through you? And so let's talk about what it means to be

> you in this really weird environment where you're an athlete or you're one of a few students of color on a campus that is all white where there's all this pressure on you and all this attention on you because you're not white. And what's it like to be that person? So I think what we do in that classroom is very different from what the advisors and administrators might think we do. (lines 256 – 282)

In particular, Lisa spoke about the disjoint between her notions of administrators' perspectives and instructors' perspectives. She began by stating that the administrators described the FC seminar as a "super college transitions" course. FC seminar as a simple trajectory from less prepared to adequately prepared for HSFU. She said that administrators treated FC students as all exactly similar—a prototypical FC person. Instead, Lisa said that students in FC are not all dealing with the same issues. In fact, she said that diversity was significant to the support of FC students. She described issues of cultural difference as often being worked through the student ("getting worked through you"), and she described students of color and athletes as needing to process what it's like to play those roles at HSFU. Rather than describing students as needing to learn how to work "within the system," as the Program Coordinator explained (see Chapter 4), Lisa located students as persons with different histories (including culture, language, social practices) needing to negotiate the context of HSFU, a predominantly Euro-American campus. She described it as a "really weird" environment where issues of race or being an athlete were heightened for FC students. She asked, "And what's it like to be that person?" In the final line, she juxtaposed instructor agenda of inviting students to examine their particular roles on campus at HSFU, building upon their pasts. The main question of inquiry became: "What's it like to be that person?"

On one level, Lisa identified a fissure between administrator perspectives and instructors. She seemed less able to describe the multiple narratives of support flowing in the FC programmatic discourse evident in Chapter 4. She seemed to think that support was not multi-faceted in the administrators' perspective, but as I have shown, administrators voiced at least four facets of support in the FC program. Yet, Lisa described some administrators as unable to see the FC seminar from an instructor's

perspective. Like Stephanie, Lisa described feelings of uncertainty about the relationship between instructors and administrators in the FC program.

On a second level, Lisa, like Stephanie, described the FC seminar as “messier.” Lisa perceived administrators as outlining a clear, non-messy trajectory of development for FC students from being “underprepared” to being adequately prepared for HSFU. However, Lisa described the FC seminar development as having nuance and complexity. It was “messier.” What is more, she highlighted issues of cultural difference at HSFU as deserving a heightened level of scrutiny: what is it like to be at this weird HSFU campus? Lisa pointed to an agenda in the FC curriculum that scaffolded students’ ability to identify the issues of HSFU context and to interrogate ways of negotiating it. She implied a curriculum that extended “study skills” and “college transition” to include making meaning of the cultural, socio-political contexts facing FC students. While Lisa didn’t point to “enculturation” as a facet of support, she implied the need for a robust framework for learning in the FC program that attended to the sociopolitical context of the HSFU community as a predominately Euro-American culture. She also described the inquiry as founded in examining the self as a first-year HSFU student: “What’s it like to be that person?” Lisa described the teacher’s role in the inquiry as helping facilitate that questioning, fostering a dialogue about these multiplicity of roles in the FC seminar and the context of HSFU. She argued that identity and power-relations deserved attention in the curriculum of the FC seminar.

In Sum: Instructors’ Implicit Models

Framed in a Bakhtinian perspective, instructor data presented a host positions about what counted as support in the FC program. They drew from them at various points in the interviews, and at times they provided perspectives not voiced in the macro-level perspectives of some administrators. In short, FC instructors spoke to the four narratives of support outlined in the administrator data: Academic Enrichment and Enculturation,

Structure, Building Community, and Teacher Care. Regarding the "and/both" narrative of Academic Enrichment and Enculturation in the FC programmatic discourse, some instructors described the course as a hybrid designed to cater to both; others expressed uncertainty about how the two approaches worked together. In some instances, as in the case of Lisa, instructors weren't prepared to address questions about remediation provoked by students in the FC seminar and not adequately delimited in the "and/both" narrative of Academic Enrichment and Enculturation facet of support. Importantly, first-time teachers described the general tone of reticence about the program as contributing to feelings of isolation, non-support, and anxiety. What is more, the current instructors seemed less familiar with the narrative of enculturation as a feature of support in FC. Additionally, instructors offered perspectives that expanded the narratives of Community in the FC programmatic discourse. While administrators described community as an espoused goal, instructors described how students enacted community in the FC seminar and teachers enacted care. In their descriptions, as a result, emerged implicit models of support that were in dialogue with official narratives of support in the FC program, illustrating dialogic voices (Bakhtin, 1981) in the FC program:

- In narratives of academic enrichment, some instructors emphasized teaching foundational skills which sometimes defined a skills model approach to literacy (Lea & Street, 2008). Some counter narratives of described academic discourse as nested in the social practices of the HSFU institution that relate to power relations, and included instruction in academic social practices and academic literacies (see Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Gee, 1996; Hull & Schultz, 2002: Lankshear & Knobel, 2003; Lea & Street, 2008; Luke, 1994; New London Group, 1996).
- Narratives of enculturation emerged less and less frequently for current instructors. And in some cases, a subtractive perspective of "assimilation"

emerged, which reinforced a deficit-approach to instruction of FC students (Giroux, 1983; Ladson-Billings, 1994; MacLeod, 1987; Ogbu, 1988).

- Narratives of Support as Structure emerged in the teacher voices as mechanisms of surveillance and Draconian control.
- Narratives of Support as Community seemed to expand perspectives of the friendship narrative and the safe haven narrative in the administrators' data. Some instructors described students as productively using the FC seminar as a place to mess up, by trying out new identities and fashioning multiple identities during interaction (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Others described the heterogeneity and plurality in the FC program as a key strength (Anzaldua, 1987, Holland et al., 1998; Lam, 2006; Lu, 1992; Pratt, 1991), which countered the prevalent narrative of FC community as a utopian safe house. Rather, community emerged through conflict and negotiations of difference.
- Narratives of teacher care included attention to personal relationships with students. However, some teachers also described a sociopolitical agenda in which part of the teacher care involved being attentive to larger social issues, being able to respond to power-relations in the HSFU community, and fostering student critical reflection on their identities as past and current learners at HSFU.

Instructors described a robust perspective of Community support in FC. They described the strengths of building on students' cultural resources in connection with their negotiation of HSFU. Instructor voices focused on community and teacher care, but some instructors also didn't see the narrative of enculturation as a clear-cut objective of FC. The mismatch between voices of administrators and instructors suggested a need to provide a clear framework of enculturation as a feature of support in FC.

All instructors, however, identified the difficulty in formulating appropriate boundaries of care while simultaneously supporting a structure of surveillance. Trethewey (1999) argues that such paradoxes "are locations where power relations lie

hidden and unexplored" (p. 153). Stephanie's bank story, for example, best represented how hidden and unexplored power relations emerged because the FC seminar was not closed off or isolated from the larger sociocultural context of HSFU. Instead FC was configured amid the larger context, and those larger issues entered the FC program. In the next section, I examine how descriptions of FC students confirm that a hidden and unexplored problem in the FC program was the prevalence of at-risk Discourse.

FC Students: Instructor Voices

In the previous section, I focused solely on instructors' narratives of support in FC. However, perceptions of support in FC were inextricably linked to perceptions of the FC students as needing support. As in Chapter 4 and 5, characterizations of support directly related to characterizations of FC students. As such, the second part of this chapter compares instructor voices with those outlined in the administrator data. Like Chapter 5, this section will emphasize the relationship between at-promise images of students and at-risk images:

- "At-promise" includes images of extra-curricular talents, like athletics, music, art and academic achievement, as well as references to positive behaviors, like being motivated and engaged. It also included references to students as having resources and being resilient.
- "At-risk" includes images of academic deficiencies, learning disabilities, emotional problems, and/or socio-economic disadvantages as well as problem behaviors, like resistance, reluctance, and incompetence. It also included images of students as underdogs or victims.

The interplay between dominant images of students as at-promise and at-risk represented struggle between authoritative unifying discourses and resistant boundary discourses in the program. Administrator talk of "at-risk" students was an example of edu-code that had become a durable construct of stereotypical student identities in the program (Fassett

and Warner, 2004; see also Gee, 2001; Lam, 2006; Powell, 1996; Skinner, et al. 1998). Instructors struggled with the visible held-in-tension chain of utterances locating promise and risk identities within every FC student. While instructors adamantly pointed to the diversity and heterogeneity of FC students, our stories often projected risk images nonetheless. In the following discussion, we return to the three salient themes introduced in Chapter 5: Underprepared but Talented; Recruited Talent as Code; Strengths and Weaknesses of Character.

Underprepared but Talented: Fitting Labels

On one level, instructors described FC students as academically underprepared because of poor educational preparation. To put it clearly, Helen said, "Half of the FC students don't have functional study skills." She pointed to a pattern across sources in the data which described FC students as lacking the educational skills necessary for university-level coursework. However, instructors also spoke about a group of students in the FC program who simply didn't fit the label of being "academically underprepared." Even though an official profile of FC students referred to them as "underprepared" academically, according to instructors, there were students in the population who challenged that label. For instance, Betty, a former instructor in the program, discussed the varied academic abilities of FC students during our interview. According to Betty, "in some cases the labels fit and in some cases they don't fit." Based on her four years of experience, she explained that the students illustrated strong academic talent:

> B: Most of them though have very successful modes for coping with academic life. Some have profited from direct instruction in time management strategies. Most are very effective and know how to manage. In addition to the theme of I didn't put forth the amount of effort, the other common theme that I've heard from them is if I manage my time well, I'll be fine, I recognize that sometimes I do that and sometimes I don't. So if there are two common themes to this population, it would be ((extends her right hand palm up)) effort or no effort, ((extends her left hand palm up)) time management or lack of time management. Definitely there are a couple, there are always just a few, whose basic

> academic skills aren't very strong, but that does not on the whole categorize the population of student.
>
> A: I just find that interesting because when I think of underprepared or academically at risk that's not the definition I would think of.
>
> B: No that's not the definition the association for developmental education gives for academically underprepared students. I can show you that definition, but it's not. These are common first year, second year, third year student complaints. First year, second year, third year student concerns. (lines 215 - 235)

Betty focused on describing the students as academically competent and savvy. In fact, I suggested that "at-risk" wasn't an appropriate label for the students, and she agreed. She admitted that a few students had deficient academic skills (line 232), but she also said the population as a whole should not be categorized as such. Interestingly, I said that the definition Betty offered doesn't fit with "at risk" or "underprepared," but I didn't define those terms. Betty agreed with me, but also didn't define the terms.

Likewise, Lisa, a first-year teacher with whom I collaborated during the academic year of this study, presented a similar description of students' academic skill:

> There are high achieving FC kids and failing FC kids and middle of the road FC kids ya know. I mean I have three kids this semester who probably would've been fine not being FC, like they're extraordinarily bright, organized ya know. I have kids that they do everything you want them to do and they make you feel happy so they're sort of those high achievers who you hope are your allies in the classroom and aren't resentful of doing the work that we do in FC, which you know could be construed as being kind of remedial or slow or pointless to kids who are driven. (line 825 – 840)

The passage here offered the kind of nuance of abilities in the classroom I've observed in my section of FC seminar. Students were not easily categorized as all low achieving or all reluctant readers and writers. Rather, Lisa described FC students of all academic ability and varied educational histories. In that range of ability, there were very bright students and "failing" students (line 825). The emphasis on the high achievers in Lisa's talk resonated with the exchange I had with the Betty, the veteran teacher. The "underprepared" label didn't accommodate the complexity and variety of academic abilities.

However, both Betty and Lisa included an image of being “underprepared” in defining certain students as not fitting the label. Being “bright” and “high achievers” contrasted the discourse of deficiency often cast in at-risk descriptions (see Chapter 5). For example, Betty admitted that “there are always just a few whose basic skills aren’t very strong,” positioning some FC students as having weak “basic skills.” In Lisa’s discussion of the students “who would’ve been fine not being FC.” Some FC students didn’t fit the stereotypical image of “risk” a teacher expected while others did. Lisa differentiated the “high achievers” (line 835) as “allies in the classroom.” The effect of this distinction positioned the high achievers as an instructor’s peers in the battleground of the classroom where she needed “allies.” The connotation of war associated some students, non allies, as needing the “remedial” FC seminar. What is more, students construed as “slow” (line 840) were contrasted to the students who were “driven, high achievers.” Some students were defined as “at-promise” by differentiating them from “at-risk” slow, less bright and less driven students.

The tension between two images of low achieving or high achieving, slow or driven, emerged in some teacher conversations about FC students. Lisa’s language was representative of some teachers in the program and repeated the same pattern juxtaposed in the official profile where references to promise of students became tied to references of risk. Participants shifted between these two poles. Teachers like Betty and Lisa (and me!) challenge the “at-risk” label of the program as a whole (something I do in the interview with Betty), but we were also likely to suggest that some students, whom we perceived to be academic stars, did not deserve to be in the program, in effect positioning the non-academic star students as fitting the FC program. The quandary of what to do with the “bright kids” was connected to a discursively formed archetype of the typical FC students as “at-risk,” which will unfold in the data examples of this section. Those students who we constructed as fitting the “at-risk” model were often described in terms of lack, as in Helen’s description of “half of the FC students” who “don’t have functional study skills.”

On another level, some instructors also echoed risk Discourse emerging in official profiles of "academically underprepared" in student development theory as well (Kuh, et al., 2005), which in Chapter 5 illustrated a pattern of risk associated with particular groups. For example, Betty also explained that term "underprepared" had never been explicitly defined in the FC program to her. Yet she repeated the TRIO guidelines for students deserving outreach and support (Kuh et al., 2005):

> In terms of them being academically at risk or academically underprepared, those terms were never defined to me in terms of the program's perspective or the university's perspective. I don't know if they consider someone being a first generation college student at risk because they don't necessarily have the cultural understanding that other people do, that they might not have the family support that other people do. I do know that throughout these three years there seems to have been students who come from economically disadvantaged families, some who had difficulties, some who came from southern states who had difficulties purchasing clothing for a Midwest climate. Also, though, I have students from, from what I would consider, very high SES groups. (lines 207- 215)

While Betty said she didn't know the university's perspective of "risk," she repeated the authoritative discourses associated with TRIO programs described by the administrators previously (see Chapter 5), echoing student development theory on predictors of success (Barefoot, 2005; Ishlar, 2005; Ishlar & Upcraft, 2005; Kuh, 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). For instance, her reference to students as being "first generation" repeated the official descriptions. Betty further explained that in her classroom, some students came from "economic disadvantage" while she considered other FC students as coming from "very high SES groups." Even though Betty had not officially been told by FC administrators what "risk" meant in FC, her definition of risk corresponded well with official university description and the federal TRIO guidelines defined above and the narratives of the administrators in FC. Across the data sources, "at-risk" included a discursive understanding of disadvantage that was more complex than simply lacking a set of transferable academic skills; it was economic and cultural. Despite Betty's reference to the few students who challenged the notion of "risk" because of their

apparent higher socio-economic status, she reified risk as specific to particular social groups of disadvantage, emphasizing the economic, educational, and cultural differences. It was clear in the beginning that she did not position the university as having provided a definitive concept of "at-risk." So from where did the image of disadvantage come?

Recruiting Talent as Code

"Talent" was often ambiguously defined in terms of recruitment. The image of disadvantage was connected to the strategically ambiguous term "recruited" as it outlined two specific populations of students in the FC program: student-athletes and non-dominant students (see Chapter 5). As a result, the more prevalent narrative focused on the risk associated with recruited students. As in some of the administrators' narratives, victimhood emerged in the instructor data. While instructors also presented counter-voices that challenged victim narratives, nevertheless at-risk emerged as a durable and centripetal Discourse across contexts.

Retention of Student Athletes

Many instructors described the presence of student-athletes as a significant feature of the FC program. Helen, a former two-time instructor said, "I think everybody assumes that they are largely athletes. And it is true that I've got a number of athletes in my section and they come from various teams." In my interview with Lisa, she concurred, "I guess if I did the math maybe half my students are athletes, but it doesn't feel like it. It feels like they are all athletes." Lisa expressed a shared perspective of the instructor data in the FC program: "it feels like they are all athletes."

Some instructors pointed out that they were fully aware of the need for the program to invoke strategic ambiguity about student-athletes, like the Vice Provost (Chapter 5) calling it "politically very protective." One instructor, Stephanie, explicitly described the program as designed almost exclusively to support athletes:

> I think in terms of athletics it's designed officially to help them keep the athletes they want. That's what I think, absolutely. I think that there's some (1 second pause) in order to look legit, just in my experience. And this could be totally wrong. This is just my experience. This is where a couple of band students and a couple of dancers come in because it can't be a program just for athletes. (lines 321 – 327)

Stephanie pointed to the recruitment of athletes as one of the central purposes of the FC program, a purpose she implied was not explicitly stated in the phrase "because it can't be a program just for athletes." She said that in her experience, which she qualified as possibly wrong, the few "band students and a couple of dancers" functioned to keep the program from being solely for athletes, which would not be legitimate ("legit"). By explaining how the students on scholarship for music functioned in the program, Stephanie spoke to the exact issue described by the Vice Provost and the Program Director (see Chapter 5), each explaining that the FC program cannot be perceived as being for athletes or for culturally diverse students. Even more, Stephanie triangulated Lisa's perspective that it felt like most of the students were athletes.

Even though some instructors presented a relatively sophisticated analysis of the use of strategic ambiguity for protecting the recruitment of student-athletes as a goal of the program, they were just as likely to advance a portrait of student-athletes in terms of "risk" evident in some of the administrator voices. The concern for FC student-athletes interrelated with the discourse about FC students as "at-risk." Like administrators' descriptions of the role of student-athletes on campus as difficult, instructors emphasized the stress of being an athlete. Helen provided a good example:

> I don't know how anyone can teach in this program and really get an eyeful of what athletes go through and hold onto any kind of negative resistance to athletes. Because it's horrifying what their lives are like. Stress and time commitment. No time alone. Physically exhausted all the time. I mean I worked my way through undergrad school. I know what it's like to have 40 hours a week committed to something else. But it was something I chose. And something that I could sort of call in sick now and again. Athletes can't. You could say they chose by accepting the athletic scholarship, but they have absolutely no idea what they're getting into. (153 – 161)

Helen began by describing the student athlete life as “horrifying.” She elaborated with short adjective phrases: “physically exhausted” and “no time alone.” She compared the experience to having a fulltime job, but unlike her own experience with jobs as an undergrad, she described FC student athletes as choosing to be athletes, but having “absolutely no idea what they’re getting into.” In the end, the image of the student-athlete was like the image of chaos and damage presented as “risks” in some administrator stories. The overwhelming stress of their athletic pursuits was described as all-encompassing. Even more, the student-athlete was described as being without resources, as someone who made a decision to be an athlete without being fully aware of the repercussions. Instead of being a story about the FC student athlete’s promise as a talented athlete, Helen positioned FC student-athletes more like academic victims.

The student-athlete-as-victim narrative emerged frequently across instructor data. For example, Stephanie described one of her students who played football at our university:

> Like Jerry. He comes here from a privileged, well I won’t say you know a privileged, a middle class—an upper middle class white family background. But Jerry also has had to struggle or think about what if I don’t make it to the NFL. To be the big great football player and everybody looks up to him, but he has said to me, “I’ve had to think about what if I don’t make it.” And he’s had to think about it sometimes when his family has not. Because his family thinks Jerry’s gonna go to the NFL because he’s big. Like he’s talked about this, so it’s really interesting to me to hear that this is like kind of a worry for him. I mean he said before he has a really, really long history of alcoholism and all kinds of stuff in his family and he’s said before, this is my chance for success and if I get hurt what am I gonna do? (lines 465 – 487)

Stephanie presented the story of Jerry as an example of the pressure that athletes face at HSFU. Her story of Jerry triangulated Helen’s description and that of the administrators. Jerry was also an illustration of how pressures emerge at HSFU and also from the family (see Chapter 5). Stephanie explained that he had to worry about both. While Jerry was also described as someone who “does great work,” Stephanie’s story depicted tremendous pressure and concern. It was an example of how the victim narrative

presented in some episodes of teacher talk often took up the “at-risk” discourse, overshadowing the stories of promise in student-athletes.

In a related way, the experience of the student-athlete was sometimes described solely in terms of being different from regular HSFU students. Some instructors, like Lisa, described student-athletes as foreigners in a strange land where other students cannot relate to them:

> I guess another thing that unites most of our FC kids is athletics, which is another like being a minority student, another really unique experience that has really specific demands. A lot of demands. It’s a really hard job to be an athlete no matter what kind of athlete you are. I mean I think football players definitely have it the worst but basketball is not that much better, even my swimmer. (lines 869 – 874)

Lisa compared the student-athlete to the experience of a “minority student.” As I have shown, some administrators described the experience of the minority student through the dominant Discourse of “at-risk.” Similarly, in Lisa’s description the risk Discourse emerged as a centripetal force. She also repeated the concern about student-athletes illustrated by Helen and Stephanie. The instructor voices characterized the student-athlete role as a demanding job. The effect was that student-athletes face extraordinary struggle. And finally, Lisa positioned the student-athlete experience as similar to that of students of color, illustrating how closely these two images interrelated in the discourses about FC students.

Recruiting Students of Color

While it was evident in the previous discussion of “Underprepared but talented” narrative of FC that instructors described FC students as varied in academic abilities and socio-economic backgrounds, discussions of racial and cultural diversity were also prevalent. For example, Lisa fumbled a little when I asked her to describe FC students in the following excerpt:

> A: I'm hearing you say like here's what administrators' say, but the teacher realizes that it's more nuanced. So just tell me about the FC students.
>
> L: Oh my god that's a really ((sighs)), that's a really good question (1 second pause). It's really hard I mean there's no unilateral, there's no unilateral definition at all. I can think of a couple of different ways to sort of group them. There are FC students who, oh my god, this is really hard. There are students of color, which a lot of FC students are, and I would say that they can be a group because they are really experiencing life in a different way than our white kids are as minorities. Whether they're really smart or super high achievers or really struggling, they all share that being ya know the only black kid in their rhetoric class. Or um being um the only Hispanic kid on their floor in the dorms. So there is that aspect of negotiating life in a white majority institution that our FC kids share in general. I mean the majority of the students in my classroom are students of color. (line 807 – 823)

While there was no easy way to group FC students, Lisa chose to categorize the students in terms of racial difference first, and in the final line of this excerpt she concluded "I mean, the majority of the students in my classroom are students of color." In Lisa's talk, being a student of color was described as "experiencing life in a different way than our white kid" and "negotiating life in a white majority institution." Lisa focused on the negotiation within a "majority white culture." In fact she echoed the talk of the Program Director in Chapter 5 who described the diversity of FC students: "a minority student may go into each of his or her classrooms and be the only minority students there and feel like why am I here" (see "Recruiting Underrepresented Minority Students"). By comparison, Lisa's talk relied on examples of students of color as isolated from the majority white culture. This teacher described FC students as "the only black kid in rhetoric" or "the only Hispanic kid on the floor." She echoed some of the prevalent narratives in the FC program about the experience of being a student at HSFU and from a non-dominant group.

Lisa's language included an implicit portrait of risk. For example, the description of "the majority White institution" contributed to locating HSFU university culture as "White" while conflating racial difference with academic risk, a discursive pattern that has been identified in predominately White universities (Powell, 1996; Prendergast,

2003; Watson, Terrell, & Wright, 2002). Watson, et al. (2002) describe three developmental stages of diversity in higher education which are emblematic of the representations of FC minority students in relation with the majority White culture at HSFU:

> Within the first stage is a single culture that excludes students of color and other minorities. Institutions allow this monolithic culture to politely exclude these students from the mainstream of campus culture. The second stage involves coexisting but separate minority subcultures within the dominant campus culture. … During the third stage, however, separate subcultures merge with the dominant campus culture to form an integrated campus community. (p. 10 – 11)

Like some administrators, Lisa's language described the majority culture of HSFU as monolithically "White," as in a dominant campus culture. On the other hand, she described the FC students as having to negotiate the barriers to the dominant campus culture. Lisa illustrated how she repeated voices in the programmatic discourses outlined in Chapters 4 and 5 that reify a discourse of the deficiency of students of color instead of countering it (see Chapter 5; Powell, 1996; Prendergast, 2003). Of course, Lisa was not the only instructor to do so. Lisa's data example, however, repeated some of the administrators' word choices and narratives, which exemplified the centripetal tendencies of language in the program, like a chain of sequenced utterances in the FC social dialogue (Bakhtin, 1981). Her descriptions illustrated how a pattern of risk Discourse gets taken up by teachers in FC.

Counter Narratives: Challenging Cultural Stereotypes

While instructors echoed voices in the FC program that sometimes limited students from non-dominant groups to victim roles in relation to the monolithic majority "White" culture of HSFU, some also spoke about the official narratives in the FC program as participating in the reinforcement of this relationship of cultural difference-as-victim. For instance, in the first section of this chapter, Helen sarcastically described

the enculturation facet of support in FC as “assimilation” (above). She expounded on the topic later in the interview as it related to multiculturalism:

> The assumption that they [FC students] have to in one way or another be assimilated to a culture that is completely foreign to them is partly the problem. It’s that assumption. Partly it’s because these are also the same kinds of people who would say quite vehemently, I believe, that they believe in multiculturalism. And so to have them sort of chuck that whole political theory out the window and say, well, multiculturalism is great but not here, assimilate them. Though I don’t think there’s anything sinister intended at all. (lines 49 – 56)

Helen pointed out the programmatic voices as discursively positioning cultural difference as a problem to remedy. She explained that narratives of support in the program undermined multicultural approaches while disguised as efforts to help students learn the expectations of the university culture. She also explained that treating the university culture as the monolithic, “foreign” culture contributed to the problem. Like Watson et al. (2002), Helen pointed to narratives in FC that inadvertently reinforced a monolithic majority university culture and treated FC students as not having any resources for negotiating the culture. The talk about majority culture of HSFU promoted an essentialist perspective because it juxtaposed the dominant, majority culture of the campus against the FC student community, highlighting the differences as emblematic of a climate problem.

Some instructors, that is, offered counter narratives that identified and criticized a pattern of the essentialist perspectives regarding the HSFU culture and the FC students in some of the administrator talk. For example, Dylan described his discomfort with the administrators’ characterizations of FC students during the annual orientation meeting when he first began teaching in the program: “I could tell what they were presenting was a stereotype, and it was a stereotype that seemed to be based on the worst students that they had had.” According to Dylan, “they” (administrators) reinforced a stereotype. Similarly, Stephanie expressed how talk in the FC program didn’t adequately consider how HSFU was itself underprepared for students admitted through the FC program:

> I feel like there's always this distinction the students who are these great successes, right? They're on their way to being high flyers or they're students who are struggling. The transition's been hard for them. Ya know? There's never, that's so problematic for me. It's always the transition's been hard for them, not there's not enough resources on the campus for first generation African-American students. It's that the transition is hard for them. Cause it's their fault, their issue. (lines 262 – 276)

Like Dylan, Stephanie called into question prevalent narratives of the program that positioned students as "struggling." In the first lines she contrasted successful FC students against struggling FC students and reported a voice that she heard frequently from program administrators: "the transition's been hard for them." She also identified what she perceived as not said in the dominant FC discourse about the majority HSFU campus: "there's not enough resources on the campus for first generation African-American students." Stephanie's perspective illustrated how the FC program at times fostered practices of exclusion or separation (Watson et al., 2002). In dialogue with voices in the program that positioned risk as in the body and home culture of FC students because of the many issues that plagued them (read: economic disadvantage, lack of parental support, and/or cultural unfitness), Stephanie disputed the at-risk Discourse. She offered a narrative that positioned the HSFU campus and the FC program as not having resources adequate for first-generation African-American students[26]. The talk about disadvantage regarding students of color was an effect of perceptions in the program that reinforced the majority culture of HSFU without also identifying how to improve the climate. Stephanie's discussion of about the ineffectiveness of HSFU to adapt for a multicultural student population shed light on a perspective that was often left unvoiced in the narratives about FC students: namely, the university wasn't equipped to accommodate cultural difference. It was a climate issue (Watson, et al., 2002).

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[26] Of course, FC students were not all first-generation African-American. However, Stephanie positioned those students as the most likely to be referred to as "struggling."

In Chapter 5, much of my analysis of risk narratives about FC students was placed within the context of HSFU, a predominately Euro-American campus in a Midwestern state where just 8.5% of incoming first-years identified as students of color. The shared notions in the FC program about defining an “at-risk” student cannot be divorced from the larger context of the predominantly Euro-American university. Like some of the institutions Watson et al. (2002) examine, HSFU fit a portrait of universities that seemed to support separate subcultures on campus that excluded more than integrated multicultural perspectives in the majority culture. The “normal” university student at HSFU emerged as Euro-American and middle class. Dylan and Stephanie (above) seemed to point to the paradox of that situation. The voices of some instructors emphasized the underlying meaning of discourse in FC included a sense of FC students conforming to the role of normal HSFU student. The expectations for FC students were not simply improved academic skills that help students perform well on measurable outcomes. The expectations included learning to adapt to the HSFU culture, predominantly positioned as a majority White culture in the programmatic narratives. Expectations were also about adapting to that majority culture.

In our interview, Stephanie criticized the FC program for its apparent complicity with projecting deficiency upon students of color without adequately criticizing perceptions of the HSFU climate as a white majority culture:

> I think that unofficially I guess it’s about the university having success most prevalently I guess athletically, but also because of the current climate about quote unquote diversity on campus. So it’s also about the retention of students of color and students of varying minority status. I don’t think that’s as much about the students as looking good in whatever those realms are. I think that that’s kind of sad because I think that there’s a way that all of this could function together and they could have some success. I think they could have athletic success and retention of minority students and students who are not only succeeding academically but actually transitioning effectively and enjoying themselves and learning and growing. But I don’t think that’s necessarily I don’t think that’s how it’s set up. And I think the students know that. They’re not stupid, so I think they know. (lines 390 – 400).

Stephanie seemed to point to the inadequacy of the narratives about student success in the program as it related to retention of specifically "recruited" students. She said the official narrative of FC was "about looking good." However, she said, the story could include "athletic success, good retention, succeeding academically, transitioning effectively, and enjoying themselves, and learning and growing." While Stephanie didn't define how students were learning and growing which were not adequately measured in rates of retention, she implied that the indices used to illustrate the programmatic success simplified a rather robust process of engagement, development and growth. Stephanie seemed to suggest that "unofficially" the FC program focused on the retention of athletes and of students of color, but it didn't actually attend to the particular needs of these students at HSFU.

Helen, Dylan, and Stephanie spoke to an overarching contradiction in the programmatic discourse in which narratives of support frequently positioned recruited FC students as the problem, as being "at-risk," while less frequently pointing to the perceptions of the climate of HSFU as contributing to the construct. The resulting relationship created a double bind in which students must be perceived as victims without resources in order to be helped. It was "their issue," to adopt Stephanie's language. While organizational communication theory frames institutional contradictions as a strength of strategic ambiguity (Eisenberg, 1984; Trethewey, 1999; Tracy & Ashcroft, 2001), there is less consensus about useful responses to contradiction in organizations (Tracy, 2004)[27].

A response to the FC programmatic discourse informed by cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) would draw from the double bind described by the instructors,

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[27] For example, some studies in communication theory point to emotional reactions, like guilt, withdrawal and anxiety (Tracy, 2004), and other studies illustrate management of contradiction as effective means of flexibility and negotiation (Trethewey, 1999). In fact, Tracy (2004) argues that "it is not tension, per se, that automatically causes such reactions" because it depends on how people frame and react to tensions in practice (p. 123).

who pointed to the victim narratives of FC students as positioning these students without resources and without abilities to manage the majority culture of HSFU. Cultural-historical activity theory examines contradiction as a productive site of engagement in social systems of interaction, like classrooms, hospitals, work places, and government (Engeström, 1999. 2002; Gutiérrez, 2008; Gutiérrez, Larson, & Rhymes, 1995; Russell, 1997; Wardle, 2004). In activity theory, the term "re-mediate" calls for participants within a system, like the FC program, to work together to change the activity system in material ways so as to remedy the problems of the system, as opposed to the problems of individuals. Through group activity, participants in a system address the contradictions in the social/material relations of the activity system (Engeström, 1984; Gutiérrez, 2008; Wardle, 2004). The FC seminars, in fact, would be a great site for using the victim narrative double bind as an inquiry for learning. Teachers could invite students to create their own handbooks to explain how to adapt to HSFU, something referred to as counter scripts in activity theory. Counter scripts allow groups to critique and transform the context of a program in creative ways; counter-scripts are introduced in dialogue with the larger sociocultural activity system[28].Helen, Dylan, and Stephanie made critiques of the FC that implicitly pointed to the potential for inviting inquiry in the FC seminar that worked toward the re-mediation of double binds. Lisa pointed to instructors as adopting individual subversive acts in the classroom, where counter scripts likely work to re-mediate the FC system rather than FC students.

[28] Counter scripts and improvisation are discussed in more detail in Chapter 7 when the focus turns to FC students. However, like activity theory, Holland et al. (1998) define improvisation and fantasy as important processes of re-figuring of worlds that work to buffet against patterns of social reproduction in institutions (see figured worlds, Chapter 1).

Strengths and Weaknesses of Character

Like the administrative profile of FC students suffering from chaotic lives, instructors' talk also included an implicit profile of weakness in character: students were described as victims without resources whose personal lives created untenable obstacles. Some instructors contested the negative character profiles, but often the force of the at-risk discourse formed in the convergence of voices nonetheless. For example, Dylan described students in FC as not fitting the stereotypes he expected for "underprepared" students:

> I was given the impression that these were undisciplined students and yet most of them seem highly disciplined, especially the athletes incredibly disciplined. My god, the, I don't think I could stand to live as disciplined a life they lead right now, spending hours a day grinding away. But they haven't been given many opportunities to become self disciplined. And you don't learn self-discipline by being disciplined by somebody else (lines 133 – 139)

While Dylan began with positive characteristics of FC students as "highly disciplined" (line134), a troubling image emerged. Dylan described "discipline" as "spending hours a day grinding away" (line 137). The emphasis was not on students as academically driven; the image was of a physical, laborious daily routine. A close analysis of the linguistic choices revealed layers of meaning in the story Dylan presented of some FC students. First, the term "grind" is well-known idiom, and Dylan's use of the term positions students as slaves to the grind. Second, the coordinating conjunction "but" (line 137) denoted a shift in the sentence where Dylan explicitly states the connotation of grinding away; he said that discipline of FC students was not an example of "self-discipline" (line 139). Like the dilemma of high achieving versus low achieving academic ability in students in the classroom, participants shifted between these two poles, seeing students as in charge of their work and seeing the program as in charge of their work. In one instance students were active and in the other instance students were passive. In a palpable way, the image of the student was grinding away for the university without a sense of autonomy and other times as active and self-reliant.

Even as instructors worked hard to contest at-risk Discourse, it emerged in talk nevertheless, which was a clear indication of discourse as saturated with a cacophony of voices (Bakhtin, 1981). A host of voices emerged when Lisa described FC students in contrast with her typical first-year, rhetoric students:

> I guess a typical rhetoric class in your fall semester, when you have all first-year kids and most of them are going to be white suburban college they're Chicago kids. There's gonna be a couple kids that are disorganized, so unable to um just keep up with the work of the class, unable to think ahead for themselves, struggle with the concepts of the class and so always kind of falling behind and needing a little bit of extra help. Doing poorly on papers and freakin' out. That's I guess how I would say it. There's gonna be a couple of those kids, but they're passive, ya know. They're real quiet about it. Unless you're really paying attention, it doesn't really come out that these issues are happening. There's just I don't know if it's a Midwest thing or a white kid, but it's just a quietness about their struggle. But they're very proactive about going to the writing center, the speaking center, coming to office hours, but FC kids struggle. All of them sort of have a little bit of trouble keeping up even the kids who are high achievers, and maybe I had one or two I really never had to worry about. But they are not passive about their struggle. They are resentful and they are challenging. (lines 139 – 165)

The argument Lisa presented in this excerpt depicted FC students as different than traditional first-year rhetoric students on our campus. Typical first-year rhetoric classrooms were described as having a "couple kids" who will quietly struggle. It was explored as perhaps a Midwest trait or it might be a "white thing" (another example of discursive moves equating HSFU majority culture with White culture). FC students, in contrast, were described as "all" struggling. Lisa described them as not quiet or passive. Finally, Lisa characterized FC students as "resentful" and "challenging." The description positioned some FC students as different from the "regular" first-year students at HSFU who are Midwestern and/or white and passive. FC students did not fit the typical first-year student profile. Lisa's example was not the only one. I have used the same language to describe FC students, which will be evident in the classroom field notes in Chapter 7. Similarly, I invited participants to make such comparisons during our interview. Across the interviews, however, layer after layer of data illustrated that programmatic discourse

formed a profile of FC students as “at-risk,” in a way that signified “risk” as more than lack in academic skill; the profile began to encompass behaviors and attitudes. Sometimes, they were “attitude problems.”

Counter Narratives: Resilience

Of course there was a pattern of centrifugal voices, resisting the centripetal force of risk Discourse. For instance, Stephanie identified strengths of character in FC students. She described them as “smart” people who “come from backgrounds where they use different kinds of intelligence.” In our interview Stephanie explained that the students had tools for success, and when I asked her to describe those tools, she characterized their resourcefulness:

> S: I just think it’s interesting that I get a lot of that feminist pedagogy community-building-while-learning in this group that’s supposed to be set up like this remedial, ya know, students who can’t succeed group. It’s so interesting to me. In some ways I think they’re gonna have more tools for success than students coming in high flyers.
>
> A: Yeah, what kind of what, would you describe those tools as?
>
> S. Ya know the ability to deal, generically, like I totally screwed up on that test. I got a D in sosh. It was horrible, and not I never should go back to that class again, do you know what I mean? There’s this ability to be like okay, so what do I have to do now? And sometimes it doesn’t function well. Sometimes it frustrates me because it’s like you can’t wait until the end and then try to pull out an A. But there seems to be more of this okay I can get through this so what do I need to do. So there’s a resiliency that’s built up, which I think is important. I think there’s this kind of um along with resilience, it’s like survival somehow, like they seem to figure out early on, although some times it takes pushing, they seem to figure early on that if they want to play their sport, they HAVE to do a certain level of academic work. So there’s a resiliency that’s built up which I think is important. (line 952 – 979)

Stephanie identified the image of FC students as “remedial” and “who can’t succeed” as reinforced in the programmatic discourse about FC students. She discerned the profile of “remedial student who can’t succeed” based on her interaction with some program administrators. However, Stephanie’s voice disrupted the narrative. She described FC

students first as having the potential for “community-building-while-learning.” Stephanie positioned students as being responsible for the community-building (line 955), as active agents in the process.

When I asked her to explain the tools for success that these students possess, she pointed to their “resiliency” and “survival.” Stephanie described the ability to tolerate adversity (like getting a “D” in “sosh” but persevering). It was an ability to cope with struggle and to work toward an academic goal even if the student had not at first done well academically. Stephanie emphasized coping mechanisms as a productive skill set that FC students employ rather than being told what to do by other people. The notion of resilience countered some of the narratives of in the programmatic discourse describing students as having no resources to cope and persist. As a result, the emerging profile of FC students became a dialogic, intertextual rhetoric (Bakhtin, 1981). The ongoing struggle between at-promise and at-risk images of students was indicative of larger programmatic tensions.

In Sum: Re-mediating At-Risk Discourse

In Chapter 5, I analyzed some administrator narratives about students as reinforcing the “at-risk” Discourse edu-code. There was a frequency in the data to paint a picture of FC students as damaged and in need of rescue, like being foster children. Instructors offered moments of dis-unifying, boundary voices contesting the dominant image of FC students as at- risk in the FC program. Emerging in the instructor data was a constant struggle in which instructors shifted between identifying risk as in the students or as a byproduct of systemic problems in the FC program and the larger HSFU climate, a predominately Euro-American Midwestern community. Two patterns in the instructor descriptions of the FC students matched up with patterns in administrator talk about FC students:

- Narratives of FC student included at-risk, deficit and unfit Discourses in FC. It emerged as a cumulative portrait of damage. Instructors sometimes echoed narratives of FC students as academically underachieving, victims of socio-economic and personal issues, and resistant.
- Narratives of cultural difference also included a durable Discourse of difference-as-victim and Discourse of deficit (see Powell, 1996).

As a result, the archetype of the FC student formed despite counter narratives of some instructors that struggled with centripetal force of the Discourse of risk. The archetype of the FC student was a male student-athlete and/or a student of color whose meager educational history and chaotic home life contributed to his lack of resources for transitioning effectively to HSFU. While there were descriptions of FC students who provided counter scripts of this archetype, the symbol of the typical FC student emerged nonetheless. In Chapter 7, students will describe their reactions to this formative archetype as it relates to the FC program and the larger HSFU community.

Conclusion: Dialogism

Bakhtin frames language as plurality, polyphony, and heteroglossia, a dialogism that emphasizes processes of meaning making in interaction and interpenetration. In the FC voices across administrators and instructors, socio-ideological negotiation and conflict was ever present. Instructors and administrators in this study entered a graceful dance among the cacophony of narratives about FC students and how to support them. Administrators and instructors were dancing among divergent views with every conversation, as did I. Exploring instructor perspectives of FC in relation to the administrator perspectives has shown how everyday, regular talk discursively figured the FC program. Discursive practices in FC were “both means and medium” that could mediate, limit, and constitute meaning while also offering a “productive site for establishing new patterns” (Hirst & Vadeboncoeur, 2006 p. 206). There were productive

lessons from the examination of instructor data in relation with administrator data in FC[29].

First, instructors articulated nuanced narratives of support. They described engagement in the classroom as complex interrelations among students in the FC program which resonated with recent sociocultural theories of repertoires of practice (Gutiérrez and Rogoff, 2003). As a theory, repertoires of practice broadens definitions of culture as individuals whose competencies are a product of cultural knowledge, contextually-dependent language-use skills and habits gained through participation in multiple communities of practices (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003). Based on cultural-historical activity theory, repertoires of practice situate people as engaging shared practices of language-use, behaviors, and cultural ways of knowing through out their life span. These vast opportunities -- through engagement in cultural groups, religious practice, neighborhood traditions, family traditions as well as more durable subject positions like gender and class -- build repertoires of practice that translate into an array of tools, cultural, communicative, and analytical. Highlighting shared community practices disrupts pervasive views of individuals as defined by a single trait, such as race or ethnicity; repertoires of practices illustrates the sociocultural means by which individuals gain competencies (Lam, 2006). FC instructors seemed to extend notions of

[29] Instructors' responses to the programmatic incongruities outlined in this chapter point to a recurring pattern in the FC classroom in which instructors face continued double binds and feel alienated or isolated, a pattern identified in much research on institutional contradictions (Engestrom, 1984, 1999; Eisenberg, 1984; Tracy, 2004; Tracy & Aschroft, 2001; Trethewey, 1999). The problematic emotional responses described by the instructors of the FC program illustrated a felt sense of vulnerability in the university. While administrators agreed that FC instructors needed staying power, it was less evident how the program might effectively support the development of FC instructors. Considering the tremendous complexity of working in a less visible program, it bears saying that the administrative structure might better address the needs of instructors in FC. Absent an appropriately complex introduction to FC seminar and program, the program contributed to feelings of isolation and alienation FC instructors described above.

community building in FC as involving diverse interactions that would build upon students' individual repertoires of practice.

Second, instructors sometimes emphasized the narrative of FC as a safe haven, which emphasized the structure of the FC program as protection. However, teachers extended the safe haven narrative by describing the FC seminar as a place for playful improvisation and trying out identities. According to the most recent instructors, the FC seminar fostered creative play with identities. As Holland et al. explain, "arenas of play" (1998) allow social experimentation and negotiation of social reproduction at the same time, promoting individuals' artful strategies for responding to durable labels, like "at-risk student." Even as instructors' stories at times reified the risk archetype of the FC student, instructors were willing to address the contradiction of that archetype in the designs of the support program. Some instructors described creative improvisations as an example of resisting the archetype and constructing strategic student identities in FC.

Robust narratives of support have implications for continued design of supports in FC. For example, instructors described needing resources that explained the objectives of the FC program. They called for curricula that exposed at-risk narratives about students in the FC program. Some made the presence of such narratives part of the inquiry of FC. By comparison, Chapter 7 (below) examines students' trajectory of development in FC as responses to FC programmatic discourses through a series of complex negotiations, struggles, and actions that contributed to strategies of self authorship and local moments of agency for the five focal students, Zach, Ben, Mariah, Tika, and Danni. In particular, their literacy performances became sites rich with negotiations of positionality within the FC program.

CHAPTER VII

FIGURING FC STUDENTS

> If you're in a certain program—no matter what the program is for—people automatically assume, so why are you in this program? Cause you're not smart.
>
> -- Danni, focal student

An examination of official texts, administrators' voices and instructors' voices in FC disclosed a pattern in the programmatic discourse. In these data, some narratives gained a kind of centripetal force. Some participants emphasized the program's support as academic enrichment that fostered the development of skills, much like the aims of "remedial" courses designed to remedy skill deficits. Some perspectives emphasized the narratives of safe house and friendship for social support in FC, which implied a homogenous student community. In particular, an emergent narrative of FC students as "at-risk" coded students as a stereotype, formed via centripetal Discourses of risk (Skinner, et al., 1998), such as a Discourse of deficiency (Powell, 1997), and a Discourse of being unfit for the university (Gee, 2000a). How did students respond to these cultural and social meanings?

Putting it bluntly in the epigraph to this chapter, Danni described the durability of stereotype: if you're in a program, no matter its intentions and designs, just being in the program marks you as "not smart." Within FC programmatic narratives emerged a unifying deficit-discourse as did a more prevalent at-risk discourse that had an impact on FC students' *positionality* (Holland, Skinner, Lachicotte, & Cain, 1998). Classroom data also illustrated the durability of the risk Discourse to which five students in my FC seminar responded. In some instances students internalized the narratives, but often students' performances in the FC seminar pushed against the unifying narratives and sometimes students contradicted them.

Chapter 1 introduced figured worlds (Holland, et al., 1998) as the conceptual frame for examining classroom identities in the FC program. Akin in spirit to Bakhtin's dialogism, according to Holland, et al., a figured world is "a socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others" (p. 52). Even as certain acts are valued over others, a figured world evolves out of mutual participation in a context; practices and activities evolve as part of the continued participation. Similarly, figured worlds answer to "larger, institutionalized 'structures' of power … that extend beyond the immediate order of interaction" (p. 57). Practices and activities of figured worlds are in constant dialogue with social and cultural meanings of larger institutional contexts. So as much as particular social responses in figured worlds might be valued over others, according to Holland et al., there is also answerability; shared cultural meanings influence the figured world, but the cultural and social models do not determine the practices outright. In this study, the figured world of FC excited students' internally persuasive tendencies (Bakhtin, 1981) and invited performances of identity with an improvisational spirit. This chapter, as a result, examines how five focal students dialogued with the social and cultural meanings of the figured world of Freshman Connection at HSFU as instanced in the FC seminar, a two-course sequence of study supporting the academic and social development of FC students. Student literacy performances in FC seminar illustrated the ways in which a space for authoring self and using FC for creative improvisation were pertinent to student engagement. While all of these students were success stories in terms of rates of retention, grade-point average, and earned grades, the more compelling story was the complex process of negotiating identities that coincided with the figured world of the FC program.

FC Cultural Artifacts: the "Reject Kid"

During the academic year, the FC seminar was the only consistent place where FC students met with each other in a credit-bearing class. While FC students had required supplemental-instruction study groups throughout the year, those groups shifted in the spring semester. Students moved to different tutors and a different small group of FC students. FC seminar, on the other hand, remained the same, and the 13 students I began with in August in 2007 returned to my section of FC seminar in January 2008. Other than the fall orientation, FC seminar was the consistent space that represented the FC program. It was the place that came to symbolize the FC program on the whole. As a symbol of the FC program, however, the seminar was culturally figured through a host of programmatic artifacts. In figured worlds, cultural artifacts reify meanings through gaining "a kind of force by connection to their social and cultural contexts" (Holland et al., p. 63). Artifacts are material and conceptual. In FC, the seminar placed the five focal students in the figured world; it presented a set of cultural artifacts that came to carry material meanings for the FC students. Cultural artifacts build conceptual and material meanings that mediate how people in figured worlds connect with the social and cultural calls; like the function of a poker chip as it takes on specific meanings for non-drinking participants in Alcoholics Anonymous (Holland et al., 1998), the FC was also figured through material artifacts. Specific documents, actions, and curricular artifacts reified the figured world of FC.

The "figuring" of that world started well before students arrived on campus. Each student received a letter from the FC program, for instance, explaining admission to HSFU through the FC program. The letter was a student's initial recruitment into the FC world. Danni, an African-American young woman in the seminar, explained to me how she read the social and cultural meaning of the FC program via the letter:

> You open the letter and they were like you are accepted under the condition. I was like, does this mean if I never did this I wouldn't go to college? That's what it made me feel like, so it's kinda like

> the reject kid who they looked at the application and said ((mimics a teacher voice)) well we'll give 'em a chance. That's what it made me feel like, and I went to my momma when I got the letter and that's when I was like, am I really accepted or is this just one of those things we're gonna see if you can do it? And she's like you're accepted, you just have to do the program. I was just confused. (lines 53 – 63)

A close look at Danni's language choices illustrates her response to the letter as artifact. She described the letter ("it") as making her "feel" like "the reject kid" (lines 57, 59). The "reject kid" emerged as a figurative representation of the FC student. Danni's sarcasm in the phrase "we'll give 'em a chance" should not be missed (line 59 – 60). It emphasized the university's relationship to the FC student as an act of support. While the university's position as offering institutional support seemed clear to Danni, her own position was less clear. In the final line, Danni admitted being confused, which characterized her uncertainty about her position in relation to the larger HSFU context. In FC, before students entered the physical landscape of HSFU, cultural artifacts of FC positioned students, in Danni's words, as "rejects." The recruitment to the figured world began with a position as a rejected student[30].

The symbol of the "reject kid" became more durable as Danni interacted with the FC seminar through out the year. She told me that, in fact, it became a private joke that she and some of the other women in FC made about themselves:

> D: Well we have this joke that Raquesha made up. Me, Raquesha, and Mariah. When we do something stupid or when people ask, you don't have to take that class? We be like, we're in Freshman Connection, okay. Don't expect a lot. ((laughing))
>
> A: ((laughing)) You don't expect a lot.

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[30] My analysis of the letter is informed by L. Powell's (1996) discussion of coded university discourses first cited in Chapter 2 and further elaborated in Chapters 4 and 5. Powell explains how discourses code African-American students as deficient and in need of support in contrast to the position of achievement coded for Euro-American students. Similarly, Danni's description resonated with Lisa's discussion in Chapter 6 about the first day of class when a student asked if FC seminar was the "dummy" class.

> D: Pretty much. It sort of makes you feel like you ride the short bus a little bit, just a little bit. (lines 148 – 163)

The joke became the way she and some FC students responded to actions that were perceived as "stupid." "They don't expect much" was a response to how she (and her friends) understood their positionality (or their role, status, and place) in the FC program. She elaborated "they don't expect much" trope with a simile; being in FC was like "you ride the short bus." The "short bus" was a symbol that represented the treatment of students with disabilities in public schools, and it emphasized FC students as not normal. The low expectations Danni joked about at first, and then elaborated in the simile of the "short bus," were discursively formed in the FC program. It was in the official language (underprepared, "at-risk") and in the stories we told about FC students as having damaged lives or being products of meager educational histories (see Chapters 5 and 6). Narratives of the FC program could at times formulate the symbol of the "reject kid."

Danni's description of low expectations resonated with my felt sense as a teacher in the FC seminar, as evidenced in my classroom journal that year. In tenth week of classes, for example, students were assigned speech presentations that would share what they learned by interviewing an upper-level undergraduate about strategies for success in college. Some of my notes described the speeches, but the final paragraphs focused on my uncertainty about how students responded to the FC seminar:

> I just get the sense that they treat this class like it's a joke. Despite the fact that they are doing the work. This is the paradox that I'm in. The students are doing the work, but then they come to class and treat it like it's a joke. But, but they did do the work. I mean, they could choose not to do the work. (Audio recorded field notes, November 1)

In the same way that Danni described the joke about low expectations, I seemed to be struggling with students treating the assignments of the seminar as "a joke." The FC seminar became the place where the dominant narratives of the program gained force and shaped its cultural landscape. It was both a place where students did work but also where they treated the work as a joke.

In the figured world of FC, risk Discourses worked in tandem, gaining in force to position the FC students as different. Drawn from the official texts as well as administrator and interview data, the prevalent narratives painted a portrait of an iconic FC student. First, the phrase “at-risk” was a coded Discourse casting a deficit approach onto particular communities of class, linguistic, and cultural difference (Fassett & Warren, 2004; Fox, 1999; Gee, 2000a/b; Lam, 2006; Rose, 1989). The discourse of risk flowed through the programmatic narratives. Second (and similarly), a binary of fit versus unfit, drawn from Gee (2000a), emphasizes how educational environments inscribe students as either fit or unfit for school. The Discourse of “unfit” flowed through narratives about FC students. Third, Powell (1996) points to a similar trajectory for university students drawn along differences of culture: the universities discursive practices inscribe Euro-American students with the Discourse of potential while inscribing African-American student with the Discourse of deficit. At times, FC reified the Discourse of deficit, as Chapter 5 illustrated.

When Danni described the “reject kid” Discourse of the FC admission letter, she indexed a cultural phenomenon of the program, referencing the layers of discourse functioning to position FC students as at-risk, unfit, and deficient. All five of the focal students referenced this feeling. Studies have shown that figured worlds in school settings instance the positions of students, and the cultural artifacts play a role in “thickening” provisional but nonetheless more stable identities, roles, and statuses (see Bartlett, 2007; Leander, 2002; Luttrel & Parker, 2001; Wortham, 2004). Positionality carried great meaning for actions in the classroom. The success of the five focal students emerged as they responded and reacted to the cultural artifact of “reject kid” that formed as a result of centripetal forces in programmatic narratives in FC. All five focal students did well in FC seminar: Zach earned a B+ in seminar, as did Mariah; Ben earned an A, as did both Tika and Danni. In the follow-up interviews, while students described their positionality in FC as a problem, each also described FC as offering useful support, an extremely important

factor in their first-year development. In short, the five focal students represented a programmatic contradiction in the success story. While students described the stability of identities of FC students as "reject kids," they also described the benefits of the FC program. In fact, many of the curricular designs of the FC seminar—the assigned readings and the formal writing assignments—emphasized that contradiction as part of the course inquiry. The rest of Chapter 7, as a result, examines student literacy practices, as it was the literacy practices in particular that offered sites of improvisation and resistance to positionality imposed by the figured world of FC for Ben, Zach, Tika, Mariah and Danni.

Space of Authorship – Figuring Good Students

Drawing from Bakhtin (1981), Holland et al. (1998) describe the space of authoring as a dynamic relationship with authoritative discourses and internally persuasive discourses. They write, "authorship is a matter of orchestration: of arranging the identifiable social discourses/practices that are one's resources (which Bakhtin glossed as 'voices') in order to craft a response in a time and space defined by others' standpoints in activity" (p. 272). The space of authoring is the process of answering to a figured world, saturated by meanings and expectations, but the opportunities for response answerability are not determined fully by the social expectations; space of authoring allows people to respond to the structure of the situation, the cultural and the social calls, with some maneuverability through various voices, meanings, and roles. Compared with the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978), Holland et al. define authorship as akin to an expert instructing the neophyte in the Zone of Proximal Development where the expert does not "compel rote action;" rather, the expert works with the novice in an open, albeit structured, space of development to extend competencies and "answerability" (p. 272). The act of authoring in response to the figured world is somewhat open because the struggle between centripetal and centrifugal discourses fosters the ability to draw

from multiple voices dialogically constituting the figured world. The tension between centripetal and centrifugal discourses caters to a variety of voices, and an individual takes a stance through the voices of others. The following two student examples epitomized the extension of competencies through stances of answerability.

Ben: Playing the Game

Chapter 3 introduced Ben as a Euro-American, male student-athlete from a neighboring Midwestern state. A football player, Ben forged relationships with many of the other football players and wrestlers. In our follow-up interview, he told me that he understood that he was required to enroll in FC because of his poor academic performance at a private high school. He said, "I was pretty sure I'd be in some type of program because I wouldn't have qualified for any Big Ten schools" (line 33). He hadn't tried very hard academically, and he cared more about athletics. Ben came from a middle-class environment; it was a two-parent home, and he described it as supportive. Even so, he said his parents joked about his academic predicament when he was admitted to HSFU through the FC program: "My mom and dad obviously made fun of me all of the time. Like I can't believe you graduated and can't even get into school." For Ben, then, the joke about FC started before he ever arrived at HSFU.

From the start, Ben resisted the jokes about his positionality in FC as a student who "can't even get into school." He performed quite well in the FC program, and he also professed that students should have the opportunity to test out of the program if they illustrated strong academic performance in their first semester at the university. Through examination of key classroom assignments, it became clear that Ben wanted to signal himself as a good student. When I asked him to explain what the program helped him with, he described the FC program as necessary practice in the "basics":

> It teaches you how to do the basics just like, this has to be done by this time. Start it early. This is what you have to do on a regular basis with each class. You have to check assignments. You have to check email. You have to use email. You have to learn how to

> attach documents. You have to learn how to submit stuff. It's more practice on a simple thing like, well you have to be on time for this. (lines 403 – 417)

Ben identified the FC program as outlining general habits expected in college "on a regular basis." The habits included checking assignments, using email, and submitting assignments. He concluded by referring to the work of seminar as "more practice" in these simple habits and suggested that over time, experience with small assignments translated into understanding what's expected in college. Ben's word choice, "practice," resonated with an exchange we had just minutes later in our interview.

In particular, Ben described the university as a place where students had to play the game:

> B: I think there should be more emphasis on how you show your teacher how you feel or how you show that you care about the class because I can think of two or three grades that I wouldn't have gotten if I wasn't, if I didn't have a relationship with the teacher. I mean did I care about the classes? Absolutely not. Did they think I was really serious about the class? Definitely. So I think there should be more emphasis on ways of, like, you have to play the game.
>
> A: So it's like these rules, right like habits?
>
> B: Yeah. One thing I do, I always, whether it's the first or second class, stay after at least for a minute or two to talk about why they're in school or maybe, say if I don't have a question, pretend like I do or ask a question, something related to the class so they think, oh this person cares they stay after class. You don't have to start getting personal with them. You'll see maybe after one time, it gets realized you know you're someone who cares about school, you're a good person. (lines 452 – 482)

Ben focused on the need to better prepare students for interactions with faculty by identifying faculty expectations. He called this "ways to play the game." At one level, Ben emphasized habits of relating with instructors that are appropriate for the role of student in the university class. However, Ben's reference to "playing a game" also highlighted the role as a performance. First, he stated that he could play two roles at once, acting like he cared even though he didn't: "I mean did I care about the classes? Absolutely not. Did they think I was really serious about the class? Definitely." Ben

described being a student as a performative act, as playing a particular role, and he also implied that he had performed the role of good student in the past: “I can think of two or three grades that I wouldn’t have gotten if I wasn’t, if I didn’t have a relationship with the teacher.” Ben pointed to norms of university and signaling his fit in the norms, a phenomenon akin to Gee’s (1996) Capital “D” Discourse. As reviewed in Chapter 1, Gee’s definition of discourse is drawn from the theoretical work of Foucault (1975):

> A Discourse is a socially accepted association among ways of using language, other symbolic expressions, and ‘artifacts,’ of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or ‘social network,’ or to signal (that one is playing) a socially meaningful ‘role.’(p. 131)

Ben described the multiple interactions with teachers as various opportunities for “identifying oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or ‘social network.’” Ben described Discourse as “valuing and acting” in the manner appropriate for each instructor, each social situation. Rather than suggesting that there was one right role for students as they related to instructors, Ben explained that he attempted to connect with instructors early on, so as to illustrate his willingness to play the role. More importantly, Ben described each class as offering a series of opportunities, suggesting that he will play different roles across the social networks. This was pertinent to Ben’s role in my class.

Throughout the FC seminar, Ben seemed to “signal” his role in the class in this manner. He worked against the programmatic narratives of the FC program that, at times, reified FC students as at-risk, unfit, and deficient. He also made it clear to me that he knew which shared habits and ways of being in the FC seminar had value based on my expectations. For instance, during class one day, as students worked in groups on assigned presentations of their reading of required Literature Circles, Ben told the class that I preferred “girlie” creative documents, and recommended to the students that they “be creative and artistic” (classroom field notes, March 11). He signaled a position in my seminar as following the rules and delineated them for other students.

One writing assignment best illustrated how Ben negotiated his continued signaling of a membership. In the first semester, we focused a majority of the time on writing and revising a memoir, a genre of personal narrative in which writers focus on an event, describe it through good detail, and consider implications of the event to a general group of readers (Newkirk, 1997). The FC seminar memoir focused on a past event when the student had to adapt to a new situation. I assigned two readings as models of this memoir: a chapter by Vershawn Young (2006) called "Going Home" and a chapter by Mike Rose (1989) called "I Just Wanna Be Average." We also read short excerpts by Lorrie Moore (2005) and Joanne Beard (1999) that I referred to as effective strategies for descriptive writing (see Appendix B). In his memoir, Ben focused on playing football in high school, and he described having to adapt to playing ball after struggling with motivation. The first draft of the memoir didn't have a title, but it began with a paragraph written in present tense describing the final ten seconds of a football game. Within a few sentences, I saw that the first paragraph was the voice of an announcer:

> *There are ten seconds left on the clock and the defending state champions are down by five points. This should be the last play of the game. The quarterback, Steve Carson, drops back urgently and looks downfield for a player to get open. The defense is running after him. Tift decides to just throw the ball up into double coverage to All-American Ben Decker. The crowd screams "Touchdown!"* (excerpt of Ben's memoir draft, italics in original)

The rest of the paragraphs of the three paged essay were similar to reflections in a diary. Ben described his feelings, such as "Going into my senior season was very scary for me. I was going into my senior year with huge expectations plus an ACL injury." While the memoir developed a story about Ben's struggle to deal with the pressure, the paragraphs didn't model the active tone captured in the present tense verbs in the first paragraph. When I had a conference with Ben about the memoir, I pointed to the differences in the prose style of the first paragraph and the rest of the essay, highlighting the effect of present tense in the prose and the active verbs like "drops back; screams." Throughout the semester, he revised the memoir. Along with other developments, Ben added a poem

at the beginning of the essay in the second draft, a strategy modeled in Young's piece. He added a title "Drain Your Love." What is more, Ben continued to work on the memoir with a tutor. With each step, Ben developed his memoir, drawing from the resources provided in the seminar as well as the FC program, like a tutor.

In the final draft, Ben's memoir had evolved into a stronger narrative in which the story was framed between two announcer's calling the final seconds of a game. To parallel the opening paragraph of his first draft, Ben concluded his final draft with an announcer's voice, but this time the focus was on HSFU's football team:

> *There are ten seconds left on the clock and the Big Ten champion Heartland State is down by five points. The quarterback, Jeff Smith, drops back urgently and throws downfield for a player to get open. The Tennessee Volunteers' Defense is running after him. Smith decides to just throw the ball up into double coverage where All-American Ben Decker is running. The 105,000 fans scream "Touchdown!"*
>
> *One of these days…* (excerpt, italics in original)

The memoir illustrated how Ben authored a sense of self at HSFU by drawing on his past experiences in football and imagining his future experiences at the university. His use of similar syntax and parallel sentence structure between the introductory and final paragraphs connect the past Ben football player to the future Ben football player. As Ben pointed out, I definitely pushed students to be creative with projects, and he took the push to be creative as an invitation to improve the memoir through drafts. In his portfolio, Ben described briefly how he became engaged in the process: "I was excited and passionate about this paper. I loved it. I worked on it almost everyday. Now that the memoir is done, I still have been creating my own assignments. I've been typing experiences that I've gone through, and I've been creating random stories." While Ben engaged the memoir assignment over time and through drafts, it was clear that he emphasized the creativity in his reflection to index following the expectations he perceived to be important to my seminar. That is, he signaled his fit with my class.

In the FC seminar, where the memoir was situated, Ben was answering to the figured world of FC as well as the resources provided to him by the seminar, and he moved to author a self that assimilated and resisted at the same time. He took up the role of student-athlete while resisting the at-risk Discourse of the program. He took up the call to perform "creatively" in the classroom assignments following my guidelines. Even further, the content of the memoir connected to his roles outside of the FC program, which allowed him to draw upon activities from which he had gained an identity as a good player and explored it in the memoir. It developed a sense of self in relation to the many roles Ben played in his life: a former high school football star, a son, a current, struggling player, and a first-year university student.

In our follow-up interview months later, I began to understand the lessons of Ben's classroom identity in practice as evidenced in the small example of his memoir and his description of needing to "play the game" of the university. Ben followed a trajectory of development in which he struggled with the many voices of authority influencing his current role at HSFU. The memoir became the space for negotiating across these diverse voices about being a student-athlete at HSFU informed by his past experience in high school. Bakhtin (1981) points to such a process as integral to the development of one's own authorial stance, as the ability of a person to gain control over the variety of discourses; rather than a novice who gives over to the voice of authority, an authorial stance, "one's own discourse and one's own voice, although born of another or dynamically stimulated by another, will sooner or later begin to liberate themselves from the authority of the other's discourse" (p. 348). Holland et al., likewise, explain that dialogic struggle with discourse is integral to developing "one's own voice or discourse," which is the space of authoring. In particular, an individual who orchestrates across others' discourse with sophistication can resist (or "liberate" themselves, in Bakhtin's words) the authority of others' discourse, and the movement to re-orchestrate, rephrase, and reword allows one to take a stance independent of but answering the variety of voices

or calls in a space. The ability to take a stance that answers to the authority of others' discourses is fundamental to the development of identities.

In his formally sanctioned reading and writing, Ben seemed able and willing to craft a provisionally stable identity in practice through and in reaction to the figured world of the FC program. Bartlett's (2007) research with emerging literate adults in Brazil illustrates that "identity work, conducted with and through compelling cultural artifacts, is central to performing literacy" (p. 64). Similarly, Ben's identity performances were conducted with and through the cultural artifacts of the FC figured world and become central to the memoir and his classroom performance. The cultural artifacts of this figured classroom world became material in his literacy practices, and those literate acts carried great import for authoring a self as a good student and a good football player. In his portfolio, his memoir, and in the events described as integral to writing his memoir, Ben used artifacts to fashion an identity in practice, situated within the FC program but related to football. He fashioned a good student and a champion football player. What is more, his astute comparison of the different ways to position oneself in the classroom context as similar to playing a game illustrated an awareness of agency as part of the game. He pointed to the ability to answer different calls differently. He described being a college student as involving multiple and evolving identifications across contexts. Likewise, Ben used the memoir to practice such a process of multiple and changing identities across place and time.

In the end, when I asked Ben to consider how the FC program helped. Ben explained that it helped him gain confidence:

> Did it help me? Absolutely. Different than some other people. Definitely the main thing about this was like I can do this. I mean I have the confidence to do this in college. I can do the major I want. So I think that's an important part, but you were human about it and you showed that you care. (lines 441 – 449)

Ben claimed that the FC program helped him gain confidence that he could manage college-level work. Even so, as he concluded his description, identifying renewed

confidence as an important part of the program, he also created a compound sentence in which he connected gaining confidence with the role of the teacher ("you were human about it"). I was humored by the implication that some teachers weren't human. But in general, Ben described me (his teacher) as "showing" that I care. According to Holland et al., it takes personal experience to organize a self within the social calls of a figured world "with the aid of cultural resources and the behavioral prompting and verbal feedback of others" (p. 283). In the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978) of the FC seminar, I compelled some rote action, but I also fostered an awareness of resources and worked to prompt and provide feedback as Ben moved through the course. Ben answered the call by extending competencies and answering as a good student, signaling himself as a "good person," which he identified as an important step in being a university student. Ben's identity in practice involved a way of presenting a self that signaled a "fit" with the Discourse of each instructor's classroom. As he gained confidence, it seemed, he was aware of needing to shift roles depending on the expectations of each instructor, each class. He seemed quite aware of the multiplicity of those roles, understanding that what counted as a good student in one course, like being creative in Aimee's FC seminar, wouldn't fit exactly in other HSFU contexts. However, the process of signaling his role in the seminar fostered a sense of confidence, a sense of self-efficacy. What is more, it was a local moment of agency in which Ben described himself as an actor in the process, not a passive student, not a joke.

Zach: Self-Authorship in "Goofy Assignments"

Not all students emulated the path of Ben's memoir work. Rather, students responded differently to different facets of the program. A Euro-American student wrestler, Zach, followed a complex trajectory in the FC program. While Ben seemed able to "fit" his role in the program with ease, other students, like Zach, struggled with the fit. Zach maintained in our follow-up interview that he didn't understand the FC program:

> The only thing I remember about FC was FC seminar we had to take and going to study group. And that's really all I remember about it. And I mean I don't even know what FC does. To be perfectly honestly, I didn't ever really go to it for help. I'm not sure, maybe I didn't understand how it works. I don't know. (lines 232 – 236)

While Zach was comfortable in the interview describing his apprehension of certain programmatic practices, he could not describe the purpose of the FC program as a mechanism of academic and social support. His response spoke to the contradiction in the program. Some students were confused by its purpose and their position in the program. He thought of a program as a thing you could find and use, as when he said "I didn't ever really go to it for help." Then he described not understanding "how it works." The ambiguity outlined in Chapters 4 and 5 emerged in Zach's reaction to the program.

From a nearby Midwestern state, Zach came from a two-parent home with an older sibling. Wrestling was his talent, and it provided him partial funding at Heartland State. Like Ben, as a Euro-American student-athlete, Zach was required to participate in many support designs in FC and Athletics, such as mandatory learning center hours, required tutor sessions, and meetings with athletic advisors regarding his progress. From the beginning, Zach complained about all of the requirements of an athlete and of the FC program. In the FC seminar, his first assignments were hurried. For example, his first draft of the memoir was submitted late on the day it was due, and thus began a pattern of Zach waiting until the last minute to do his course work. In my classroom field notes, I described five different class periods when Zach arrived asking to leave early so he could print an assignment due for his first-year writing course in the next hour. While Zach didn't signal his role as a "good student" like Ben, many of his actions in the FC seminar were reactions to an expressed dissatisfaction with some policies of the FC program. In contrast to Ben, who wrote in his portfolio about taking advantage of the "resources" provided by the FC program, like tutoring and learning assistance, Zach did not describe the required tutors, study group, and hours of learning assistance as "resources." He described the programmatic designs as requirements.

In our follow-up interview, for example, Zach described the supplemental instruction offered through the required study groups associated with the FC seminar. He explained that the main reason he attended study group was fear of discipline:

> I don't think, it shouldn't have anything to do with seminar. I mean going with the grade that goes in seminar? I guess that gave a little bit of incentive to be like, to do well in it, but if you don't go, you get in trouble. So that was enough incentive. (lines 229 – 232)

Two incentives for attending study group were assessment and punishment. The grade a student received in SI counted toward the final grade in FC seminar was "a little bit of incentive," but getting into trouble for not attending was "enough incentive." Forms of punishment included Sunday night football, running the stairs, or extra learning center hours. Zach spoke to the way that some students became objects of punishment in the monitoring system of the FC program described by administrators and instructors. Zach said in our spring midterm conference that he was trying to do well: "I'm trying to keep my head above water. I still somehow get in trouble. I'm either unlucky or just I don't know." Zach, however, seemed less able to identify the system that he was trying to keep his head above. In Chapters 4 and 5, surveillance in the FC programmatic structure emerged as a contentious facet of the program design in which some of the administrators touted the efficacy of the system of monitoring and control while others described the system as Draconian. The FC Seminar Supervisor, for example, referred to the Catch-22 of programmatic structures that control student behavior in an attempt to regulate. As Foucault (1975) argues, a vast system of surveillance regulates as it controls because the individuals comply with the surveillance and follow the norms outlined by the system. They conduct selves that fit the system.

Zach reacted to the Catch-22 of the program early on. In our follow-up interview I asked him to elaborate his perspective of the study group as a mechanism of discipline:

> Oh. It's a joke. It is! It's really, yeah, you come, you get your points whatever. There really is not any motivation. Besides that it affects 20 percent of our grade in your class. And that, and mainly that grade is just showing up. So people go and show up and just

> be miserable there. That's what I felt most of the time. That's exactly what it was. It wasn't to go there and learn for my other classes. (lines 240 – 254)

While the grade offered Zach incentive to attend study session, he described not having "any motivation." It was miserable. In fact, he described that he didn't go there to "learn for my other classes." Zach, a student-athlete who had more opportunities in the program for discipline, described avoidance of punishment as the motivation for study group. Zach reacted to one dominant narrative in the FC program of intrusive structure as integral to the support of FC students, like one administrator describing the need to "grab students by the collar" (see Chapter 4). Zach resisted such narratives of support. On the contrary, he described his role when being forced to attend as static and passive, a student disengaged and miserable. Zach's description was more akin to Foucault's description of individuals complicit with discipline and control in institutions where mechanisms normalize students into fixed roles: "you go and show up and just be miserable there." You self-regulate.

However, Zach was a student who did well in the FC seminar, which means he continued to attend study group, he submitted his work, and he completed all of the requirements. So what did Zach gain from the FC? Zach's criticism of the disciplinary narratives of support in the FC program emerged as central to his development in the FC seminar. He answered the need for discipline and structure narratives in FC by both complying, attending and doing the work, but also taking advantage of an opportunity to offer his perspective on the system. One assignment in the spring of FC seminar offered a good example of how Zach responded to intrusive support in FC. Building from the literacy practices refined in writing a memoir in the fall, the writing project of the spring was called "Making Connections: A Problem/Solution Paper" (see Appendix C). In the assignment, I directed students to write a paper that established a problem that affected them at HSFU and had also been explored in a book the students read while participating in required Literature Circle Groups. Choosing one of four book options, Zach had read

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian by Sherman Alexie (2007) with other students in the FC program. In his paper, he focused on the pressures facing a student-athlete, one of the less significant themes developed in Alexie's novel about the main character, Junior, who played basketball for his high school. As part of his research, Zach filmed a day in the life of a wrestler: he followed his core group of first-year wrestlers in a typical day of practice during the season and interviewed them for the project.

In his paper, called "Balance," Zach described the problem at HSFU of a dominant stereotype about student-athletes as having it easy. He described misunderstandings in the mainstream student population regarding the experience of the student-athlete at HSFU. And he most enjoyed taking the time to film an entire day because it allowed him to reflect on his daily responsibilities:

> The video was really me just screwing around. I remember it was like us going to wrestling practice and showing what we do through out one full day. And you don't even realize it until you try to put together something like that. And I didn't even realize, like man, this is kind of tough, like one day is consuming and takes a lot of energy to go through. And I didn't even realize that as I go through the day. I mean through out the day you don't even realize that , man I gotta get up at 5 AM go to weight lifting, right after that I have class, right after that we have to go to the learning center. It was like a bundle that you don't even realize until you do a project like that. I think doing that project made me understand we really do have a tough day. Yeah that made me like reflect that what we did on an entire day. I thought that helped me. (lines 388 – 397)

Zach described that part of his research, the filming of a day in his life, was just "screwing around," but it became extremely important because it helped him "reflect" on the experience. Reflection emerged as a resource for Zach throughout the year. For example, Zach reflected on writing the "Balance" paper in his portfolio, and he explained how it helped in a reflective memo:

> Even though the project was difficult, it was effective. I got across many good points with the interviews. For example, when one interviewee talks about social life, he says that student athletes don't have one. This can give the freshmen a heads-up that the sacrifice they sign up for means that there is something they are not going to be able to do in college. The most important piece of

> information was not found in research. The interview of student-athletes and the film of a typical day provided the best sources. (excerpt Zach's portfolio).

Zach pointed out that the most effective component of his paper "Balance" was the interviews with other students and being able to document a day in the life of a student-wrestler. Importantly, Zach's choice to film himself and other wrestlers allowed him to see his own experiences from an outside gaze.

During our follow-up interview Zach explicitly pointed to the process of reflection as important to his development. In fact, he described some of the assignments of the FC seminar as "goofy" but that over time in the academic year, he gained competencies as a result of doing them:

> The assignments I thought were a little goofy. But I thought they were more fun than anything. I mean they were fun to do. That project on student-athletes was fun. The portfolio was fun. At the same time you don't even realize you're learning a lot about the campus and a lot about the college. You're not even processing that. You know. It's kinda weird to describe. I like how it was talked about and how it was processed. (lines 340 – 348)

Zach concentrated on the seminar assignments and described "learning a lot" about the campus and about college. In Zach's experience, opportunities to reflect had a cumulative effect on his literacy performances, a term introduced by Mollie Blackburn (2002) to theorize the effects of literacy across locations and over time. Blackburn argues that literacy performances stretch across innumerable literacy practices of varied ideological meanings. She writes, "It is in the series of literacy performances that literacy has the potential both to reinforce and destabilize the values constructed through reading and writing" (p. 313). At the core of literacy performance, identities of readers and writers are held in tension through a complex interrelationship. Similarly, Zach pointed to the cumulative effect of the "goofy assignments" in FC seminar that became productive sites of complex interrelations among the narratives of support in FC and the narratives about first-year students. Likewise, Zach emphasized how assignments like the portfolio in particular helped him learn about the campus culture. Again, the performance of literacy

allowed him to destabilize the dominant narratives of discipline in the FC program and negotiate a stance as a student-athlete at HSFU. Zach described a sense of learning literacy practices and other habits useful for the university. Ironically, he indicated that he processed adapting to college through FC seminar assignments despite not being able to articulate the steps of that process or to define the espoused mission of the FC program.

Like Ben, an integral component of Zach's development was a Bakhtinian (1981) space for authoring self, even in "goofy assignments." Essential to authoring self is a mixture of a sense of "I" and the words of others; "the self authors itself, and is thus made knowable, in the words of others" (Holland et al., p. 173). It involves seeing oneself from the outside. In the "Making Connection" assignment, Zach's focus was the outside perspective of the student-athlete at HSFU. The documentary of his day and the interviews with wrestlers allowed Zach to literally gaze at himself from the outside perspective. In this assignment, he orchestrated a sense of self through the discourses of others, like other students, other readings, and the character Junior in *The Absolutely True Story of a Part-time Indian*. It was a sorting out of many voices about the experience of being a student-athlete that Zach cited as significant to his paper. His research, illustrated in documenting a day in the life of a student-athlete, represented Bakhtin's internally persuasive discourse, a process of "intense struggle within us for hegemony among various available verbal and ideological points of view, approaches, directions, and values" (p. 182). Most importantly, Bakhtin argues that the process of authoring self through the perspectives, approaches, and directions of others will lead to resisting the authority of others' discourse (Holland, et al., p. 183). Zach's self authorship through the "Making Connections Writing Project" and his final portfolio assimilated and resisted the positionality of a passive student complying with required supports while simultaneously re-orchestrating his positionality as an active student in the FC program who narrated his role as a wrestler and student-athlete in the FC program at HSFU.

Zach emerged as an illustrative example of the struggle between facets of support in FC that administrators and instructors referred to as the Catch-22: the problem when the supports do the work for students. Dylan, in chapter 6, criticized how the FC program led students around on the first day tour without allowing students the opportunity to locate themselves and to map out their routes to each class. In a related way, Zach expressed learning a lot by being able to locate himself as a student-athlete in the FC program at HSFU and to map out his daily routines as a result of reflection. The reflective practice emerged as integral to Zach's development in the program. The self-reflexive practice of the assignments in the FC seminar seemed to foster it. Much has been written about the generative benefits of reflective writing and practice (Hillocks, 1999; Yancey, 1998) as fostering a model of review and meta-analysis to discern patterns and generate a new way of thinking about a situation. The exercise, according to Yancey, is dialectic, as is the case for Zach. His literacy performances in the seminar culminated in a portfolio project which scaffolded his reflective process: to look back, discern, and move forward with new understandings. Like Bakhtin's theory of internally persuasive discourse in which individuals dialogue with other's discourses on the way to new meanings, reflective practice fosters a dialogic relationship. Zach illustrated how reflective practice in the sequence of assignments in the FC seminar was integral to his development. Over time opportunities for this type of reflective, generative thinking emerged as sites of self-authorship and localized moments of agency, destabilizing the positionality of passive FC students. Like Ben, Zach described a local site of agency by coming to see himself from the outside.

Both Zach and Ben exemplified the significance of constructing identities in academic Discourses. The ability to take a stance that answers to the authority of others' discourses was fundamental to the development of identities. The designs of the FC seminar emphasized contradiction and tension between school identities and other identities. For example, our reading of Mike Rose's "I Just Wanna Be Average" (1989)

and Vershawn Young's "Going Home" (2006) and the Literature Circle Books highlighted the tensions between home and school culture; like Alexie's novel, all emphasized the need to negotiate across these purposes. In short, the curriculum introduced contradiction and tension between home and school as part of the inquiry of the course, and Ben and Zach seemed to respond well to the invitation to examine tensions in their own experience as first-year student-athletes in the FC program at HSFU. Literacy performances emerged as integral to that work.

Making Worlds: Creative Improvisation in FC

Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998) define play worlds, or "arenas of play," as sites through which people can negotiate both social experimentation and social reproduction (p. 238). While culturally determining models often limit the potential responses available for people in a social space (like at-risk student, student-athlete, or good student), arenas of play allow people to respond to the cultural and the social calls with some maneuverability through various voices, meanings, and roles. Play, as a concept, is particularly important in theories of learning as it is the foundational resource for symbolic mediation, according to Vygotsky (1978). Moments of imagining alternative worlds are a "means of symbolic bootstrapping, a medium through which a different world could be envisioned" (Holland, et al., p. 250). Making worlds is integral in the process of identities in practice, for it is through the dynamic process of struggling across the social and cultural calls of larger historical and institutional contexts through which "new figured worlds and new identities—both figured and positional—emerge" (p. 236). Such practice was integral to how some focal students negotiated positionality in FC and the larger HSFU campus, a theme that emerged as pertinent in the student data consistently. In particular, for Tika, Mariah and Danni, gender and cultural differences emerged as important to their identities in the FC program.

Tika: Girl Support Network

Both Ben and Zach provided the perspective of Euro-American student-athletes whose positionality emerged as it negotiated the social and cultural meanings of the FC program. However, the perspective of Euro-American student-athletes was just one point of view. Other students engaged the FC program differently. In fact, women in the FC program were often my biggest concern because they were outnumbered almost three to one in our course. In the FC program, of the 41 students there were just eleven female students, accounting for 27%. The FC Program Coordinator explained that the administrators enrolled students across sections of FC seminar in an attempt to limit the number of male student-athletes per section. In my section of seminar, for example, five students were male-student athletes. While the "reject kid" was a cultural artifact against which students authored a self (as in the case of Ben and Zach), the predominance of male students added another layer of the figured world in which more durable discourses of gender took shape. For example, in my classroom field notes I often remarked on the behaviors of male students as disruptive. On Day 19 of the semester in the classroom field journal, I described some of the dynamics between men and women in the classroom that I was continuing to note:

> There was a lot of notions that I made about people's positioning of the body before the beginning of the class. Tika was setting up her power point presentation at the consul and Ron came over and stood by her, right next her, and was sort of giving her a hard time, saying that she was showing off for doing a power point. And all of the women did power points and all of the boys thought they were showing off. Not all but a few. So there was something going on there between the "good" and "bad" student and it's a tension that you know I often see. And I'm interested in how much I perpetuate it and you know who stands to gain for marking some students as good and some as bad. (audio recorded excerpt classroom journal, October 28)

In my field notes, I described Ron's actions of teasing Tika, but I failed to capture how bothered I was by the activity on that day, which I recalled during data analysis. I worried that Ron was invading Tika's personal space and creating a fairly close body-to-body

interaction. My field notes described Ron's actions as standing "right next to her," but in the note I was also criticizing his behavior as being aggressive in his stance. The image of Ron teasing Tika as she set up her Power Point Presentation at the computer consul epitomized an emerging conflict in the classroom, which I described in the field notes. In fact, the interactions between men and women emerged frequently, and in this field note during the tenth week, I pointed to the good and bad students. I also differentiated good and bad in terms of gender. Gender performance in the seminar gained a kind of force throughout the academic year.

One episode epitomized the significance of gender in the seminar: in the spring the three sections of FC seminar collaborated on most of the projects, one of which was the literature circle. Another was a presentation on the first Writing Project of the spring semester. Designed as a getting-to-know you activity for all FC students, the first assignment was to create a Song Mix that told a story about their first-year experience, using just song titles from their musical libraries. During Week 5, a young, Euro-American male student presented his song mix about night life in the HSFU community, focusing on the "hook up." He described through song titles getting a woman intoxicated and taking her home. At the end of his presentation, as students were asked to write evaluative comments on notes that they would pass to a presenter, I said, "There's a fine line between the hook up and date rape." Some female students responded in support. After the class, Stephanie, Lisa, and I discussed the incident and we decided to make an official statement about the song mix being inappropriate for the classroom. The performance of gender continued to be a central tension in many of the classroom activities, and it emerged as another means of figuring the FC seminar in the data, especially for the women students.

An African-American woman from an urban city of a neighboring Midwestern state, Tika started off doing extremely well in the FC seminar. She had grown up in a single-parent home with her mom who was a nurse. Tika had an older cousin who also

attended HSFU. She referenced her cousin multiple times in our conferences in some of the writing she did in the class. Academically Tika excelled. Throughout the year, however, transitions to HSFU social life were marked by fits and starts. For example, she described having trouble with the Euro-American women on her dorm floor. In a related sense, social roles, like gender, became pertinent to Tika's interaction with the FC program as illustrated in seminar. Tika's positionality in the FC program depended on her interaction with the "recruited," predominantly male student-athletes, who made up a high percentage of the FC students and who gained status due to their role as athletes.

In one of our student-teacher conferences during the academic year, I asked Tika about the men in the FC seminar, and she described them as "obnoxious, loud, and unruly" (March, 2008). Similarly, in my journals, much of what I describe centered on the men of the classroom being active and seeking more attention while the women were silent. For example, in week 4, my classroom field notes pointed to the women as less able to participate during our discussion of Young's memoir "Going Home" in which the class talked about how people need to shift behavior, clothes, even ways of talking for different contexts; Ron described that he approached women differently at HSFU than he did at home, and I wanted the women to respond:

> I notice a distinct silence in the girls. I attempt to bring the girls in, specifically to respond to the claim that men have to approach women differently here [at HSFU]. No name calling. You have to say "Excuse me. Can I talk to you?" The girls seem less able to talk. (excerpt, Day 8, Sept. 18, 2007).

By the 12th week, I was still remarking on how students interacted in class, noting that the women always sat next to each other, typically in the front row while the men were along the back wall (Day 24, Nov. 15, 2007). Holland et al. (1998), invoking Bakhtin (1981), highlight instances of struggle and resistance in figured worlds as sites especially productive for articulations of identity because identities are often developed during sites of "personal crises and social recruitment" (p. 284). Tika began to stabilize a provisional identity in practice, one that cast an image of a good girl. A key characteristic of Tika's

identity in practice began with a struggle against the over-representation of male athletes in our program. As the semester progressed, Tika drew from gender as a resource in our seminar, which was most evident in her personal portfolio, a required reflective assignment that students submitted twice for formal evaluation—once at the end of fall semester and once at the end of spring semester (see Appendix D).

One artifact in Tika's portfolio provided an illustrative example of Tika's positionality in the FC seminar. She designed a photo collage and documented its

In this section I placed a picture of a small part of my support network of friends. In my paper, I talked about how important it was to have a support network here at school, and I wanted show more even if I couldn't put a picture with everyone. I also found a great picture of four women who attended the [redacted] back in the 50's and I fell in love with the picture. I thought this picture showed an exclusive group of women who decided to attend a school that didn't necessarily want them and they seemed to have bonded such other and are happy (in the picture anyway). Although I do not know their stories I would like to think they found comfort and strength in each other enough to finish college and go on to great things. I thought it would be a good way to show my own support system and also another person's support system.

Figure 2: Tika's Support Network

significance to her growth in the final portfolio (see Figure 2). On this page, Tika placed a photograph of four of her African-American girlfriends eating at a table[31]. In the middle of the page, she explicated the significance of this page as an artifact in her portfolio. The lower third of the page anchored the text with a second photo. At first

[31] I edited this scanned page image by graying out identifiable faces to ensure confidentiality.

glance, there were obvious differences between the upper and lower photo images. The women in the top photo wore sweatshirts emblazoned with the name of the university (HSFU) and jeans. The women in the bottom photo wore vintage dresses. The hairstyles were of a different time. The photo itself looked like those of my mother's teen years, the 1950s. My first response was that Tika was related to one of the women in the lower photo, but the text on the page clarified. The two groups of women were not related. In the annotation of the images, a required part of the assignment, Tika explained that she found this photo of women who attended HSFU in the 1950s and "fell in love with it." She made a clear connection between her own experiences at HSFU to the four women pictured in a photograph from "the 1950s."

Specifically, Tika explained that she designed the photo to show the importance of a "support network"—a theme she focused on in her portfolio. Like the narratives of support in the FC programmatic discourse that emphasized the significance of friendship and community, Tika echoed those voices in her explication. She wrote: "I placed a picture of a small part of my support network of friends. In my paper, I talked about how important it was to have your support network here at school, and I wanted to show mine." Importantly, Tika's support network was all women of color, like the photo of the four women in the 1950s. In the explication, Tika explained why she included the vintage photo:

> I thought this picture showed an exclusive group of women who decided to attend a school that didn't necessarily want them and they seemed to have found each other and are happy (in the picture anyway). Although I do not know their stories, I would like to think they found comfort and strength in each other enough to finish college and go on to great things. I thought it would be a great way to show my own support system. (excerpt Tika's portfolio)

Although Tika didn't know the women's stories in the vintage photo, she provided their story, drawing from knowledge she gained in an African-American history course that she took in the spring of 2008 as well as her own experience at HSFU. The story of the

women in this collage (both historical and contemporary) was one of exclusion. Tika's own story of development in her first year at HSFU was tied to the narrative she imagined about the historical women, drawn from multiple narratives at HSFU, including but not limited to those in the FC program. The image of women as strong but marginalized fit with the gender differences in the FC seminar.

Tika's portfolio developed imagery of women with an implied positionality for women of color as excluded. Gender performance in classrooms is not a new topic, and I interpreted Tika's gender identity performance as a response to FC as well as the larger HSFU community. Informed by Walkerdine's (1994) research which illustrates how gender in student-centered pedagogy inherently limited girls, I saw Tika's performance of gender as a response to the limitations of the role of women in our FC seminar. For example, in student-centered pedagogy, according to Walkerdine, girls become non-entities who learn to be nice, kind, and courteous, but not to be active engagers. Similarly, Finders (1996) explains that institutional classroom designs can position good girls as "spacers" who function as barriers to subdue the active boys (p. 125). Active boys learn to be disruptive while good girls learn to react to disruption and muffle it. The archetype of the good girl as a conceptual artifact in school settings is not new to literacy research (Bartlett, 2007; Ferguson, 2000; Finders, 1996; Leander, 2002; Sperling & Freedman, 1987; Wortham, 2004). Evident in my own field notes, the archetypes of bad boys (see Ferguson, 2000) and good girls emerged in the FC program consistently.

Tika's personal portfolio became a tool to improvise her role as a strong woman of color with a support network through cultural artifacts of our seminar, like the conceptual artifact of "reject" and the material artifacts of male student-athletes; she secured an identity in practice through *positionality*, deriving from "more durable social positions—such as gender, race, ethnicity, and class" (Holland et al., 1998 p. 271). More durable social positions are "marked" by enduring divisions and are "cultivated in every frame," according to Holland et al. (p. 271). Similarly, Leander (2002) writes that social

relations, which arise as part of conceptualizations of topics with great personal import, like race, gender, and class, “center around other people in other space-times” (p. 213). The good girl archetype emerged as conceptual cultural artifact with durability across HSFU contexts and was useful for Tika’s own positionality in our classroom. Certainly, a durable social position like gender is itself saturated with history and meaning, and that meaning extends over many figured worlds. For Tika the durable social position of being a woman became part of her practiced and increasingly stabilized identity. As a teacher, my continued worry with Tika was that she was not getting the support she needed. I worried that there was no community for her despite the FC program’s intention to foster student community for these recruited students.

Tika talked about the portfolio assignment as an endeavor of self-presentation that motivated her in ways I hadn’t anticipated during our interview:

> So that was a big motivation for me, to write about our classes and think about it. I really worked hard. That was a lot of fun. I mean I basically I didn’t want to leave that class because I really liked it you know and college transition all that. I think that helped me too because if I didn’t take seminar, I probably would have done really bad because I had like outlets to write and express myself on how I felt about certain things or how I felt I viewed myself. (lines 483 – 495).

Tika described the portfolio as giving her incentive, and she also described it as an “outlet to write and express” herself. While the objective of the portfolio assignment was to invite self-reflexivity so that students articulated the strategies that had worked and not worked in their first-year of college, Tika explained an element I hadn’t considered.

The portfolio assignment emerged as an invitation to construct an identity in relation to the FC program as well as the larger university communities. Tika’s work in other courses became part of the study of FC, like a course on African-American history that she referenced in her paper. At the end of spring term, she also described having a perspective of the past and moving to the present. She created a timeless and less rigidly bound sense of space in the FC seminar while working on the portfolio. Tika showed

fluidity across different university contexts to articulate a student identity in relation to past, present, and future orientations as well as beyond the seminar toward the larger social spheres of HSFU. Likewise, Tika described wanting to present herself as a strong woman in her final portfolio. The portfolio became a means for Tika to self-regulate and for artful self-presentation where she directed the activity. The portfolio, as a site of imaginative play, allowed Tika to make a world in which she traced her support network of strong women of color with the story she imagined for the women of color in the vintage photo. The portfolio self-authorship was informed by her historical practice with an eye toward her future. She was a historical actor in the sense of Gutiérrez' sociocritical literacy theory (2008) because she drew from a cultural history of African-American women at HSFU and re-designed it for her own needs in the FC portfolio. Tika's description pointed to a more robust concept of time-space contexts in her self-presentation, and identity and agency were important to Tika's authoring of a self in the portfolio. These features depicted multiplicity of engagements across time-space contexts, testing out of identities, and agency in relation to support in FC.

Mariah: Language Play

Another student, Mariah was a bi-racial student and a student-athlete. She grew up in the south playing competitive soccer with the support of her parents. She came from a two-parent home, and she was close to her mother and father. To be clear, Mariah's position as a soccer player seemed to carry a lower status than the highly visible sports of football, basketball, and wrestling in the FC seminar. So while Ben and Zach (above) drew on their student-athlete roles significantly, Mariah followed a different trajectory. While Mariah attended FC seminar regularly and did her assignments, she didn't always follow my guidelines. She was outspoken and gregarious, but on the formal assignments, sometimes she didn't comply with all the rules, unlike focal student Ben above.

Even though Mariah submitted all of her assignments and did relatively well on them, there were a few times when I was confused by Mariah's strategies, especially in the first semester. For example during the memoir assignment, she revised the content of her memoir, which focused on reading in her family. She talked about the importance of books to family relationship. I was encouraged by her content revision and her development of ideas. In my feedback to her second draft, for instance, I wrote, "the memoir is developing well. There are moments when you have used detail very well such as when you describe how your mom told you the story was all right but it needed to have punctuation." In the same feedback letter, I reminded Mariah to "double space the essay and follow correct format." During class, I briefly described format for MLA papers such as margin, heading, title, and page numbers as well as line spacing. Yet, throughout the semester, Mariah never fixed the format of her memoir. Submitted with her portfolio at the end of that semester, the final draft of her memoir remained single spaced without appropriate heading and title. On one level, this was significant because she didn't earn all of the points on that assignment as a result of poor format. Even though Mariah didn't get an "A" on the memoir, she explained in the portfolio that her writing had improved that semester. She wrote, "by looking at the evolution of my memoir, I think that can be seen." I didn't understand why Mariah would take the time to revise the content of the memoir but not make the small changes to format which would ensure her a better grade. After all, editing and format were worth about 10% of the memoir assessment. Why would Mariah do so? Was it just that she procrastinated and didn't have the time or energy to fix format errors? Was it that she didn't understand them?

Like Ben, above, who wanted to know how to play the game, Mariah forged a complex connection to the expectations of academic Discourse as illustrated in her decision to not follow appropriate format in the memoir. At one level, the FC seminar was designed precisely to address this type of behavior; it was important that students understand the "basics." Clearly, Mariah chose not to adhere to this format. That Mariah

resisted the formal format guidelines was also pertinent to how she presented her relationship to the language of the university during her first year of college. Her portfolio provided a strong example of how Mariah began playing with discourse and language, a performance that was juxtaposed against her choice to not format the memoir in the way I had required. One artifact in the portfolio included three pages, each a collage of words and phrases. In her annotation describing the collages as an artifact, a required part of the portfolio assignment, Mariah explained the purpose of the word play of these pages in a short paragraph. The first few sentences explained the words and phrases in relation to college:

> I put a collage of words together for the portfolio. When people go to college I think they end up coming home with a whole new vocabulary. Normal people go back home with a more intellectual vocabulary, but I went back home with more slang words in my vocabulary. (excerpt of Mariah's portfolio)

Mariah made a significant distinction about her language use as it related to her transition to college. Clearly, Mariah referenced language as saturated with ideological, cultural and historical meanings and shaped across contexts. Adapting to college, in Mariah's portfolio, included gaining new language, "an intellectual vocabulary." Like Ben's description of playing the game in the university, Mariah also implied the identities that coincide with the Discourses of college (Gee, 1996). For example, an intellectual vocabulary was the "norm" in adopting academic Discourses. Surprisingly, Mariah explained in her portfolio that unlike "normal people," she didn't learn an intellectual vocabulary during her first-year at HSFU. Rather, when she returned home for holiday visits, she did so with more slang words. Mariah signaled membership in a community of speakers, the Discourse of slang as it became meaningful to her role as a student at HSFU.

In the annotation of the collage, Mariah explained the significance of the slang vocabulary focusing on the phrases of the first page:

> Some of the words I already said before I came to HSFU, but when I got here, I started to use them more like: *Wench*, which I got from my grandmother, is a variation of the "B" word, so I use the word in place of the "B" word; I've used the word so much that its lost its meaning and now its just a random funny word. Another word I used before I came to HSFU but used more when I got here was *Oh Snap*. It's just a word that goes for every situation. It is a word that is quick and expressive. The last word, or should I say phrase, used is, *Good Stuff, Good Stuff*. I have no ideas where I got that phrase from, but I used it to show my agreement with something. (excerpt from Mariah's portfolio)

The first part of Mariah's collage connected language from her home to the new context at HSFU. She explained that "Wench" was from her grandmother. The next two phrases, "Oh Snap" and "Good Stuff, Good Stuff," didn't have a clear origin, but she used these words before HSFU. When I read Mariah's paragraph, I read it as if she was speaking to me; for instance, with the last phrase of "Good Stuff," she described it first as a word, and then wrote "or should I say phrase." To whom was she asking "or should I say phrase?" Mariah introduced "phrase" because the correct description of two words together was "phrase" rather than a word. As she asked "should I say phrase," she signaled a desire to follow the standard form. Within this paragraph itself, Mariah epitomized language as struggle and as a register for signaling membership, the very theme she identified in this artifact and described as significant to the transition to college. It was within something as small as a sentence, an utterance even, "should I say phrase?" According to Bakhtin (1981), internally persuasive discourses are "affirmed through assimilation, tightly interwoven with 'one's own word'" (p. 345). Mariah provided an acute example of internally persuasive discourses, which she elaborated in her analysis of the last pages of the collage.

Rather than focusing on the "intellectual vocabulary" of the university, Mariah juxtaposed "intellectual vocabulary" with the language of her friends:

> The other words in my collage I started to say once I got to HSFU. The word I *Bawlin* I got from Raquesha, and I have no idea what it means but my group of friends and I say it randomly at different points throughout the day. The word *Bun* and the phrase *Went On You* came from my friend Nicola. Nicola brought these words from Maryland with her, and the first time I heard them I was so

> confused, but Nicola cleared it all up for me by telling me the meanings: *Bun* – a cute guy, *Went on you* – To talk about someone really badly. The last phrase in my collage is something I started saying not too long ago. I have no idea where it came from, but I used it whenever I proclaim something to be good or a good idea: *That's new hotness right there*. I don't expect to still say these words in the next six months, but I think they are a big part of who I am right now. (excerpt from Mariah's portfolio)

The last sentences of Mariah's explication generated two ways of signaling. First, Mariah no longer struggled to differentiate between a word and a phrase. She referred to "Bun" as a word and "went on you" as a phrase. The shift in this sentence to adopt "word" and "phrase" as signifying the different categories of language showed a move toward comfort with the explication, the process of description and analysis as well as her comfort with more standard language. On one level, then, Mariah was showing sort of mid-paragraph that she was gaining some authority over the process: she identified the categories of the language, word and phrases, in order to analyze their meaning, gaining competence with this endeavor within this paragraph. That is, in her reflection she was analyzing, discerning a pattern, and coming to a conclusion. She was also exhibiting the process of negotiating language use practices in formal assignments. She was struggling to gain authority over many voices within this very paragraph.

On a second level, the examples she used to support her analysis of slang vocabulary illustrated that Mariah was signaling her membership in a group, her group of friends. Note that she identified the two friends, Raquesha and Nicola, as providing the slang vocabulary. Mariah, in effect, signaled her affiliation with them in her analysis of when she used the language and why she did. She explained that her "group of friends" say the words together, a chorus of slang vocabulary that reified their identity as friends. Again, Mariah, like Tika, illustrated the significance of identity affiliation for her transition to the university, outlined via the slang vocabulary. Relatedly, Gee's (1996) Discourse emphasizes how individuals, through social processes, interact with subsequent Secondary Discourses, or less familiar social networks and groups. Mariah pointed to the social process of her network of friends in the example of slang

vocabulary. She signaled an affinity for the Discourse of her peers rather than the "intellectual vocabulary" of academic Discourses.

What is more, Mariah had a playful tone regarding the slang vocabulary. First, she identified origins of the slang in person and place, when she could, like Nicola's slang from Maryland. She placed the slang historically, but she treated the slang vocabulary as more open. In the final sentence, she wrote, "I don't expect to still stay these words in the next month." The slang was important to Mariah at that moment in time, but she was aware that she would be open to new language, other Discourses in the rest of the year. According to Bakhtin, the process of weaving one's own word with others' discourse internally is creative and productive, not just assimilation: "The semantic structure of an internally persuasive discourse is not *finite*, it is open; in each of the new contexts that dialogize it, this discourse is able to reveal ever newer *ways to mean*" (p. 346; also see Holland et al., p. 182). Mariah's slang vocabulary became an example of how she negotiated internally persuasive discourse as open; it would dialogize in new contexts, and there would be new ways to mean. The language play in Mariah's portfolio signaled her interaction with the FC seminar and the larger FC program as interacting with the social and cultural calls but also anticipating new answers. She authored a self in adopting the slang vocabulary of her past and current peers.

To return to Mariah's memoir in the portfolio, it was important to juxtapose it with the language play in this portfolio artifact to see a process of identifying with academic Discourses as it was unfolding. She seemed to treat the FC seminar assignments as a relatively open invitation to academic Discourses. She didn't adopt outright the proper or standard format of an academic paper (e.g. following APA or MLA format), and yet she saw her progression in the memoir assignment as marking a kind of development. Like her language play, she saw that she was building on practices cumulatively. Similar to Ben (above), Mariah, then, presented a complex relationship with academic Discourses, and she saw the need for the "basics" of academic skill, but

she also illustrated an awareness of her past cultural practices as important. Gutiérrez (2008) writes that views of school-based literacies as "ahistorical and vertical forms of learning …are oriented toward weak literacies" (p. 149). And it seemed to me that contrary to some narratives in the FC program about academic support as "reduced to the appropriation of tools," Mariah exhibited the significance of social roles in affiliations with Discourse communities at HSFU. What is more, Mariah described her slang language as drawn from past cultural practices as it intermingled with the social Discourses of HSFU. According to Gutiérrez, "development is also concerned with the horizontal forms of expertise that develop within and across an individual's practices," a phenomenon Gutiérrez describes as "repertoires of practices" (p. 149). The portfolio, as a site of imaginative play, allowed Mariah to make a world in which she traced her language practices informed by historical practice with an eye toward her future, building a variety of language practices.

In the end, when I asked Mariah to explain what she got out of the program, she described it as a good program:

> I don't know. I liked everything. I don't know what I would change. I mean the program itself was really good, so I don't think I would change anything about that. It helped like in the sense that you gave us a lot of extra help we needed in writing assignments and things like that. And it did help to know all those people that were in the class. Because I mean it gave me that many more friends that I wouldn't have had. (lines 289 – 295)

Mariah identified two facets of the FC program as important: help with writing and the friendships. In her portfolio, not surprisingly, it was these two facets that interconnect. Language connected the social roles and friendships. Mariah's portfolio signaled membership in a group while connecting her historical past with the present. All the while, she treated the writing of the course as a place to practice writing for the university and to get help. Mariah moved toward the extension of repertoires of practice (Gutiérrez, 2008, p. 156). That extension is fostered by the ability to play with roles, to make a world

in which Mariah did not internalize “intellectual vocabulary;” rather she played with it in relation to a growing repertoire of language practices historically and across contexts.

Danni: Finding Myself at HSFU

Like the four focal students I have described thus far, Danni’s relationship to the FC program had much to do with her relationship to the larger HSFU campus. Similar to Tika and Mariah, Danni’s role in the FC seminar was related to durable social positioning, such as gender and culture. An African-American woman who had moved a lot during her childhood and adolescence, Danni came from a single-parent home. Many of her relatives had gone to college, and Danni made it clear that she was following in their footsteps. During our follow-up interview, for example she said, “college is a requirement in my family.” Like Tika and Mariah, Danni negotiated a sense of self through the affiliations she made with other students. They were an important source of support.

In the second semester, Danni, like Mariah, forged stronger affiliations with

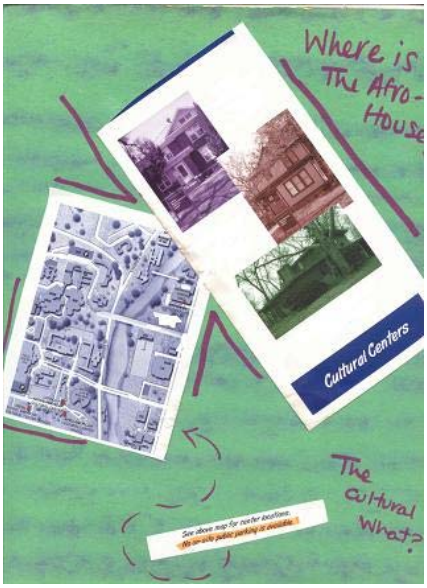

Figure 3: Danni's Support

students in the FC program, like Raquesha and Nicola and Mariah. However, she also became fairly involved with the Cultural Center at HSFU. In the final portfolio she submitted in the spring of 2008, she documented her affiliations with friends and the Cultural Center as important to her support. In fact, one page was dedicated to the Cultural Centers at HSFU and her affiliation with the African-American Cultural Center, one of three cultural houses on the campus (see Figure 3). To document her connection to the Cultural Center, she drew from official publications at HSFU about the cultural center. The pamphlet "Cultural Centers" anchored the page. It was the center, and it was directly flanked by a map of HSFU. Then the bottom quarter of the page provided text information: "See above map for Center Locations. Note no public parking is available." She highlighted the second line: no public parking available. Lines drawn in red connected to other textual information, written in the same red pen. A dashed line in red ink connected the map. On the right side of the page, two handwritten texts flanked the imagery: the top read "Where is the Afro-House?" The first handwritten text explained the focus of the page, showing the African-American cultural center on campus. The second handwritten text on the bottom read: "The Cultural What?" The two questions were dialogic. Providing a header, the first asked about the location of the Center. Danni answered the question with the map and connected the map to an explanation. However, the last question—"The Cultural What?"—was a response with which she became familiar. In the annotation of this page in her portfolio, Danni explained that in this collage she wanted to "show the lesser known part of the campus for those who might one day read and look over this portfolio (a plug for the cultural centers)." She emphasized the marginality of the cultural centers at HSFU.

Danni's collage about the cultural centers at first glance can be read simply as an introduction to the Cultural Centers and where to find them. However, Danni documented the cultural centers in her portfolio because she researched them as part of the "Making Connections Writing Project," the assignment described in the discussion of Zach

(above). Like Zach, Danni read *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian* by Sherman Alexie as part of a Literature Circle Group. Rather than focus on the issue of student-athletes, as Zach did, Danni focused on Junior's identity as a cultural minority at his high school, for Junior was the only Indian on the reservation to attend the predominately Euro-American high school. A theme developed through Junior in the novel is the support of underrepresented cultural minorities in education. Danni focused on this theme in her paper which was titled "Finding Myself in [the Heartland][32]." The paper focused on the issue of supporting non-dominant groups on campuses like HSFU. Specifically, Danni wrote in her paper, "As a black person on the HSFU campus, it was painfully obvious by the first week, that there were not a lot of people like myself on the campus."

Danni used personal experience at HSFU to establish the problem students of color face on predominately Euro-American campuses. She cited her friend, Nicola, who introduced Danni to the Cultural Centers. She also researched articles about cultural difference on campuses, and she developed an argument about the need for Cultural Centers to provide a sense of belonging "for those black students on predominantly white campuses" (excerpt of Danni's essay). Danni presented an argument similar to Mary Louise Pratt's (1991) position that safe houses on campuses provide necessary social spaces where groups can find trusting support as a reprieve from the contested relations in other spaces of the university, like a classroom. In a related sense, Canagarajah (1999) has also commended the benefits of campus programs as safe houses for non-dominant student groups to work through their transition to campus Discourses. However, what I found striking was that the FC program was not mentioned in Danni's paper. Wasn't the FC seminar designed to be a safe haven for students like Danni? Students who were from

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[32] I have replaced the name of the Midwestern state in the title of her essay to Heartland to ensure confidentiality.

non-dominant groups and whose rates of retention were far lower than Euro-American students at HSFU? I certainly hoped our FC seminar provided community support.

To answer this question, I turn to the beginning of the chapter when I quoted Danni as describing the admission letter to the FC program as not very clear about whether she was actually admitted to HSFU. In fact, she said, “I was just confused.” There were other issues that confused Danni, too. For example, she was surprised by the large representation of students of color in the FC program, an issue I introduced in our follow-up interview:

> A: What I think is funny is that they never say anything about diversity in letters to you about the FC program in the way they describe the program?
>
> D: That would have helped cause I was like man look at all the black people in this thing. Cause I had been here before and obviously there wasn’t a lot of black people here to begin with, so I’m expectin’ a lot a white people, and I was like, there sure are a lot of black people in this program. That was kinda confusin’. (lines 379 – 385)

Clearly in the interview Danni and I co-constructed the tone of the discussion. First, I positioned the program as separate from myself by using the third person plural pronoun “they” in the first three lines. Second, I presented the idea of “diversity” as not discussed openly with students in formal letters about the program sent to the students upon admission, and Danni confirmed the lack of information in the statement “that would have helped.” Danni explained that she didn’t expect to see many students of color (“black people”) in campus programs since in previous visits to HSFU, there were not “a lot of black people.” Rather, Danni expected “a lot of white people.” Similar to the admission letter, Danni described her first meeting of the program, at orientation in August, as confusing. Like the admission letter’s positioning of students as the reject kid, Danni pointed to the percentage of students of color as signifying in a meaningful way. She described it as “kinda confusin.” In a similar way, Rose (1989) describes his introduction to the university as marked by confusion, and much scholarship on

supporting academically underprepared students identifies feelings of anxiety, fear, and confusion as significant for some students from non-dominant groups at universities (Anzaldua, 1987; Canagarajah, 1998; Gutiérrez et al., 2009; Hrabowski, 2005; Lu, 1992; Pratt; 1991; Rose, 1989; Watson et al., 2002).

Danni admitted that the FC program was a space at HSFU where many students were underrepresented cultural minorities in our interview, but her paper didn't focus on FC as providing a safe haven like Cultural Centers. Instead, much of her paper focused on how difficult it was to find the African-American Cultural Center. Although Nicola had introduced Danni to the center, it seemed they had trouble finding it the first time. Even with their "trusty" map, wrote Danni, finding the house was not easy:

> After an hour of putting our heads together and standing at multiple bus stops looking like lost freshmen, we finally found the house, all the way behind the Athletic Learning Center, across from the law library, which couldn't be found either. (excerpt Danni's paper)

In the same paper, Danni explained that even once she began working at the Cultural Center, she still found it difficult to direct people to the location. What is more, she found it troubling that African-American athletes rarely knew about the center. She wrote, "I have also realized that black athletes don't even have a clue as to where to find the house, which is across from where they spend most of their time, the learning center" (excerpt in Danni's paper). The very fact that the Cultural Centers were difficult to find and less known by students at HSFU became a tension in Danni's paper. The Cultural Center was less visible on campus and yet it was a sense of support for her. The affiliation with the Cultural Center carried both a sense of support and the sense of being marginal, outside. The tension emerged in the collage documented in her portfolio. "Where's the Afro-House?" and "The Cultural What?" were two dialogically fused voices at HSFU and in Danni's experience. They emerged as internally persuasive discourses for Danni. Even though Danni didn't explore the FC program in her paper as a site of support among the many narratives about cultural difference at HSFU, she was able to draw from resources

through the required writing assignments in the FC seminar in order to interrogate the dialogical relationship across perspectives about cultural difference at HSFU.

Danni's perspective of the FC program illuminated its function in her development and support as different from her reflection on the Cultural Center as place of belonging. When I asked Danni what it felt like to start thinking about her second year at the university without FC, she compared it to being on a reality television show:

> It's kinda like being on a reality show. Don't you know how people, they're on a reality show and then the cameras no longer with them and you have to go back to your regular life. (lines 421 – 423)

I keyed on Danni's comparison because it was unexpected. I assumed that reality television represented bad qualities of FC. Was Danni comparing FC to MTV's *The Hills*, a show often described as overly scripted instead of representing realism (Hall, 2006)? Looking at her entire interview and her data, Danni's metaphor of reality television suggested a playful tone as opposed to a criticism.

Much has been published in the past decade regarding the merits of reality shows (Bratich, 2006; Hall, 2006 Jagodozinki, 2003), and likewise, researchers have examined viewers' responses to the television genre. Rose and Wood (2005) found it useful to frame viewers "as involved in a reflexive negotiation of personal authenticity" (p. 288) when they engage reality shows. Not unlike the participants of reality television, viewers undergo processes of negotiation including patterns of identification. Rose and Wood argue that on some level "reality shows may serve as utopian places where the viewer can engage in creative play space" (p. 295). As I thought about Danni's analogy, of comparing her first-year in FC to being on a reality show and her second year as the time when the cameras stop and "you have to go back to your regular life," I interpreted Danni's sense making as similar to Rose and Wood's study. She described FC in contrast with real life, drawing on reality television as an example to support her claim. Danni's example equated FC with the play space associated with viewers' perceptions of reality

shows. Danni's reference to reality television described a slightly different perspective of FC as a "safe haven" in the FC program. While the Cultural Center was the space where she described feeling a "sense of belonging" similar to the scholarship of Pratt (1991) and Canagarajah (1999, 2004), she described FC as a play space where students were set apart from the regular life of the HSFU campus. Danni exhibited in her engagement with the FC seminar assignments, like the portfolio and the paper, a spirited imagining of an identity affiliated with the Cultural Center. Her identity with the "Afro-House" responded to FC.

Recall in the introduction to the chapter that Danni described being in the FC program as "riding the short bus." Even though Danni did all of her work in the FC seminar, the perspective of FC program as positioning her as "deficient" remained a constant source of struggle for Danni. Engaging the FC program, that is, also meant engaging with the durable positionality of the "reject kid." Instead of internalizing the "risk" identity, however, Danni resisted it. She refused to embrace it. And she imagined a counter world as providing the sense of support counter to FC. Danni's feeling about the reject kid was how she figured the FC seminar. It was a conceptual artifact that became a site of struggle for her. It's that struggle which becomes a cultural resource in the program. It was represented as a larger conflict about cultural difference and identity affiliations in her paper "Finding Myself in HSFU."

Holland et al. (1998) recognize the deeply affecting presence figured worlds can have on positionality, but the relationship between situation and positionality is such that "people's behavior/experience/expression" is created jointly with the social situation (p. 189). A dialogic relationship means an evolving, ever-processing interaction in which "figuring" a world itself begins with fantasy, play, and improvisation. Holland et al. (1998) explain that "human life is inexplicable without our abilities to figure worlds, play at them, act them out, and then make them socially, culturally, and thus materially consequential" (p. 280). As such, "improvisation and serious play" are habits of figured

worlds through which people "acquire the key cultural means … [to] escape, or at least reduce the buffeting of whatever stimuli they encounter as they go through their days" (p. 280). For Danni, the Cultural Center emerged as important resources for her identity in practice in the first-year at HSFU, and it became the cultural resource through which she resisted the figured world of FC which positioned her as "rejected." Likewise, the portfolio became a "play world" where she crafted her identity with the cultural center, trying it on and improvising. This creative improvisation allowed her to negotiate or answer more durable social positions like gender, culture, and class, and she drew from these durable positions to craft an environment of support. The portfolio "play world" was the cumulative performance of creating a support network as a resource, a "symbolic bootstrapping," through which a different world could be envisioned. Danni was figuring a counter world that resisted the "reject kid" symbol. In short, the space of authoring became a site heightened with interrelations where Danni made a world for her own resourcefulness: she researched the Cultural Center, juxtaposing the theme of supporting non-dominant groups at HSFU to her own experience, and she fashioned an alternative group of support outside the FC program through the Cultural Center. This alternative world was a useful mediating tool for Danni to imagine an identity not bound by the figured world of the FC program.

In our follow-up interview, I asked her what advice she would give to in-coming FC students, and she emphasized the role of students in the program:

> I would just say to make an effort. Don't put everything down because we have a tendency, no matter what it is, to put stuff down before we do it and say well I don't know. Just make an effort cause I can see like doing the thing that we had the portfolio. That was fun cause I actually tried to do it, and I got into it. So if I hadn't tried than it would've been a horrible project, but I liked it. I would say just try. (lines 512 – 517)

Danni articulated the significance of her role in the FC seminar assignments. She highlighted how much she gained by being open to doing the portfolio project. For Danni, the portfolio project was integral to connecting with the FC program, and that

connection was mediated through her identification with the cultural center. Play emerged as significant to her engagement in the FC program, illustrated in her portfolio project. Likewise, in the portfolio play she forged a space of agency to resist the perspectives of others' discourses and to make new meaning in the context. Engagement through struggle will likely help her in future moments of conflict at HSFU.

Discussion: Lessons of Focal students

Because identities in practice forge in within a figured world, they are often created "under conditions of great struggle, social recruitment, and crises" as these sites make others' discourses most visible (Holland et al., p. 284). Ben, Zach, Tika, Mariah, and Danni seemed to use the FC seminar classroom as resources to answer to the conditions of struggle and recruitment figured in the FC program. Some students' trajectories in the program were marked by great identity struggle and others epitomized the dynamics of social recruitment. Even for students like Ben, who worked to fit smoothly in FC seminar, identity in practice emerged out of cumulative and sometimes contentious participation in the FC seminar. These students' literacy performances (Blackburn 2002) emerged as sites of identities in practice negotiated through the FC figured world. The five focal students in the FC program provided important implications for offering multi-faceted support in curricular and programmatic designs for students deemed underprepared for university study but recruited to benefit the university due to athletic talent or the educative benefit of diversity.

FC Community as Conflict

A fairly prevalent narrative of support flowing in HSFU's official texts and my conversations with administrators and teachers was the promise of FC community as a "safe haven" full of trusted "friendships" for students (see Chapter 4). Administrators and instructors alike agreed that the intention of the FC program was to foster a place in the larger HSFU community where students would feel welcome and comfortable. I certainly

wanted to foster trusting, caring relations in the seminar where student might gain a sense of belonging. However, that was not exactly what students described on the ground. The five focal students complicated the community narrative for me, offering evocative portraits of FC as a site full of conflict. They identified the FC seminar and the FC program as not sealed off from the HSFU community, as influences from the larger HSFU institution clearly emerged in the classroom dynamics. What is more, the five focal students described their classmates as a diverse group of people marked by differences in gender, social class, culture, and social memberships. For example, the sport a student played mattered in the classroom. Identity mattered. There were fault lines, some politically charged. As a result, this classroom "community" emerged as a complicated space of relations imbued with status, value, and privilege (Wenger, 1998). These dynamics underscored students' inevitable needs to understand and negotiate conflict as they move through first-year support programs and beyond.

Particularly in the cases of Zach, Tika, Mariah, and Danni, the environment of the FC program included significant identity conflict and group conflict, associated with social recruitments (as when Zach passively regulated his behavior so as to not be disciplined), gender differences (as when Tika imagined an exclusive support network of all women to counter the over-representation of men in the program) and cultural differences (as when Mariah and Danni constructed identities in FC assignments that draw from their cultural backgrounds and linked it to their current position at HSFU). Conflict emerged as an important facet of the development of these students as they connected to HSFU. Focal students like Tika, Mariah, and Danni spoke about feelings of confusion, fear, and anxiety that accompanied their participation in the FC program. They each struggled through these feelings with the help of different resources. Their largely successful efforts to find their way through these struggles and conflicts—attended by confusion, fear, anxiety, and feelings of exclusion—were among their notable first-year accomplishments. The importance of such struggle and conflict in entering academic

Discourse communities emerged as an important point of examination in this study (Anzaldua, 1987; Rose, 1989).

Naming conflict as a facet of community is not unique to this study (Anzaldua, 1987, Pratt, 1991; Holland et al., 1998; Leander, 2002; Lu, 1992; Wenger, 1998). For over thirty years, pioneers of "basic writing instruction" have debated approaches to conflict in classroom communities specifically designed to support students identified as academically underprepared students of non-dominant cultural and linguistic groups (Bartholomae, 1985; Bruffee, 1985; Harris, 1989; Lu, 1992; Pratt, 1991; Rose, 1989; Shaughnessy, 1978; Wiley, 2001). At the core of the debate is the conflict that develops during the negotiation between "Primary Discourses" and "Secondary Discourses" in institutional settings (Gee, 1996, p. 142). Anzaldua (1987) refers to such awareness as extremely beneficial, helping students recognize conflict and contradiction as fundamental to institutional contexts. Attempts to eliminate conflict, that is, lead students to "view the academy as a place free of contradictions" (Lu, 1992, p. 897). In fact, Lu calls for research that presents "oppositional and alternative accounts from a new generation of students, those who can speak about the successes and challenges of classrooms which recognize the positive uses of conflict and struggle and which teach the process of repositioning" (p. 910).

In the FC seminar, the focal students of this study offered accounts of academic success borne out of "conflict and struggle" and the "process of repositioning" (Lu, 1992, p. 910). Repositioning depended on the mutual participation of students in the FC seminar, especially moments of personal conflict. Community depended on complex interrelations among students. However, in FC, some administrators and instructors described prevalent narratives of "community-as-friendships" that depicted a static perspective of student identities and group affiliations. The narratives made little reference to divergent and contradictory understandings drawn from the diversity of persons in the FC program. While the official narrative in the FC program touted the

benefits of FC program as community, it didn't always characterize the significance of struggle and conflict, as an experiential part of the social support in the figured world of FC. Students, for instance, described FC community as rife with tensions that were reactions to durable positions like gender, race, class, and sexuality as well as the Discourses of risk, deficit, and being unfit. The FC program, that is, did not cohere with Pratt's (1991) notion of a "safe house"; rather the community was contentious, much more like her concept of a "contact zone." Students seemed to respond to the conflict with agility, a habit that should be identified as productive practice at repositioning in the face of contradiction and internal and/or group conflict. The story of success for these five focal students is one of repositioning self in the face of conflict and struggle.

Play: Creative Improvisation

The focal students showed that opportunities for creative improvisation were productive sites for negotiating difference and for buffeting conflict. Students consistently described FC as place where they could try out various roles, like being a good student who knew how to play the game, reflecting on one's position as a student-athlete, being a strong woman, and interacting with people from various contexts at HSFU. Based on their mutual participation in the FC program and their FC seminar assignments, students' spirited improvisation, like those evidenced in the portfolio artifacts above, allowed students to forge an identity in practice in the FC figured world, as defined by Holland et al. (1998).

Students characterized FC as offering a place for playful improvisation, often times describing themselves as trying out new roles and learning to negotiate issues of identity and group relations. Instructors, likewise, depicted some of the student social roles in the FC program as playful identity performances (see Chapter 6). From the student standpoint, the FC seminar was about playful performances. As Holland et al. explain, "arenas of play" foster social experimentation and negotiation of social

reproduction at the same time, promoting individuals' artful strategies for responding to durable labels such as "at-risk student." Play functioned as "symbolic bootstrapping" (Holland et al., p. 38), which was a type of semiotic mediation. For some of the focal students, creative improvisations contested limited roles of positionality in FC, like Danni's attempt to forge a self counter to the conceptual artifact of the FC program she had named the "reject kid" and "like riding the short bus." Like "training wheels of a symbolic sort" (Holland et al., p. 38), play helped her choose what aspects of a situation to ignore and which to address in FC. The FC seminar offered opportunities for mediation of self through play that helped some students negotiate the anxiety and conflicts of the larger HSFU institution and community. Creative improvisations emerged as significant to FC students' engagement.

Identities in Practice

In the end, the above lessons boiled down to the importance of constructing identity in the FC program, an agenda highlighted in the curricular designs of my section of FC. Even as some of the centripetal discourses in the FC program constructed FC students as fixed identities of underprepared students moving toward preparedness, the five focal students described and exhibited artful performances of identities in response to the FC seminar. A more expansive model of identity emerged in the student data as integral to their support. Holland et al.'s identity in practice emphasizes organizing self within the social calls of a figured world. The notion of identity in practice foregrounds agency and self-directed engagement with the help of cultural resources, cultural artifacts, and support of others. Brown and Renshaw (2006) draw from Bakhtin's chronotope (1981) to describe this sense of agency:

> The chronotope provides a way of viewing a student's participation in the classroom as becoming a situated, dynamic process constituted through the interaction of past experience, ongoing involvement, and yet-to-be-accomplished goals. … Viewed as relational and transformative, classroom contexts

> become creative spaces in which identities, both personal and collective, may be imagined, enacted, and contested. (p. 249)

The mediation of self through play produces imagined, enacted, and contested identities that over time and with the support of cultural resources become "relational and transformative."

There are two lessons from the five focal students which are informed by Holland et al.'s notion of identity in practice. First, despite the conflicted interrelations in the FC seminar, the five focal students arranged the classroom resources to direct their own actions. Second, identity in practice took time; according to Holland et al., it takes personal experience to organize self within the social calls of a figured world "with the aid of cultural resources and the behavioral prompting and verbal feedback of others" (p. 283). Blackburn's (2002) theory of literacy performances explains how reading and writing in the FC seminar aided the five students to respond to calls for organizing self in the FC program. Specifically, Blackburn's literacy performance frames the effects of literacy across locations and over time as stretched across innumerable literacy practices The cumulative effect of sequential literacy events situated within specific contexts condenses innumerable ideological practices into a repertoire of shared values constructed through reading and writing. She writes, "It is in the series of literacy performances that literacy has the potential both to reinforce and destabilize the values constructed through reading and writing" (p. 313). Formal reading and writing in the FC classroom established dynamic sites for organizing meaning as well as creating it. Framed in terms of Holland et al.'s figured worlds and Blackburn's literacy performance, the experiences of the five focal students of this study illustrate that a provisionally stable identity in practice evolved out of multiple occasions in their sequenced literacy performances for destabilizing the formidable cultural artifact of the "reject kid" in the FC program.

The lessons of agency in the cases of Ben, Zach, Tika, Mariah, and Danni involved identity in practice that was self-directed while simultaneously supported by

cultural resources, cultural artifacts, and the verbal feedback of others. In fact, the dialogism of discourses in the FC program outlined in Chapters 4 and 5 fostered a space for contesting, contradicting, and improvising against the "reject kid." Support of student success, evidenced in the five focal students, was a nuanced story of persistence and retention. As much as these students were successful at persisting into their second year, persistence also included experiences of personal conflict, group conflict, artful negotiations, and spirited improvisation in the FC seminar. Their experiences provide insights to programmatic designs of support. They pointed to features of the support program not often voiced in the macro-perspective of some administrators and official texts of HSFU. Instead, the students illustrated features that have implications for conceptualizing support:

- Negotiating academic Discourses involved marking social affiliations and memberships akin to Gee's "identity toolkit." Literacy practices were institutionally situated social practices full of power-relations and identities.
- Community included significant group conflict. Rather than being a safe haven, the student diversity was marked by fault lines and borderland differences.
- Play and creative improvisation emerged as a symbolic mediation for students' negotiation of the social relations of the FC program and HSFU.
- Constructing identities in practice and achieving local moments of agency became integral to the performance of literacy.

In the classroom data, the five focal students showed that support in the FC seminar evolved out of learning where students capably negotiated contradictory calls of the FC program. In many cases, students described the assignments requiring reflection and study of the self as important to their trajectory in FC seminar. For instance, all of the students described the portfolio as "fun," and all were excited by what they gained through the opportunity to connect themselves to the negotiation of a complex institutional environment at HSFU. Likewise, students also claimed that the FC seminar

(and the larger program) supported them as much as any one program could. As Zach explained:

> I'm not gonna say it made me like completely figure out college cause I don't think any class can do that. But I think seminar helped a lot in. I think it helped a lot with adapting to college. (lines 311 – 313)

The five focal students offered a perspective of their development in the FC program over the course of their first year that at times pushed against the macro-level narratives of support flowing in the university and programmatic discourse. The insights of the five focal students pointed to student engagement. These five focal students, in different but equally strategic ways, proactively co-constructed their experiences in the FC seminar in the negotiation of the HSFU context.

CONCLUSION

> I sense a dilemma for researchers when they study learner identities in classroom contexts. Though they are theoretically attuned to representing the resistance of students to unfavorable identities imposed on them, they don't have any evidence for such complex acts of negotiation in their corpi.
>
> -- Suresh Canagarajah *Subversive Identities, Pedagogical Safe Houses, and Critical Learning*

Overview

As I began this study, the research problem focused on how the context of Heartland State Flagship University situated the Freshman Connection program, and I intended to place particular emphasis on students' responses. I introduced Brandt's (2001) notion of "sponsors of literacy" (p. 18) to identify the fairly complex relationships that arise when individuals are sponsored to learn literacy by an institution. To carefully explore these relationships in FC, the theoretical frame of this study began with Bakhtin's (1981/1994) dialogism, which informed my study design and data analyses. Intent on locating different perspectives in the FC program, I set out to trace the voices flowing in the programmatic discourse of the academic year 2007 - 2008. In seeing the differences in administrators', instructors', and students' voices in FC, I was most excited by the theoretic implications for conceptualizing academic support programs. Rather than offering simply an illustration of dialogism (Bakhtin 1981), that is, this project was designed foremost to be conceptually generative. In the process of analysis, theoretic fine tuning has yielded to related, but more precise language to capture the complexity of support in Freshman Connection.

Informed by current models in sociocultural literacy theory, the theoretic concepts I review in this conclusion chapter came to complement the initial Bakhtinian framework, emerging as especially generative through the process of data analysis. First, *repertoires of practice* (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003) offers a fine-grained orientation toward academic support, given that it emphasizes an acquired dexterity in responding to different

institutional social practices and ways of knowing. The concept of repertoires of practice sees students importing a set of competencies gained through engagements in a variety of communities. Second, *borderland play* is a rich definition of community support as diverse and full of negotiation (Lam, 2006; The New London Group, 1996; Pratt, 1991) with an emphasis on creative improvisation as outlined in figured worlds (Holland et al., 1998). Both repertoires of practice and borderland play describe the complexity of student engagement in the FC support classroom and the literacies fostered and performed there. As a result, two final conceptual models refine the insights for pedagogy in the support classroom attuned to student engagement as borderland play. Informed in part by Gee's Big "D" Discourse, I explain the relevance of *Third Space* (Gutiérrez, 2008) as an iteration of student learning in a support classroom. The Third Space conceptualizes learners as following varied trajectories of development in connection with the classroom. I use Bakhtin to frame how to foster multiple learning trajectories at once. Bakhtin's *carnival* reaps principles of Third Space in the designs of support classroom, for carnival situates the activities of classroom in relation to the official university as patterned by creative improvisations. As a result, theoretic points in this chapter enact the conceptual fine tuning I have brought to bear in the research and serve to lay out the insights of the study.

Sponsors in Freshman Connection

As Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, and Associates (2005) suggest, every university cultivates both *espoused* and *enacted* missions. In the lived experiences of students, however, enacted missions are more significant, as they represent "unspoken but deeply held values and beliefs about students and their education" (Kuh et al., p. 27). The espoused mission of FC underscored the importance of offering academic and social support to FC students deemed talented but academically under-prepared, while the

everyday practices and informal talk in the program illustrated a set of implicit metaphors for describing support in the FC program:

- Support as Academic Enrichment & Enculturation
- Support as Structure
- Support as Friendship
- Support as Safe Haven

This study of Freshman Connection unsheathed some of the programmatic beliefs reflected in the discourse of administrators, instructors, and students. In these data, some metaphors gained a kind of centripetal force. Some participants emphasized the program's support as academic enrichment that fostered the development of transferable literacy skills, much like the aims of "remedial" courses designed to remedy skill deficits. Some administrator perspectives emphasized the metaphors of safe house and friendship for social support in FC, which implied a homogenous student community. Finally, and in particular, the metaphors for "at-risk" student contributed to coding FC students as a stereotype outlined in the centripetal Discourses of risk (Skinner, et al., 1998), including a Discourse of deficiency (Powell, 1997), and a Discourse of being unfit for the university (Gee, 2000a). A Bakhtinian read of these metaphors framed them as "a contradiction-ridden, tension-filled unity" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 272), providing students opportunities for making new meaning through the voices of others.

In highlighting programmatic tensions in this study, I set out to do exactly what the epigraph of this chapter says researchers fail to do. The study affixed the lived experiences of five focal students in the context of FC and illustrated their multiple and complex processes of identity construction, negotiation, and engagement. Focal students' lived experiences in FC pushed against some of the explicit metaphors in the administrator and instructor language, illustrating that academic development in the university included signaling memberships in a variety of institutional Discourses, each governed by a process of negotiation. One of the contributions of this research, then, is to

share the insights that are relevant for curricular and programmatic designs of academic support programs. Insights provided by this study included what might be gained by offering different metaphors for support. What if metaphors for supporting students deemed academically underprepared underscored students as proactively co-constructing learning in the programs designed to help them? While the story of retention is an important narrative in support designs, what gains can be made by conceptualizing support as fostering competencies in academic and cultural ways of knowing that build from processes of negotiation and deep engagement?

Academic Support as Repertoires of Practice

Brandt's (2001) notion of "sponsorship of literacy" (p. 18) draws attention to institutional practices as granting access to literacy in powerful ways. "Sponsors" refer to any "agents who enable, support, teach, and model literacy" (Brandt, p. 19). Likewise, sponsoring literacy in FC was particularly significant for students' transitions to Heartland State Flagship University. FC programmatic literate practices seemed to mediate students' negotiations of the larger institution. The FC programmatic designs and classroom curricula oriented students to HSFU through explicit narratives of support that had a bearing on how FC students engaged its institutional practices.

In this study, an examination of perspectives in FC program showed the prevalence of two overlapping metaphors of academic support: academic enrichment (a skills model that highlighted the appropriation of tools) and enculturation (a model of cultural negotiation). In FC discourse, academic support included an emphasis on literacy improvement, that is, the development of reading and writing practices. Some administrators and instructors also pointed to the need for social development outlined by an enculturation model, in which students became acclimated to a foreign culture. Perspectives of instructors and students, however, illustrated that while these two metaphors were pertinent, they didn't adequately address literacy practices as

institutional social practices, including differing access to roles and differing values that imbued academic Discourses. Particularly, students described the process as not as simple as being inculcated into shared norms, because the norms were rife with power relations and identities that they needed to negotiate with increased sophistication and savvy. What is more, students illustrated that the skills-model narrative of FC often cast the FC seminar as a site of "remediation" as opposed to a site of support, which was evidenced in teachers' descriptions of student behaviors in the seminar, like asking if FC seminar was the "dummy class" and students describing feeling like "reject kids." This remediation frame positioned some FC students as deficient, as opposed to the growth-oriented "talent development" model of current student development theories (Astin, 1985; Tinto, 1993). The skills model framed FC students as deficient and "remedial."

Sociocultural literacy scholars Mary Lea and Brian Street (2006) argue that approaches to teaching literacy for the university should be conceptualized through the overlapping of three perspectives:

- a study skills model,
- an academic socialization model, and
- an academic literacies model (p. 369).

The first two models correspond to the skills model and the enculturation model in FC. According to Lea and Street, a study skills model approaches literacy as an individual and cognitive skill. Writing and reading are neutral tools to be gained, and often remedial classes remedy the lack of skill (Lea & Street, 2006). The skills model is like the prevalent narrative of academic enrichment in the FC program. Many administrators and instructors identified the importance of reading, writing, speaking, and thinking skills in the FC program. Lea and Streets' second model, on the other hand, emphasizes academic socialization, and it focuses on learning the culture of the academy and inculcating students into the new culture. Academic socialization is like the enculturation narrative in the FC program (as, for instance, when some administrators and instructors described

students needing to understand the norms, behaviors, and values of HSFU). However, often times in the FC data, the norms, behaviors, and values of HSFU seemed to suggest a finite culture which at times referenced predominantly Euro-American, middle-class values. For example, some administrators and instructors pointed to the majority "white" culture as being a difficult environment for students from non-dominant groups. While the enculturation model works to introduce students to the shared norms and codes of cultural capital (Delpit, 1995), the model sometimes ignores institutional power relations and constructions of identity. In fact, Lea and Street critique the academic socialization model for ignoring issues of power and not contextualizing institutional practices (Lea and Street, 2006). Academic literacies, as a third model, approaches literacies as social practices situated within institutions that are imbued with power relations, historical values, and identities (Lea and Street, 2006). These academic literacies include gaining competence through reflexivity so individuals become aware of difference in social practices and ways to negotiate across them, including language awareness, attention to social meanings and identities in academic contexts (Lea & Street, 2006). In the FC program, however, there was not a clearly formed narrative that matched with Lea and Street's academic-literacies model.

The focal students, on the other hand, seemed able to describe academic support as the appropriation of tools or skills (academic enrichment) and perceiving academic Discourses as shared institutionalized social practices, which included an awareness of multiple social memberships, and contexts imbued by power relations and identities (Gee, 1996, 2000). Likewise, students illustrated that negotiating academic Discourses across the university involved an ability to shift roles for differing academic and social contexts, a shift often registered in language choices, behaviors, and other Discourse moves (Gee's Big D). For example, Ben described navigation of academic Discourses as a means of artfully managing to fit a variety of institutional expectations across classroom contexts. Likewise, Mariah described the need to signal membership in

multiple social groups of varying Discourses at the same time. The students illustrated an implicit narrative of support that conceptualized literacy learning at HSFU during their first year as an overlapping of the three models outlined by Lea and Street (2006).

In contrast, the pattern of descriptions of support in some administrators' and instructors' voices emphasized the appropriation of tools, suggesting a skills model of academic enrichment. Second, while a narrative of academic socialization endured in many administrators' talk, just some instructors explicitly named enculturation as a metaphor of support; in fact, some instructors referred to "assimilation." The socialization model didn't emerge as a shared and explicit metaphor of support in the programmatic designs. On the whole, administrator and instructor data showed more references to academic enrichment than enculturation, and fewer references to academic literacy development as related to shared institutionalized social practices, including social memberships in contexts imbued by power relations and identities.

Students' lived experiences illustrated a different metaphor of academic support that effectively highlighted literacy as institutional social practice, somewhat like Lea and Street's third model. Focal students, especially those whose histories with non-dominant cultural and linguistic practices did not fit with the norms of Euro-American, middle-class Discourses of the university, characterized academic support as gaining competencies by negotiating differing contexts both academic and social, a shift often registered in language choices and in behaviors (Gutiérrez, 2008; Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003; Prendergast, 2003; Young, 2006). Current sociocultural literacy theory is expanding definitions of literacy practices. For instance, based on cultural-historical activity theory, "repertoires of practice" (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003) emphasizes competencies individuals have as a result of historical and cultural shared practices that can be brought to bear in different settings. According to Gutiérrez and Rogoff, a central principle of repertoires of practice is helping students gain "dexterity" in discerning which practices of their repertoires to use in different institutional situations (p. 22). On

one level, the notion of repertoires of practice treats skills as learned strategies within particular contexts: during a lifespan, people will have performed multiple roles in different contexts where cultural ways of knowing and competencies will have been realized as a result of interactions with grouped affiliations, including engagements with communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), neighborhood traditions, and more durable cultural groups defined by traits such as religion, gender, ethnicity, and class.

These many experiences build varied cultural competencies and ways of knowing within an individual. In this study, focal students illustrated that invitations to reflect on past practices and current practices at the university fostered shifts in language use and behaviors that developed academic competencies for reading and writing in the university. For example, Mariah, like other students, illustrated a need to signal membership in many Discourses at once, gaining facility with language use, behavior, and signaling membership for differing purposes. Some instructors in this study, likewise, approached literacy as institutionally shaped and varied. So while instructors spoke to the need to help students maintain a standard of language use appropriate for academic conventions at HSFU, they also described literacy as more robust than correct skills. For example, Lisa's description of development in FC as "messier" than administrators think emphasized the complexity of engagement with HSFU sponsored through the FC program. Some instructors described wanting to foster the ability of students to make sense of who they were as people in relation to and the negotiation of HSFU. There are insights for the curricular designs of academic support programs based on how the five focal students discerned which Discourse practices to use under which circumstances at HSFU.

Drawing from repertoires of cultural practice, Gutiérrez (2008) outlines sociocritical literacy theory. Sociocritical literacy moves beyond appropriation of tools and instead emphasizes understanding how communities and institutions situate different

cultural practices, including literacy, and it involves the ability to discern when and how to use tools across different institutional practices. Gutiérrez, Hunter, & Arzubiaga (2009) call for "an historicizing literacy that privileges and is contingent upon students' sociohistorical lives, proximally and distally" (p. 23). Sociocritical literacy instruction invites student to engage intellectually demanding academic texts, taking up literacy as social practices bounded by specific circumstances with a particular emphasis on power relations and identities. The engagement of complex academic texts and Discourses mediates student reflexivity, offering students opportunities to reflect on repertoires of practice and analyze how they relate to the conventions of institutionally appropriate cultural ways of knowing. As students interact with academic texts as key artifacts in the figured worlds of academic contexts, they build an authoritative stance (Bakhtin, 1981) that leads to gaining facility with academic texts. The five focal students of this study repeatedly referenced the portfolio assignment of the FC seminar as inviting a reflexive practice of one's development in the first-year that fostered an ability to observe the difference in communities across the HSFU institution and to discern the commonalities and differences in the cultural and language tools of these communities.

The five focal students of this study also illustrated how attending to contradictions in their lived experience at HSFU led to the ability to reflect on patterns across the locally situated acts at HSFU. Specifically, students negotiated the contradiction in the FC program that defined students as "at promise" but also at great risk of failure. A feature of sociocritical literacy, according to Gutiérrez (2008), is "attention to contradictions in and between texts lived and studied, institutions and sociocultural practices, locally experienced and historically influenced" (p. 149). In the FC program, attention to programmatic contradictions seemed fruitful for critical inquiry. For instance, some instructors in this study described institutional incongruities as leading to important teaching moments. They saw the contradiction between the program's surveillance system and the call for teacher care as a useful opportunity to introduce

students to critical inquiry. They also spoke about the label of remediation in the FC seminar as an important critical point of entry to explore with FC students. Students also responded to institutional incongruities, some arguing that the "risk" label belied their status as good students. Other students identified the passive role of student in the institutional practice of surveillance in FC, and imagined more active roles for themselves, as in Zach's paper about the stresses of being a student athlete. Zach directed his inquiry into the pressures of student-athletes at HSFU instead of assimilating the victim narratives prevalent in the administrative and instructor language about student athletes. Also, Danni examined the Cultural Centers at HSFU as a support network but also as a point of contradiction in the institution. Danni seemed to ask, why were these cultural centers so hard to find? Gutiérrez calls for opportunities for negotiating contradiction as useful for revealing "how the development of critical social thought—in which they [students] individually and collectively reconceived their past, present and future—serves as a potent mediator in academic and everyday activity" (p. 160). However, support programs must be aware of their contradictions and double binds in order to effectively draw on these contradictions for productive inquiry.

Community as Borderland Play Space

Another prevalent narrative in the data was Community as social support in FC. Perspectives of some administrators described community as offering students friendship and a safe haven. Similar to academic support above, the community as support narrative emerged as the overlapping of these two perspectives, especially apparent in the administrative language. Administrators from the Office of the Provost and the Center for Academic Advising emphasized friendship and providing a safe haven. Instructors and students spoke to these overlapping perspectives too, but they also described more complex interrelationships. In fact, students like Tika, Mariah, and Danni illustrated that the FC program was not their notion of a safe haven (see Chapter 6). Instead, some focal

students seemed to use the environment as a site for playful improvisation and trying out of identities. Instructors, too, pointed to the FC program as a place of improvisation and play. Dylan thought of it as a place to “mess up” and Stephanie thought of it as a place where students tried out identities and took risks.

Borderland Communities

Studies informed by contemporary student development theory have documented the positive effects of peer-to-peer social interaction in colleges, showing that peer interactions both in and outside of class positively correlate to academic skill development (Astin, 1985; Watson & Kuh, 1996; Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Nora, and Terenzini, 1999). Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) explain that peer interactions are integral to student persistence on campuses. Similarly, Tinto’s (1993) model of leaving college highlights the significance of peer interaction in the support of university students. In particular, Tinto argues that for first-year students, social membership is of the utmost importance for negotiating the university; indeed, social and intellectual integration are equally important to their persistence on a campus. However, Tinto warns that the mere presence of interaction between peers does not insure that “integration occurs” for students (p. 136). Rather, social membership depends on the character of the interaction and whether or not an individual perceives such interactions to be rewarding or not rewarding (Tinto, p. 136 - 137). In FC, narratives of community focused on the intrinsic benefits of peer-to-peer learning, a design in the FC program described frequently by the Program Director and the Program Coordinator. Yet, the instructors and focal students didn’t describe the character of the FC community as a rewarding “membership” for all students. As Tinto indicates, the benefit of working with peers was more complicated than correlations between peer-to-peer contact and academic and social development might suggest. While the FC program held the potential to foster social support for students, data suggested that simply placing the FC students in classrooms

would not develop into rewarding relationships. Rather, instructors and students cultivated a caring environment based on difference and negotiating difference. The "friendship" model turned out to have less utility in characterizing the support students found in FC than did a borderland model.

In this study, some instructors and students in FC offered a more complex metaphor of community as involving conflict and difference in the service of constructing new meaning. Mary Louise Pratt (1991) and Min Zhan Lu (1992) provide thoughtful critiques of cooperation in university classroom communities. Both authors explore conflict and negotiation in the process of learning (see also Harris, 2001 and Wiley, 2001). Even scholarship in learning theory has looked at community conflict; Wenger (1998) emphasizes that communities of practice are rarely peaceful and harmonious circles of trusting friendships. Rather, communities of practice are full of diversity. He writes:

> Most situations that involve sustained interpersonal engagement generate their fair share of tensions and conflicts. In some communities of practice, conflict and misery can even constitute the core characteristic of a shared practice, as they do in dysfunctional families. A community of practice is neither a haven of togetherness nor an island of intimacy insulated from political and social relations. (p. 77)

Communities of practice, according to Wenger, are not to be understood as havens of togetherness. Heterogeneity has the potential for productive interrelating. The character of FC, in fact, was full of diversity and differences. The friendship conceptualization of community in FC effectively reduces the story of community in the FC program to that of an island of togetherness, a simple story of likeness between "at-risk" students. On the contrary, while the focal students may have forged friendships, the strengths of community emerged in their careful and artful negotiations across differences.

During interviews in this study, many administrators discussed the multicultural character of the classroom as a benefit of the program. However, the narrative of multiculturalism was rarely developed beyond describing the presence of students from

non-dominant groups. The students and instructors pointed to the vast differences in the FC community that emerged as fruitful opportunities for gaining competencies by learning to interact with different social groups even when there were moments of conflict. Educators MacDonald and Bernardo (2005) argue that an expansive definition of "diversity" is a first step in delimiting the competencies gained in multicultural classrooms. A narrow concept of diversity posits a multiculturalism-by-numbers pursuit, by counting the presence of difference in terms of "superficial features of skin tone, gender and so forth" (p. 3). MacDonald and Bernardo write:

> Reframing diversity as a concept, then, reveals that the point is not just what color or gender a person is; more important are the *dynamics* which play out in regard to people's *perceptions* of others and people's resulting *value judgments* in regard to these perceptions of difference. (p. 3).

A fluid concept of diversity highlights the negotiation of differences in the effort to build a toolkit of interrelating from which to draw in future social interactions. It's the dexterity Gutiérrez and Rogoff (2003) celebrate in their definition of "repertoires of practice." In FC, community was more than friendship. It was a borderland of negotiation (Anzaldua, 1987). The productive facet of borderland sites is that culture is not reduced to stable, essentialized identities like female, male, African-American, and Latino. In this approach, pedagogy centers cultural and linguistic negotiation in the classroom, an approach that responds well to the burgeoning interactions of culturally and linguistically diverse groups on global and local scales (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, & Alvarez, 2001; Lam, 2006; New London Group, 1996; Pratt, 1991). Borderland interaction offers great potential in the classrooms, like my section of FC seminar, where diverse students meet and interrelate from fairly disparate positions. It centers multiplicity and processes of interaction in hybridity through the teaching of literacy (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, & Alvarez, 2001). Points of cultural contact, often fraught with confusion and tension, are emphasized as part of the pedagogic content. There were quite a few data examples in this study in which teachers and students emphasized negotiations, like gender

differences in the classroom identities, sexual identities, the roles and statuses of student-athletes and non student-athletes. Some students came from upper-middle class environments, others from lower socio-economic communities. Some students took up their religious identities while others did not. The FC seminar was full of moments where students interacted across diverse cultural fields and collaboratively constructed strategies for their negotiation. As a result, the concept of "borderland" captures the significance of "ways of acting and participating in diverse social groups and the heterogeneous sets of cultural knowledge, skills, and competence that are acquired in the process" (Lam, 2006, p. 217). According to Lam (2006), in an increasingly global world where ways of participation flow across geographic, linguistic, cultural, and class-based boundaries, a fluid concept of culture is necessary. The importance is how people "develop repertoires of skills and competencies through their engagement in heterogeneous communities" (Lam, 2006, p. 217). There is an educative benefit of community in FC only if the pedagogic content of the seminar emphasizes and exploits participation as a borderland of continual negotiation.

The story of student success in FC features a borderland story, articulating how ways of acting and participating in diverse social groups develop cultural knowledge, skills, and competence (Gutiérrez & Larson, 2005; Lam, 2006). What are the implications for thinking of support programs as borderland communities? How can we measure cultural knowledge gain and competence in borderland support programs? What indices best illustrate the benefits of developing repertoires of cultural competencies in diverse university settings? Insights of this study were particularly generative for considering definitions of community and diversity in the academic support classroom.

Play: Testing Identities

The "borderland" metaphor also suggests the limitations of the "safe house" (Pratt, 1991) metaphor of FC that surfaced in these data. Pratt (1991) defines safe houses

as “social and intellectual spaces where groups can constitute themselves as horizontal, homogenous, sovereign communities with high degrees of trust, shared understandings, and temporary protection” (p. 121). Canagarajah (2004) extends “safe house” by equating it with school institutional underlife, such as the hidden underlife of the classroom (Goffman, 1961) or sites deemed unofficial, illustrating how students’ management of identity conflicts emerges in moments of agency (p. 120).While I think the term “safe house” is a misnomer for the agency Canagarajah identifies in student underlife, I agree with her emphasis on playful identity construction as significant for learners of academic literacy:

> In a more direct sense, the safe ways of communicating opposition, practicing suppressed discourses, and adopting controversial identities helps develop strategies of footing. *Students are testing out safe and strategic ways of constructing identities* desirable to themselves without getting penalized by the academy. These strategies help in academic literacies where students face similar struggles of expressing critical opinions without antagonizing their academic audience. (p.133, emphasis mine).

In my study, similarly, testing out strategic ways of constructing identities proved to be extremely significant in focal students’ literacy performances. In Chapter 6, students illustrated the opportunities of playful improvisation as artful negotiation of difference and conflict that seemed to scaffold their negotiation at HSFU. Also, in Chapter 5, Stephanie’s example of Theresa, a woman who chose to come out as a lesbian during an FC seminar activity, exhibited testing out strategic ways for constructing identities.

While I see that FC, as a somewhat affixed program on the HSFU campus, could be defined as an instance of institutional underlife (Goffman, 1961), a perception of “safe house” limits student groups to categories of like-minded affiliations that oppose dominant Discourses. For example, some of administrators’ macro-level narratives of support cast FC students as all similarly “at-risk” and in need of support. However, the five focal students and the instructors spoke about how FC students occupied a borderland of different affiliations and identities. The five focal students chose different

strategies of negotiating dominant Discourses, and they didn't all align as a singular group affiliation. The FC seminar was full of varied affiliations and student alignments. Different sports had different status and values. Tika would probably describe Ben and Zach as part of the problem in FC, as male student-athletes. Students did not simply band together because they were in this program, and the task of fostering social support was not founded on the similarities of the FC students. Fostering support was, rather, to see the environment as a play space where students followed a variety of trajectories.

So what's the difference between a safe house and a play space? The difference starts with play as mediation. Mediational tools are central to Vygotsky's (1978) theory of development. Apprenticeship models of learning draw from Vygotsky's social and cultural theories of psychological development (Holland, et al., 1998; Lave & Wenger, 1991). A Vygotsky zone of proximal development (sometimes called "zo-ped") highlights the role of expert/mentor in scaffolding the learning of a novice in an appropriate space of interaction with cultural tools as a mediational means (see Gutiérrez, 2008; Holland et al., 1998). These cultural tools foster abstract thought while individuals engage in activities. Mediation includes symbol systems, social activity, and objects in the process of abstract thinking (Holland et al., 1998; Vygotsky, 1978). In *Mind in Society*, Vygotsky (1978) emphasizes play as a tool of mediation that facilitates abstract thought where "action is subordinated to meaning" (p. 101). Play is not a place or a community. It is an endeavor. Imagination is integral to play. According to Vygotsky, "it is the essence of play that a new relation is created … between situations in thought and real situations" (p. 104). Holland et al. build from Vygotsky's concept of play, illustrating the ways in which adults continue to participate in play worlds, imagining alternative worlds, which they describe as "our ability to fantasize, to envision other worlds, to create other worlds by recombining elements from those we know" (p. 237). What is more, figured worlds conceptualize play in relation to everyday interactions. Drawing from Bakhtin's dialogism, Holland et al. (1998) argue that "in our everyday

lives we encounter and enter into many specialized practices, and these practices exist in various degrees of interrelation. Activity is never quite single, never quite pure. It is dialogized, figured against other possible positions, other possible worlds" (p. 238). Figured worlds are characterized by dialogism.

The five focal students' data illustrated moments of fantasizing and imagining that contributed to authoring a self in the FC program that connected to the larger HSFU community. The opportunities to create a fantasy identity or role in the FC environment related to moments of negotiation in the larger HSFU community. Students' playful improvisation was mediational. It seemed to be what marked their success because they were able to try out roles like being a disciplined wrestler, a good student, a strong woman, and an advocate for the Cultural Center, all of which emerged as significant sense making. Students used these playful improvisations as training wheels for their transition into HSFU. In our follow-up interviews, the students spoke of how processes of identity construction in the temporary space of the FC program supported their increased confidence and self-advocacy. Agency emerged through play (Holland et al. 1998).

Bakhtin's notion of "carnival" (1994) animates how creative improvising, and figuring counter worlds can emerge as sites for agency in figured worlds (Holland et al. 1998). According to Bakhtin (1994), carnival "belongs to the borderline between art and life. In reality it is life itself, but shaped according to a certain pattern of play" (p. 198). Including comic language, comic imagery, parody, and critique, actions of carnival are set up alongside the official sphere, on the borderland where a system of meaning emerges in the contact between the two. Carnival is a heightened interaction between official spheres and unofficial spheres—in the constant tug between centripetal and centrifugal—except that the interaction is patterned by play. In carnival, spheres of social practice, like languages, are characterized by dialogism. Moments of parodic spectacle emerge in relationship with the official order of institutional social practices.

In this study, the five focal students performed identities that responded to the official sphere of HSFU in constant company. Sometimes they were countering the archetype of the “reject kid” in the figured world; sometimes they were countering the passive role of student-athlete who conforms to the regulatory structures of support. Some students made a critique of the invisibility of the Cultural Centers on the HSFU campus. Sometimes, they emphasized how the larger HSFU community excluded strong African-American women. The experiences of the five focal students illustrated that the figured world of FC was interrelated in various ways and to various degrees with social practices of other figured worlds in the larger sphere of HSFU. The FC program was not isolated from these social practices. It was conjoined to them. To consider FC to be a “safe house” denied the potential for interaction in the FC seminar to build upon these HSFU figured worlds in order to recombine them and create new worlds in agentive ways. The five focal students, in fact, illustrated their ties to a variety of figured worlds at HSFU that they recombined in creative new worlds.

Clearly, play was important activity in the FC program evidenced in the focal students’ and instructors’ descriptions of the FC seminar. Some assignments that fostered play invited students to reflect on their own experience and make connections with HSFU, like the portfolio assignment. In particular, students seemed to imagine worlds by recombining elements from those they knew at HSFU and in the past. This imaginative play allowed students to try out identities, like Tika’s vintage photo of 1950s women as a support network, Mariah’s language play, or Zach’s wrestling documentary. As a result, the FC seminar offered students the space to author identities constructed in and through the words of others (Holland et al., 1998). The FC seminar and the sequence of assignments functioned as symbolic bootstrapping, supporting students’ understandings of academic work at HSFU. That is, the FC seminar was a mediational tool for students to try out identities related to HSFU. Its role in the first year as a separate program for targeted students created a unique space of interaction.

In the end, borderland play seemed to capture the utility of the skillful authorship exhibited by focal students. It allowed for figuring alternative worlds that assisted students' negotiations of the larger university community through strategic ways of constructing identities. The notion of borderland play has implications for how instructors and administrators might conceptualize learning in support programs designed to meet the needs of students deemed to be academically underprepared.

Learning in the Third Space

By listening to the five focal students, I learned that engagement materialized in the support classroom when students took up opportunities to construct playful identities that negotiated the multiple figured worlds at HSFU, including Freshman Connection. Students illustrated that a deep engagement in the assignments emerged in a classroom space where communities and identities played an integral role in shaping the interaction. Borderland play space emphasizes both the social phenomenon of development and processes of individual meaning making, which resonates with the notion of Third Space (Gutiérrez, 2008).

A theory of Third Space learning emphasizes principles for fostering individuals' deep engagement that Engeström (2001) defines as "expansive learning" (p. 137). Gutiérrez (2008) defines expansive learning in Third Space as both "vertical" and "horizontal" engagement. First, vertical learning emphasizes a linear, progressive accumulation of knowledge (Engeström, 2001; Gutiérrez & Larson, 2007). Vertical learning is often described in binaries, like the move from immature to mature, and it focuses on the "appropriation of tools" as neutral skills (Gutiérrez and Larson, p. 70). For example, the skills-model approach (Lea & Street, 2006) in "remedial" classrooms treats literacy instruction as simple delivery of Standard English skills. According to Gutiérrez (2008), vertical learning promotes weak levels of engagement, for the learner is treated like an empty vessel in which learning is "reduced to the appropriation of tools that help

enhance personal growth, develop voice, or build skills" (p. 156), as in the banking concept of teaching (Freire, 1970). While the accumulation of knowledge and the appropriation of competencies are important, the primary orientation of learning in Third Space emphasizes horizontal engagement in which the development of vertical skills is an important byproduct.

Horizontal learning in Third Space is a different orientation toward the learner, starting with conceptualizing individuals as people with cultural histories whose experiences with language use, Discourses, cultural ways of knowing, and shared practices come to bear on opportunities for accumulating new competencies. In horizontal engagements, learners move across temporal, historical, and cultural spaces as "historical actors" (Vadeboncoeur, Hirst, & Kostogriz, 2006, p.167) who historicize their pasts as a resource for their present and future actions as learners. Brown and Renshaw (2006), for instance, characterize horizontal student participation in the classroom as "a situated, dynamic process constituted through the interaction of past experience, ongoing involvement, and yet-to-be-accomplished goals" (p. 249). Third Space builds upon "repertoires of practice" (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003), emphasizing connections across temporal, historical and cultural spaces. In the Third Space classroom, topics of inquiry are very real to learners' histories, connected to the material world of cultural practice with deep roots into their communities and backgrounds (Gutiérrez, 2008). For instance, Gutiérrez has written about the Migrant Student Leadership Institute at University of California Los Angeles as an example of Third Space in a support program. Engagement in the MLSI support program draws from the values and issues facing communities of migrant farm laborers, and the stories of their communities become avenues for moving forward in the university academic context. Through assignments, like a testimonio (Denzin, 2003), students in the MSLI engage in vertical and horizontal learning in the Third Space.

To be clear, like Lea and Street's (2006) definition of literacy support as optimally conceptualized through the overlapping of three models (skills, socialization, and academic-literacies), Third Space learning involves the overlap of vertical and horizontal learning. What is more, insights of Third Space include new conceptions of the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). According to Gutiérrez (2008), in the Third Space, the zone of proximal development is not a predetermined space scaffolded by an expert for a novice. Instead, Third Space re-imagines the zone of proximal development by de-emphasizing the mentor-scaffolding-novice relationship. Rather than visualizing the zo-ped with an emphasis on the learner's trajectory of development from less expertise to increased expertise, the Third Space emphasizes the bi-directional relationship between the learner, as a person with a history, and the expert within the zone of proximal development. Scaffolding is not the best metaphor for the zo-ped in the Third Space, according to Gutiérrez. Third Space is a dialogic relationship between learners and instructors. It's important that an individual learner collaboratively direct the learning in the zo-ped with the expert. While some narratives of support in FC described bridging the distance between FC students and HSFU's cultural ways of knowing, a Third Space orientation invites a bi-directional relationship. The Third Space extends the zone of proximal development into a hybrid relationship, like Bakhtin's dialogism, in which both the student and the instructor learn in dialogue. The lessons of Third Space start with re-conceptualizing the zone of proximal development in sites of learning.

In this study, Third Space theory illuminated insights of the focal students' data in connection with the perspectives of administrators and instructors in FC. For example, some administrator and instructor data showed the propensity of centripetal narratives of support to define learning in terms of a linear developmental trajectory. The narratives of academic enrichment as a skills-model characterized vertical learning. Similarly, the centripetal narratives of support as structure in FC included images of students being regulated by a surveillance system characterized by vertical engagement. These

narratives positioned students as passive recipients in the academic support classroom, much like Freire's (1970) banking concept of learning.

The five focal students, on the contrary, illustrated that an active participation in directing some of the inquiry in the FC seminar assignments fostered horizontal engagement, given that students were invited to reflect on and incorporate into the inquiry a sense of themselves as historical actors with cultural practices who were participating in multiple Discourses at HSFU. In these data, a collection of five different, though interrelated, zo-peds seemed to emerge for the focal students. As students were invited to examine the HSFU community, its institutional practices, its Discourses, and its varied power relations by drawing on their own cultural pasts, each followed different and yet interrelated trajectories. Students began with a memoir, and by the end of the year, they were drawing from their personal experience to research and examine an institutional problem at HSFU. Each assignment catered to more complex calls and means of responding. The students chose issues pertinent to their personal situatedness at HSFU. The progression of the formal assignments in my FC seminar seemed to foster these engagements, like a chain of development in which early assignments focused on reflection (like a memoir) while the latter assignments focused on more complex academic texts and analyses.

Importantly, the dynamics of Third Space are mediated discursively. Gee's big "D" Discourse (1996/2000a/2000b) reminds us that in environments of learning, constructing meaning is mediated through Discourses. Gee writes "social languages are distinctive in that they are used to enact, recognize, and negotiate different socially situated activities" (2000b, p. 413). However, it's not only language or specific ways with words that signal situated action within Discourses. For Gee, "specific ways with words are fully integrated with specific ways of thinking, believing, valuing, acting, interacting, and, often, ways of coordinating and being coordinated by other semiotic systems, other people, various objects, tools, and settings" (p. 413). Discourse practices include feeling,

believing, acting, and interacting with people, tools, and settings. So when we talk about expansive, horizontal engagement in the Third Space, we are talking about indexing feelings, beliefs, actions, and interactions with people, tools, and settings in Discourses. What one values, believes, and feels stems from historical and cultural pasts and is situated within the current socio-cultural "semiotic system." The engagement is embodied, emotional, political, and intellectual.

As a result, I want to emphasize that the literacy performances of the five focal students emerged as embodied and emotional, political and intellectual, as in when Danni examined the marginal status of Cultural Centers on the HSFU campus and called for making them visible on campus, or when Tika emphasized the historical exclusion of women of color on the HSFU campus to examine her own current support network in the community. These students explored issues with personal relevance. Some emotional conflicts incited students' learning, like countering prevalent narratives in the FC program that positioned students as "at-risk." Students in FC illustrated affectively charged engagements as productive in the Third Space. Likewise, I would be remiss if I ignored the pleasure these students described in doing some of the formal assignments. In the follow-up interviews, students spoke about "fun" activities as significant to support in the FC seminar and their transition to HSFU. All five focal students described some of the FC seminar assignments as fun and rewarding, like the portfolio, but they also spoke about a spirit of confidence and self-advocacy. In many ways, these students were pointing me to see with more clarity how deep engagement emerged through embodied and emotional literacy performances. In the FC program, acquisition of competencies and skills (vertical learning) occurred through mediational tools of Discourses with beliefs, values, and statuses (horizontal learning). The acquisition of vertical skills, that is, emerged as embodied, emotional, and deeply rooted in the students' cultural pasts.

To foster such deep engagement in literacy classrooms, Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, Alvarez, and Chiu (1999) suggest creating assignments of hybridity where

students draw from literate forms of students' pasts combined with conventions of academic texts. In the FC seminar, the portfolio offered multiples tools of inquiry that fostered each student's ability to draw from home communities in the formal academic texts of the portfolio. As an assignment, it seemed to offer opportunities for parody, critique, and self-authorship; its inquiry was open to creative improvisation. Play seemed integral to constructing a Third Space in the FC seminar where the literacy performances were constructions of identities through imagined and dialogic counter worlds.

Sociocultural theory draws from Bakhtin's concepts of dialogism and chronotope in defining "Third Space" theory (see Brown & Renshaw, 2006; Vadeboncoeur, et al. 2006). Relatedly, imagining the support classroom as borderland play space emphasizes the potential role of support programs as mediating between official spheres of the institution and borderland spheres, much like Bakhtin's carnival (1994). What if we imagined the support classroom like carnival, as embodied moments of play, parody, and critique shared by diverse peoples in a particular temporal space? Carnival conceptualizes the support classroom as a collection of many zo-peds where students discursively mediate meaning through language, ways of thinking, believing, and valuing as well as situating identities. What is more, in many support programs, students come from vastly different backgrounds, and inquiry deeply rooted in their repertoires of practice must accommodate multiplicity and pluralism. As such, an instructor might cultivate a collective grouping of multiple zo-peds. I offer the metaphor of borderland play space precisely because it resonates with the diversity of communities observed in the FC program.

Fecho and Botzakis (2007) make the case for "carnival" classrooms as spaces of engagement that endorse play, parody, and critique as useful mediational tools. In the classroom, carnival emerges through evolutionary and multiple "Carnival-inducing events, like inquiry discussions, group work that expect analysis and synthesis, and student initiated readings and projects, which are introduced slowly and then occur more

frequently" (p. 554). Like Gutiérrez' description of Third Space, Fecho and Botzakis emphasize ways of cultivating a classroom environment that invites deep engagements through social interaction. Specifically, a support program can invite the imagining of counter worlds and play worlds in relation to mediating transitions to university Discourses. Play worlds emerge as a collective of zones of proximal development in the support classroom, a borderland play space.

Catering to the development and accumulation of academic literacies, carnival literacy classrooms double as "playgrounds, workplaces, and intellectual spaces of the future" (Fecho & Botzakis, p. 556). In FC seminar, playful self authorship in the portfolio documented students' cumulative literacy performances that historicized themselves through a series of assignments (memoir, making connections paper, and portfolio) and functioned as mediational Discourse tools. With increased attention to the current social historical circumstance at HSFU, focal students moved toward an imagined future at HSFU. Their engagement included pleasure and affect. It was political and intellectual. And their engagement supported acquisitions of academic conventions of reading and writing. In the context of the FC seminar, literacy performances that invited playful identity construction and connected students' histories with the first-year experience at HSFU were more likely to foster a rich learning ecology. An orientation of learning in the Third Space patterned as play had the potential to buttress student agency in FC, allowing students opportunities to make sense of the centripetal social practices of the university as they related to their own positionality. Students illustrated that they could be empowered when invited to place their historical and sociocultural repertoires of practice in academic Discourses. Students described gaining self-confidence as university students.

Toward Collective Third Spaces: Imagining Support Programs as Carnival

In their qualitative study of 20 universities, Kuh et al. (2005) archive policies and programmatic designs that effectively support undergraduate students. They delineate institutional practices in higher education that foster good conditions for supporting students. While they pinpoint the need for strong empirical research to verify the effects of institutional practices, Kuh et al. also write that "additional important information comes from ongoing contacts with students—listening to their needs, learning about their successes, and understanding how their success occurs" (p. 126). When I began this study almost two years ago, I had one desire: I wanted to illustrate how hard students worked in the FC program. At the time I didn't know it, but I was pointing to artful, creative, and skillful self-authorship like the kind Keneika described as learning to push herself in the opening epigraph to Chapter 1. She said she just needed to realize it in herself first. Likewise the epigraph to this chapter suggests that much skillful student authorship goes unnoticed in official spaces of classrooms. In this study, I have tried to listen to the five focal students and to capture their successes as a multi-faceted process of engagement. Their lived experience provided nuance to the story of success in the FC program and hopefully illustrated that student success in FC is retention and good grades, yet it also includes a complex trajectory of self-authorship and imagining figured worlds. Insights for programmatic designs of and curriculum in support programs included:

- academic support as repertoires of practice (Gutiérrez, 2008);
- social support as gaining cultural competencies through borderland communities;
- opportunities for play and creative improvisation in the literacy performances;
- attention to constructing identities in relation to university community.

What is more, the insights of this research suggest that researchers need ways to measure student engagement in the first-year support program that address these features. How can we effectively measure traits of horizontal and vertical learning in the Third Space?

Kuh et al. (2005) explain that support programs are effective when they establish early-alert institutional mechanisms for students recruited as underprepared, like identifying students up front on the basis of entering characteristics and tracking them throughout the year. Fayetteville University, for instance, offers an early-alert system that depends on an intricate network of individuals, including academic support units (Kuh, et al., 2005). However, it is equally important to integrate active learning within services of support. For example, California State University at Monterey Bay presents an "assets" philosophy in which students' past experiences help to foster learning (Kuh et al., p. 79). Faculty members design assignments that "integrate students' work and life experience into the classroom" (p. 79). CSUMB uses first-year seminars as a place where students design "Individual Learning Plans" (ILP) that focus on strategies for achieving the five learning outcomes of the seminar (Kuh, et al., p. 114). The strategies at CSUMB resonate with the student engagement that focal students of this study exhibited: the attention to work and life experience outside of the university and students' abilities to orchestrate their learning trajectories in the FC seminar. Another insight of the FC data related to the emphasis on "active learning" in the research of Kuh et al. (2005). The key to "active learning" for the five focal students seemed to be deep engagement. The metaphor of support program as borderland play space invites "active learning" in the programmatic and curricular designs that connect an individual's arc of development in their first-year of study to her or his repertoires of practice.

Finally, carnival in support programs includes the extension of student development theory with current sociocultural literacy theory that attends specifically to institutional power relations and identities. As a result, support programs that want to foster borderland play space might do well to synthesize more capably student development theory (Boylan, Bonham, & White, 1999; Higbee, 2005; Hrabowsky, 2005; Kuh, 2005; Kuh, et al., 2005; MacDonald and Bernardo, 2005; Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1993) with current sociocultural literacy theory (Gutiérrez, 2008; Gutiérrez

& Rogoff, 2003; Lea & Street, 2006; Moje, Ciechanowski, Kramer, Ellis, Carrillo, & Collazo, 2004). While there are a variety of institutional approaches to active learning, some political and critical, in this study, the five focal students illustrated how play and creative improvisation emerged as deep engagement.

The metaphor of borderland play illustrates that Third Space is as much carnival (Bakhtin, 1981) as it is zones of proximal development. For programs designed to support students deemed by institutions of higher education as "academically underprepared," Third Space learning offers opportunities for collective activity, contradiction, critique, and self-authorship that may include affect and pleasure, especially in the face of institutional double-binds. The insights of support programs as borderland play space may resonate for programmatic designs across the nation similarly situated in large, public, Research One institutions where "remediation" is invisible (Grubb, 1999).

> The carnivalesque crowd in the marketplace or in the streets is not merely a crowd. It is the people as a whole, but organized *in their own way*, the way of the people.
>
> ~ Mikhail Bakhtin in *Carnival Ambivalence* (1994, p. 225, emphasis kept)

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Administrator Interview

1. Tell me about the Freshman Connection program. What do you know about its history and its changes over time?
2. How did the Freshman Connection program begin at Heartland State ? What was its design?
3. Where does the funding for the program come from?
4. Tell me about your role in the Freshman Connection program.
5. Tell me about the current structure of the program. How is the program reviewed and enforced? What kinds of problems do you help resolve?
6. How and by whom are students selected for the Freshman Connection program?
7. Tell me about the students in the Freshman Connection program. What are they like?
8. As a teacher in the program, I know that many of my students are athletes. What is the role of Freshman Connection in supporting student athletes?
9. What is the purpose of the Freshman Connection program? What is its relationship to other campus-level initiatives or challenges?
10. What does the Freshman Connection program do for students?
11. If you had no budget limitations or policy constraints with respect to Freshman Connection, what would you hope the program could do for students and the university?

Instructor Interview

1. Tell me about the Freshman Connection program. What do you know about its history and its changes over time?
2. FC Seminar is one part of the Freshman Connection program. Tell me about the seminar. What are the seminar's origins? How has it changed over time? What is its role in the program's mission?
3. Tell me about your role in the Freshman Connection program. To what extent do you supervise as part of the program? How is seminar supervised and reviewed?
4. Tell me about the supervisory structure of the seminar. What are the procedures for finding teachers of the seminar?
5. Based on your experience with FC Seminar, how would you describe the students of the course?
6. As a teacher of the seminar, I find a lot of athletes in the class. What do you think the role FC Seminar plays in supporting student athletes?
7. What are the objectives of seminar? How do teachers work toward these objectives in the curriculum and/or instruction?
8. If you were and advisor to the Provost for the Freshman Connection program, what would you say about FC seminar and the students?

Student Interview

1. What is Freshman Connection? What is its role in supporting you in your first-year of college work?
2. What is FC Seminar? How would you describe your experience in FC Seminar?
3. How were you selected for Freshman Connection and the FC Seminar? Who informed you of the selection? And what procedures did you follow to be enrolled in the program?
4. In your memoir you describe yourself as [use personal characteristics emphasized in an assigned personal essay]. How do these characteristics compare or contrast students in the FC Seminar?
5. If you were asked by a friend from home to describe students in the FC Seminar, what would you say?
6. What do role you think Freshman Connection and FC Seminar play in supporting student athletes?
7. In your personal portfolio, you describe yourself as participating in these three communities [list the communities student has identified in the portfolio], how do your roles in these communities connect with who you are as a university student?
8. If a reporter was writing a piece in the student newspaper about your experiences as a Freshman Connection student, what would you want the reporter to understand about you? What stories would you share?
9. What do you think the purpose of Freshman Connection is? What about FC Seminar? How would you describe the relationship between the two?
10. What do you think the program does for you as a student? What stories or examples do you have that explain what the program does for students?
11. If I had the power to make you a student representative on an advisory board for the Provost regarding the Freshman Connection program, what would you tell him about what the Freshman Connection program could do for students?

APPENDIX B

MEMOIR ASSIGNMENT

A memoir tells a story. A good memoir does more than merely entertain: it "reaches out," making the writer's personal experience significant to the reader. The best memoirs help readers to understand the writer's experience and what it means to the present.

There are two strategies that are essential to memoir writing. First, writers focus on details that have deeper meanings. Those details are described specifically with careful attention given to setting the scene, describing the key characters, and creating the time or space in which an event took place. "Show—don't tell" is the maxim to follow. Be detailed, specific, and filled with sensory impressions. Second, writers connect their experience to a larger historical or cultural context, which means, they connect their specific experience to broad issues that others can relate to. Writers use the larger context to make such detail significant for the reader. In other words, tell a good story, but one with a purpose.

Directions for the topic:

This semester, we have read two memoirs that are great models for you to follow. Mike Rose told of his experience and tried to connect it to the problems he sees in high schools. Vershawn Young described the conflict he felt in an educational system that didn't seem to accommodate him. Here emerges a heartfelt story about cultural conflict and school. These stories explore the theme of academic success and achievement for those whose home culture does not fit snuggly with school culture. Both clearly describe moments of learning influenced by people and events. For Rose, McFarland, the teacher, made learning important and he single-handedly got Rose into college. For Young, his mother seems to play a particular role in sponsoring his growth as a reader.

In the essay you write, you will write a memoir that explores your own personal experience with learning, anytime before your current college experience. Think of a time your interest in learning was motivated. You will want to use specific details that will allow your reader to experience the memoir as vividly as you did. What can your readers learn about you and the world from reading it?

APPENDIX C

MAKING CONNECTIONS: A PROBLEM/SOLUTION PAPER

Objectives

Your final paper in FC Seminar is an opportunity to look more deeply into a theme in your literature circle book which relates to an issue you have faced during your own transition to college. This paper asks you to identify a problem/theme in your literature circle book that relates to your experience as a student. Then, you will research this problem and write a paper that explains its significance and presents a possible solution.

Directions

This assignment asks you—as a member of this university—to formulate a problem pertinent to you and begin to investigate the *debate* around it. When we invite you to look deeper into a topic, we expect you to do some research on it. And we will help you do so by asking you to develop a problem-solution paper.

A problem-solution paper has two parts. First, it starts by establishing that a problem exists for a particular community or audience, and then it proposes a solution or a new means for understanding the problem. In your paper, the main purpose will be to use research to prove that there is problem that students face in their first-year of college that you think needs to be solved.

In this paper, your focus will be connected to a recurring issue, element, or idea in your literature circle book that has also affected you in college. Based on your book and your own personal experience, you will research the significance of this problem for university students and present possible solutions. Your goal, therefore, is to engage in a process of research that brings you into conversation with a variety of sources as way to understand the problem and how to address it.

Themes

A theme is a unifying idea that is a recurrent element in a literary or artistic work. For example some people describe themes like this: it was the usual 'boy gets girl' theme. We see a few themes developing in our literature circle books. For example in *Broke Diaries*, a recurring idea in Angie's life is budgeting/financing. In *Part-Time Indian*, a recurring idea in Arnold's life is feeling outside a community or not fitting in. In *Prozac Nation*, Elizabeth deals with depression. And in *Learning Joy*, Lauralee deals with parent/family dynamics.

We are asking you to focus on a theme from the book so that you make connections in your own life as a student. One example for this paper would be to focus on a theme like financing college in *Broke Diaries*. Angie struggles to budget for college, like the rising cost of textbooks. A student could focus on the high cost of textbooks. She would research the issue: for example, how prevalent are expensive textbooks in college? Who is to blame (like publishing companies, professors, and university bookstores)? Then in the paper she would explain the problem of textbook prices and present what options there are for helping reduce the high cost of textbooks.

In your paper, you should do the following:

- Clearly articulate a problem using personal experience and other research;
- Establish the significance of the problem with examples;
- Develop a solution with examples, personal experience, and research of your own;
- Synthesize and use your sources to build and develop your ideas;
- Display a solid grasp of MLA or APA citation style;
- Write 5 – 8 typed doubled spaced pages in 12 pt. font;
- Include a formal list of citations;
- Use **5 sources**; and
- Incorporate quotes from your sources in the writing.

Types of Sources

- Personal experiences and anecdotes
- Personal Interviews
- 2 Scholarly texts (journals, books, periodicals)
- 2 Popular sources (use sparingly magazines, websites, wikipedia)

Primary Audience

Think of your readers as your peers, people who likely have some similar experiences with college. It will help your audience to know what experiences you've had. Most people find that they are not alone in having confronted the complex demands of university.

APPENDIX D

FINAL PORTFOLIO

For the final portfolio this spring, you will add to your final portfolio from last semester. This spring, I ask you to include everything from the portfolio you included last semester and to add new artifacts from this semester along with the formal written work you've done in FC Seminar.

Add 2 Artifacts

Choose 2 artifacts that represent the problem you examine in paper #2. Because the paper you have written describes your experience with issues related to campus, finding artifacts is a great way to reflect on the ideas of that paper and to articulate how you relate to those ideas. For each artifact you find, you must write a paragraph that explains how it relates to the paper.

Include 2 Blog Posts

You should include printed versions of two of your best blog posts this semester. One must discuss *Friday Night Lights* and one must discuss your literature circle book. Your blogs should illustrate strong critical thinking and well-developed ideas.

Required Contents:

- Cover Letter
- Table of Contents;
- The revised, polished final version of Paper #2 a problem/solution paper;
- The first draft of paper #2 with my feedback;
- All drafts of the song mix essay and reflection (paper #1);
- 2 new artifacts that represent the problem you examine in paper #2, including the paragraphs you have written about these artifacts;
- Printed copies of 2 of your best Blog posts this semester—one about *Friday Night Lights* and one about your literature circle book;
- All the contents from the fall semester, including the first cover letter, table of contents, all drafts of the memoir essay, and the 3 to 4 artifacts from last semester.

Cover Letter:

In this portfolio, you will write a cover letter to explain how the portfolio represents you as a student this semester. This cover letter is an essay that analyzes the contents of the portfolio. It explains how the material in the portfolio represents you as a first-year student at the University. It should describe your development this semester. You will reflect on your performance as a student and evaluate the progress you've made. The cover letter should be two to three typed, doubled-spaced pages**.** The content of the letter should consider the following issues:

- Explain what you've come to understand about being a college student. How has your opinion of college changed from before the beginning of the fall semester? What are the most important issues you've faced? How does the portfolio represent these experiences?
- Use the artifacts in the portfolio as evidence to show your growth.

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