

FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE IN TRANSITION:  
RESPONDING TO DIVERSE STUDENT POPULATIONS  
IN SUMMER BRIDGE PROGRAMS

by

Maria Conti Maravillas

---

Copyright © Maria Conti Maravillas 2019

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
WITH A MAJOR IN RHETORIC, COMPOSITION, AND THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

In the Graduate College

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

2019

The University of Arizona  
Graduate College

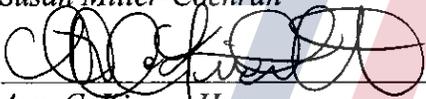
As members of the Dissertation Committee, we certify that we have read the dissertation prepared by *Maria Conti Maravillas*, titled *Funds of Knowledge in Transition: Responding to Diverse Student Populations in Summer Bridge Programs* and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Aimee C. Mapes

Date: (4/12/2019)

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Susan Miller-Cochran

Date: (4/12/2019)

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Amy C. KimmeHea

Date: (4/12/2019)

Final approval and acceptance of this dissertation is contingent upon the candidate's submission of the final copies of the dissertation to the Graduate College.

We hereby certify that we have read this dissertation prepared under our direction and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Aimee C. Mapes  
Associate Writing Specialist  
Department of English

 Date: (4/12/2019)

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Susan Miller-Cochran  
Professor of English  
Department of English

Date: (4/12/2019)

## Acknowledgments

To my committee, three fierce student advocates and insightful scholars, you have provided so many models for me. Learning from you has been such a gift! To my co-chairs, Dr. Susan Miller-Cochran and Dr. Aimee C. Mapes, thank you for all of your support during this process. Susan, you have fought for me time and again. I admire your tenacity and your willingness to enter the fray to protect your students. Aimee, I am amazed by your ability to take the most convoluted of prose and show me my true message. Thank you for the gift of clarity. To Dr. Amy C. Kimme Hea, thank you for taking a chance on me and for bringing your excitement and insights to this project. Thank you to my committee for your emotional support—it has meant the world to me.

Dr. Christine M. Tardy, this dissertation owes much to your Second Language Writing seminar, which helped me to finally discover the kind of scholar I want to be—one engaged in practical applications of scholarship for diverse groups of students. To Dr. Adela C. Licona, thank you for introducing me to the funds of knowledge framework, which has become so transformative for me. To Dr. Thomas P. Miller, thank you for challenging me to keep going. Without your timely support, I would not still be in this life-giving profession. Special thanks goes out to Dr. Eric House and (soon-to-be) Dr. Brooke Hotez for helping me get unstuck. In addition, I would like to thank the Graduate and Professional Student Council for financially supporting this project. Thank you to my professors and mentors at The University of Arizona, Kent State University, and Walsh University. In particular, I would like to acknowledge Dr. Pamela Gurney, whose fantastic teaching in my sophomore year inspired me to pursue a PhD.

To the instructors at 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue Yoga, especially Brian Hanner, Kali Kennedy, and Amanda Mee—your spiritual guidance has fortified me to complete a project of this magnitude.

To Patti Munsen and the beautiful souls at Most Holy Trinity Catholic Church, thank you for showing me what a truly engaged mass looks like. I have drawn strength from the well of your faith and the joy of your community. To my therapist, Dr. Mirto Stone, your wisdom has helped me find ways around many obstacles. Words aren't enough to thank you.

To my parents, Dave and Joanne Conti, thank you for putting my education first. You gave up so much so that I could do what I love—what a gift! Mom, thank you for supporting me when I wanted to quit. It's hard to believe I could have missed this. To my sister, Marisa Porter, and my big, Italian family—thank you for your encouragement and love. Special thanks to my godparents, Lisa and Duane Crabbs, for their mentorship and prayers. To Mart Andrew Maravillas, my Langga, thank you for your calming presence, for keeping me fed, and for loving me so well. Gihigugma ta ka!

To my students, especially those who participated in the New Start Summer Program. Thank you for sharing yourselves and for taking risks.

## Dedication

To God—Is this what You had in mind?

I dedicate this work, and my life's work, to serving others.

Keep showing me the way.

This dissertation is in memory of my mentor, Terrance Portis,  
who showed me how to meet students with compassion.

## Table of Contents

List of Tables .....	9
Abstract .....	10
Chapter 1: The Remedial Tradition in Higher Education: Deficit Approaches in Context.....	12
I. Remediation and Writing Courses: First-Year Composition and Basic Writing .....	18
<i>First-Year Composition: Standards vs. Access</i> .....	18
<i>Basic Writing: Deficit Approaches and Alternatives</i> .....	22
<i>Attacks on Remedial Programs</i> .....	26
II. Remediation and Institutional Programming: Developmental Education, Summer Bridge Programs, and Retention Initiatives.....	28
<i>Developmental Education as Modern Iteration</i> .....	28
<i>Summer Bridge Programs: Goals and Approaches</i> .....	30
<i>Retention Research: Shaping the Conversation</i> .....	31
III. Funds of Knowledge Approaches to Higher Education .....	33
IV. Chapter Summaries.....	37
Chapter 2: Methodology .....	40
I. Overview of Chapter .....	40
II. One Program’s Story Meets My Own: A Statement of Positionality .....	40
III. Exigency for Studying Bridge Program Websites .....	44
IV. Bridge Program Websites in the Data Set .....	46
<i>Data Selection</i> .....	47
<i>Overview of Selected Programs</i> .....	53
V. Methodology and Methods .....	56
<i>Interpretive Paradigm of Qualitative Research</i> .....	56
<i>Document Analysis</i> .....	57
<i>Approaches to Qualitative Coding</i> .....	59
<i>Discourse Analysis: Fill In and Figured Worlds Tools</i> .....	67
VI. Limitations.....	71
<i>Websites as an Indirect Measure of Program Content</i> .....	71
<i>Small Sample Size and Limited Range of Institutions</i> .....	73
VII. Looking Forward: Final Chapters .....	73
Chapter 3: Deficit Discourse in Bridge Program Websites .....	75
I. Overview of Chapter .....	75
II. Student Subject Position and Program Parameters .....	77
<i>Programs Serving Diverse Student Populations</i> .....	78

<i>Bridge Programs Serving Students in Affiliated Programs</i> .....	81
<i>Discipline-Specific Support: Programs Serving STEM Majors</i> .....	82
<i>Transitioning to American University Life: Programs Serving International Students</i> ...	85
<i>Programs with Few Student Restrictions</i> .....	86
<i>In Between the Lines: Bridge Programs and College Access</i> .....	86
III. Academic/Study Skills: What Students Need to Succeed .....	87
<i>Remedial Underpinnings of Skills Discourse</i> .....	90
IV. College Knowledge: Managing Student Expectations .....	92
<i>Taste Tests: Sampling What College is Like</i> .....	92
<i>What This Particular Institution is Like</i> .....	94
<i>Orienting Students Geographically</i> .....	97
<i>Institutional Expectations of Students</i> .....	98
<i>Deficit Assumptions about Students' Prior Knowledges</i> .....	99
V. Relationships: Belongingness .....	102
<i>"I Gained a Family": Family-Like Communities</i> .....	103
<i>Making Friends "That Are More Like Myself"</i> .....	104
<i>Connections with Professional Staff, Peer Mentors, and Faculty</i> .....	106
<i>Belongingness and Private Enclaves</i> .....	109
VI. Summer Bridge Programs as Figured Worlds .....	112
Chapter 4: Possibilities and Potential: Funds of Knowledge as a Constructive Response .....	115
I. Overview of Chapter .....	115
II. Aspirational Knowledge: Recognizing Students' Potential .....	118
III. Aspirational Knowledge: One Program's Pathways to Major, Discipline, & Career .....	121
<i>Emphasizing Careers of Program Graduates</i> .....	122
<i>Corporate Sponsors as Unlikely Partners</i> .....	123
<i>Limitation of Pathways Discourse</i> .....	125
<i>Programmatic Areas for Growth</i> .....	129
IV. Familial Knowledge: Connecting with Students' Existing Support Systems .....	131
<i>Beginning Steps Toward Recognizing Families' Potential</i> .....	132
<i>Utilizing Familial Knowledge: One Program's Example</i> .....	135
V. Obstacles to Funds of Knowledge Approaches .....	136
Chapter 5: Funds of Knowledge Applications and Future Directions .....	141
I. Overview of Chapter .....	141
II. Summary of Dissertation .....	141
III. Implications for Critical Conversations .....	143

<i>Strengths-Based Retention Initiatives</i> .....	143
<i>Funds of Knowledge for Composition Studies</i> .....	145
<i>Bridge Programs and Inclusion Work</i> .....	146
IV. Recommendations for Bridge Programs .....	147
<i>Connecting to Aspirational Knowledge</i> .....	147
<i>Incorporating Familial Expertise</i> .....	149
<i>Addressing Linguistic Knowledge</i> .....	151
<i>Heuristic for Integrating Funds of Knowledge</i> .....	154
V. Suggestions for Future Research .....	156
<i>Bridge Program Research</i> .....	157
<i>Multimodal Website Analysis</i> .....	159
<i>Composition Studies, Student Success, and Retention Program Applications</i> .....	159
VI. References .....	161

## List of Tables

Table 1. Data Set and Contextual Information.....	49
Table 2. Excerpted Codebook.....	61
Table 3. Selected Programs and Contextual Information.....	116
Table 4. Heuristic for Integrating Funds of Knowledge.....	154

## Abstract

In examining twenty-two summer bridge program websites across the country, this study focused on a particular type of student support at one of the most historically-contentious positions in a college student's trajectory—the point of access. Diverse student populations bring specific strengths, resources, skills, and knowledge, or “funds of knowledge,” to the university space from other parts of their lives (Kiyama & Rios-Aguilar, 2018; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 2005). In light of the history of deficit-based explanations for student failure, funds of knowledge approaches to instruction and program design offer models that more fully describe the abilities and potential of diverse groups of students. Drawing on the diametrically opposed frameworks of remediation and funds of knowledge, this qualitative research study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What do the website descriptions of bridge programs at a range of institutions reveal regarding assumptions about students and support they need?, and
2. In what ways, if any, do these descriptions connect to funds of knowledge?

I engage in systematic qualitative coding and analysis of the bridge program websites. The emphasis on *academic/study skills*, *college knowledge*, and *relationships* in the data set (see Chapter 3) positioned bridge programs as the benevolent giver of these things instead of presenting students as capable of building on their skills and existing knowledges. In the figured world (Holland, Lachiotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998) of summer bridge, the underlying assumption goes as follows: Adjusting to a challenging new environment is possible as long as the university provides students with academic and social integration. Without these supports, students are not likely to succeed on their own due to their demographics as first-generation students, low-income students, or students of color or due to the intensity of their chosen major (in the case of the

STEM-affiliated bridge programs). However, eight of the programs were partially aligned with a funds of knowledge approach, especially regarding *aspirational knowledge* and *familial knowledge* (see Chapter 4). The funds of knowledge framework is a constructive response to deficit discourse that asks bridge programs and other student success initiatives across the university to rethink their assumptions about students' prior knowledges and strengths.

## Chapter 1

### The Remedial Tradition in Higher Education: Deficit Approaches in Context

In recent decades, higher education institutions have received increasingly less state funding, and more of it is being linked to student performance metrics (Ruecker, Shepherd, Estrem, & Brunk-Chavez, 2017). In response, colleges and universities have developed “a range of strategic plans, action plans, programs, initiatives, and metrics” to improve student retention (p. 3). Yet the numbers are bleak: “For first-time, full-time degree-seeking students who enrolled at 4-year degree-granting institutions in fall 2015, the retention rate (i.e., the percentage of students returning the following fall) was 81 percent” (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). And at two-year institutions, the retention rate was 62 percent (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). Why do so many college students fail to complete their degrees?

Since the 1970s era of open admissions and increased higher education access, countless theories have been posited to explain student failure. These explanations often focus on “diverse student populations,”<sup>1</sup> which include students of color, students who speak English as an Additional Language (EAL) or non-dominant varieties of English (such as African-American English Vernacular or Chicano English), low-income students, students from rural areas or reservations, and first-generation learners (students whose parents/legal guardians did not complete a four-year undergraduate degree), among others. Some claim that these students fail because they lack motivation and family support, are lazier than other students, or are academically underprepared (Kiyama & Rios-Aguilar, 2018). Others allege that these groups of students don’t value education as much as their middle-class, white counterparts, and they can’t

---

<sup>1</sup> While students can be diverse in many ways, I use these particular identity categories to refer to “diverse student populations” intentionally, as they were the most common across this study’s data set.

write (read: they are less familiar with “standard” academic English). The claim that students can’t write implicates writing instruction and writing support in higher education as part of the problem. In response, writing programs are positioned as a core node in the nexus of institutional relations designed to support academically underserved populations. As such, writing instruction becomes a site of debate regarding students’ perceived deficits.

These same voices have argued that diverse populations of students, who are accused of being less academically prepared, should be kept at community colleges or encouraged toward vocational-only paths of study (Soliday, 2002, p. 131). Deficit approaches to understanding student failure are common in the literature on college access, persistence, and success (Kiyama & Rios-Aguilar, 2018). In the deficit-oriented line of thinking, diverse populations of students are solely to blame for their failure to succeed in higher education. They are seen as not possessing the requisite academic, social, and motivational aptitudes and as being less committed to university study than their more traditional counterparts.

Against this backdrop of acontextual explanations for individual student failure, Kiyama and Rios-Aguilar (2018) presented a more holistic view:

When under-represented students appear to make choices that do not lead to successful outcomes (for example, stop or drop out of school in order to take care of family members or to find employment), it is through this individualistic deficit paradigm that they are assessed. . . . Since this is the lens through which services, programs, and policies were and are created, it is no wonder why participation, retention, and graduation rates remain painfully low for under-represented college students. . . (p. 4)

While diverse populations of students may face these and other significant barriers to completing their education, they also bring specific strengths, resources, and knowledges to the university

space (Kiyama & Rios-Aguilar, 2018). These often-untapped “funds of knowledge” can be used by bridge program administrators, instructors, and student success professionals to better support the learning of diverse student populations.

Funds of knowledge are the experiences, skills, and knowledges that students and their families possess. This term became widely known in educational circles due to the pioneering work of a group of anthropologists and education researchers at The University of Arizona (U Arizona). Moll, Amanti, Neff, and González (2005) defined funds of knowledge as “historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being” (p. 72). To investigate the reservoirs of knowledge that students bring to the classroom from their home environments, they collaborated with teachers in the Tucson Unified School District to conduct interviews with Mexican and Yaqui families. Moll et al. (2005) reflected on their study’s approach:

We are particularly interested in how families develop social networks that interconnect them with their social environments (most importantly with other households), and how these social relationships facilitate the development and exchange of resources—including knowledge, skills, and labor—that enhance the households’ ability to survive or thrive.” (p. 73)

In close-knit familial or cultural communities, the exchanging of goods and services helps families survive “changing, and often difficult, social and economic circumstances” (p. 73). Moll et al. (2005) identified different funds of knowledge that could create goods or provide services to be exchanged, such as masonry, mining, renting and selling, folk medicine, appliance repairs, religious knowledge, and midwifery, among others (p. 73). After discovering these myriad areas of expertise that students were exposed to through their families, several Tucson Unified School

District instructors sought to make more explicit connections between families' funds of knowledge and course material. This approach counters a deficit orientation in which students are viewed as lacking or deficient in one or more academic areas (Rodriguez, 2013, p. 94).

Although Moll et al. (2005) originally explored funds of knowledge in terms of household expertise, others have expanded this concept to higher education, calling for faculty to see students and their families through asset-based lenses (Bensimon, 2007; Kiyama & Rios-Aguilar, 2018). Kiyama and Rios-Aguilar (2018) argue that the funds of knowledge of underrepresented students must be incorporated into the college experience: "We must focus our efforts on recognizing, validating, and utilizing the wealth of resources they bring to college campuses" (p. xii.). To fully recognize and incorporate the sociocultural, linguistic, and intellectual resources of students, there must be room for revision in both curricula of individual instructors as well as departments and student support programming.

However, the funds of knowledge approach has not yet been widely embraced by institutions of higher education. Historically, courses and services grounded in adult learning and development have been focused on remedying individual student deficits by giving them the "basic academic skills necessary for college-level work" (Boylan & Bonham, 2014b, p. vi). This goal has been supported by study skills initiatives, student success programs, and learning assistance centers at a range of institutional types (four-year research university, small liberal arts college, community college), as well as collaborations between academic and student affairs. At the same time, prerequisites for general education courses such as writing and math have in many cases been offloaded onto community and two-year institutions (Soliday, 2002, p. 110). Some of these prerequisites have been relegated to "summer bridge programs." These experiences, which are required or optional programs for incoming first-year students that

typically include courses and social activities, emerged as one response to the presence of diverse populations of students on college campuses. Summer bridge programs are “accelerated and focused learning opportunities that help students acquire the knowledge and skills needed for college success” (Barnett et al., 2014, p. 320). They may include 3-6 units of academic credit, course-based peer tutors and mentoring, a residential component, social and educational programming, and student involvement opportunities on campus.

Designed to help incoming first-year students from historically underrepresented populations succeed in higher education, bridge programs typically serve students of color, international students, and English language learners. These student groups are often categorized by the institution as “at risk.” And in spite of their good intentions, bridge programs can at times unintentionally adopt this at-risk discourse, which stems from deficit-based models of learning and assumptions about students. This dissertation explores website descriptions of summer bridge programs across the United States to examine the ways in which they characterize the students they serve and the support they need. One goal of this project is to paint a picture of how bridge program websites describe first-year students as well as the assistance the programs offer during students’ transition to college. The following research questions guide my study:

1. What do the website descriptions of bridge programs at a range of institutions reveal regarding assumptions about students and support they need?, and
2. In what ways, if any, do these descriptions connect to funds of knowledge?

To answer these questions, I engage in systematic qualitative coding and analysis of twenty-two summer bridge program websites. Since my own interest in bridge programs began with the New Start Summer Program at U Arizona (see Chapter 2), I limit this study’s data set to U Arizona and its fifteen peer institutions, as specified by the Arizona Board of Regents’ Approved

University Peer List (2009). Of this list, there are thirteen institutions that have at least one program that meets the criteria for this study (see Chapter 2). Though each university is unique, the fact that most of them are large, public research universities allows for comparisons across institutions regarding how they understand students and the support they need.

The overarching goal of this dissertation is to provide a theoretical framework for identifying deficit-based, harmful discourse about diverse student populations and replacing it with language and practices that recognize and affirm their strengths. The project is relevant to those interested in drawing on funds of knowledge pedagogies and student-centered program policies and structures, such as administrators of basic writing<sup>2</sup> programs, writing program administrators (broadly speaking), first-year experience programs, summer bridge programs, and instructors interested in diverse student populations and retention initiatives. As professionals in developmental education and student success programs have authored much of the published research on summer bridge programs, this dissertation is one of the few on the topic originating in composition studies. As such, it seeks to connect existing conversations in disparate fields to create a more unified approach to working with diverse student populations. Ultimately, it seeks a more inclusive university space for all students.

The remainder of the chapter reviews the relevant literature in several areas: (1) the history of first-year composition and basic writing, as situated within the wider context of open access and perceived literacy crises; (2) academic support initiatives such as summer bridge programming and retention projects, as situated within the wider context of developmental

---

<sup>2</sup> Scholars such as Bloom (1995) and Fox (1999) have critiqued the term “basic,” arguing that it now carries much of the same stigma it originally tried to replace. Due to its continued use in the field, I use the term “basic” to refer to courses, curriculum, or scholarship. When referring to writers, I use phrases such as “students placed into basic writing” to avoid the pejorative term “basic writer.”

education; and (3) funds of knowledge approaches to higher education, as situated within research on culturally-relevant pedagogies, programs, and policies. The funds of knowledge section provides the theoretical framework for the dissertation.

## **I. Remediation and Writing Courses: First-Year Composition and Basic Writing**

### *First-Year Composition: Standards vs. Access*

Historically, composition studies in the U.S. has been entangled with movements to promote “standards” while also being a mechanism for access. Standards refer to educational benchmarks, such as standardized test scores, grade point average, and writing proficiency scores, that are used to exclude people from higher education institutions. Access refers to an institutional stance that takes into account the various backgrounds of students in granting them admission to colleges and universities. Access also includes policies and structures that help students succeed. While there are several (and at times varied) histories of composition (Fox, 1999; Miller, 1993; Soliday, 2002), most of them discussed the infamous Harvard University entrance exam as having a pivotal role in the formation of composition courses. In 1876, Harvard instituted the entrance exam, which half of the applicants failed (Fox, 1999, p. 18, p. 22). Fox (1999) traced the first composition course in 1885 from this entrance exam (p. 18, p. 22). The aims of the test and course were to teach writing style as manners and to promote the notion of higher education as “marker of cultural respectability” (p. 22-23). Thus, first-year composition as we know it originated as a remedial course to improve students’ skills at the beginning of their university work. Remediation was the goal of all composition courses, and all writing classes were essentially basic writing. Some outside the field of writing studies today, such as faculty and members of the general public, continue to view composition courses as merely assisting

students with the concerns of grammar, mechanics, and expression so that faculty in other courses do not have to teach writing. Crowley (1998) summarized this view:

Academics' desire that students master the so-called "basic" principles of composition in Freshman English is understandable, given their own lack of interest in attending to student literacy. A Freshman English class is supposed to "fix" students' supposed lack of literate mastery once and for all, so that teachers of more advanced courses do not have to bother with such things. (p. 8)

And not only is first-year composition supposed to "fix" students so that other faculty do not need to address literacy in their classrooms, but it is supposed to do it in the short span of one or two courses (Soliday, 2002, p. 15).

Through examining the fraught history of composition, we can see the building blocks of how diverse populations of students are often treated today in university spaces—as cognitively, culturally, and motivationally deficient, as belonging to a "lower" tier of education, such as community colleges and vocational schools. This is not to say that community colleges and vocational schools are not worthy educational enterprises, only that the people making these arguments suggest this hierarchy. The development of composition studies, and subsequently basic writing, is riddled with gatekeeping exclusion in the name of standards, which "inevitably referred to writing ability" (Fox, 1999, p. 43). In this section, I trace key moments in the access versus standards debates from the Open Admissions movement of the early 1970s to the present day, providing theoretical and historical context to situate a contemporary understanding of diverse student groups and their transition to college.

When the City University of New York (CUNY) system radically changed its admissions policy by eschewing standardized test scores and grades in the early 1970s, the concept of access

was brought to the forefront of higher education debates on a national level. Fox (1999) described this moment as “the most serious challenge to the rhetoric of gatekeeping” (p. 40). In enacting a policy that came to be known as Open Admissions or Open Access, the university “recognized historical racism and its effects and sought to intervene in the historical scene” (p. 41). While some of the promises of the open access movement have yet to be fully realized in colleges and universities today, it was a significant historical moment. Soliday (2002) located in this move the beginnings of “the ideology of access and the politics of agency—a belief that remedial writing programs fulfill institutional commitments to open access for a special group of students, minorities” (p. 48). As more middle-class and working-class students sought access to higher education, colleges and universities were pressured to revise admissions policies.

However, there were limitations to the Open Access movement, especially in terms of mindset:

University officials seemed to believe that the student body could change without really changing the university. The success of Open Admissions was limited by the inability or reluctance to think of standards as an ordinary plural that changes with social conditions and with people who develop and hold them. (Fox, 1999, p. 43)

If we think of standards as an a-contextual, unchanging set of knowledge and skills, then we will always be disappointed when students fail to meet them. If we acknowledge, however, that standards change with historical, social, economic, and political contexts, then we will understand how arbitrary they can be and we will avoid using measures of them improperly.

Another limitation of the Open Access movement was the extended backlash from other universities and the general public (Traub, 1994), a reactionary response that continues in different forms to the present day. As is the case with various claims of literacy crises in different

times and places, this response is usually unsupported by data. Soliday (2002) cited numerous studies that show attacks on “Johnny’s ability to write in the 1970s were not based firmly on empirical measurements of students’ literacy” (p. 107). Despite this lack of evidence for students’ decline in overall literacy abilities, the backlash to the open access movement and accompanying literacy crisis foregrounded the concept of student deficiency in the late twentieth century American milieu.

At the heart of deficit ideologies regarding diverse populations of students is the “discourse of student need,” a phrase that Soliday borrowed from Crowley, who brings the phrase to composition studies from the work of Fraser, a feminist philosopher. Crowley (1998) listed the justifications for the required composition course in light of this phrase: “students need composition in order to write better, to write error-free prose, to survive in the academy, to prosper in a job or profession, to become acquainted with the best that has been thought or said, to become critics of the society in which they live” (p. 257). The first three claims were used in response to the increased presence of diverse student populations on campuses during the era of open admissions, and they are still used today to require one or two writing classes of all students and, at times, even more writing classes of students of color and working-class students.

As more diverse populations of students began to gain access to higher education, there were claims, albeit unfounded, that these students’ lack of familiarity with standardized forms of English constituted a literacy crisis (Gunner, 2004). And while the myth is that open access policies created a need for remediation (Soliday, 2002, p. 48), Soliday located remediation historically in the desire for institutions to take care of their own needs, not those of their students: “Remediation serves immediate institutional needs to solve crises in growth—in enrollment, curriculum, mission, and admissions standards—as much as it does to serve

students' needs" (p. 2). Requiring groups of students to take a series of writing classes before entering first-year composition allowed institutions to shift their standards upward during a time of rapidly increasing enrollment and amidst the pressure to define themselves as elite (p. 50). Soliday's historical research demonstrates that far from being universal and ever-constant, standards of writing shift to fit institutional needs (p. 11). Different freshman courses developed not to better serve students, but to "achieve articulation between institutions and between English departments and the content disciplines" (p. 38). The subfield of basic writing emerged in this discourse of student need.

*Basic Writing: Deficit Approaches and Alternatives*

The development of separate basic writing courses in the second half of the twentieth century heralded another key moment in the access versus standards debate. Gunner (2004) traced the sense of urgency for basic writing programs as one resulting from the burgeoning era of writing program administrator professionalization. This era began with the founding of the Council of Writing Program Administrators at the Modern Language Association Conference in 1976 (Gunner, 2004, p. 269). In order to protect their growing professional status, writing program administrators needed to disassociate themselves from "remedial" students (p. 271). Basic writing programs became divided from mainstream writing programs in no accidental manner. They were offloaded onto "locations outside the English department: in 'academic foundations' initiatives, tutorial centers, or separate developmental education programs, departments, or colleges" (p. 272). Through this separation, writing programs could leave to others the task of dealing with diverse populations of students, who were in many instances, and still are, overrepresented in basic writing courses. As a sign of how large the rift between basic writing and composition studies has become, there is not much scholarly overlap between the

two (p. 272). There is little discussion of basic writing issues in the literature of writing program administration and vice versa. This division relegates students in basic writing to an even less protected status than they already have due to gatekeeping administrative structures such as placement exams and standardized test scores. Indeed, “basic writers have been institutionally positioned even more precariously than first-year writers” (Fox, 1999, p. 51). This precarity allowed content that was not in students’ best interests to dominate basic writing curricula.

Early basic writing courses focused on language form and correctness. The dominant ideology among the general public, elected officials, school board members, and university administrators was that basic writing is a remedial course in correct (read: “standard”) English, focusing on “skills and drills” approaches to grammar, expression, and mechanics. In many cases, students placed into basic writing were and still are required to take a series of skills-based courses which bear no credit as prerequisites to first-year composition (Adams, Gearhart, Miller, & Roberts, 2014). In light of this context, it is easy to see why students placed into basic writing courses were deemed remedial. Olson (2013) noted that iconic basic writing scholar Shaughnessy has been recognized as the first to assert that “basic writing students are not developmentally deficient individuals . . . but rather writers inexperienced with the context of academic writing” (p. 20).<sup>3</sup> Shaughnessy’s (1977) *Errors and Expectations* emphasized this distinction: “. . . BW [basic writing] students write the way they do, not because they are slow or non-verbal, indifferent to or incapable of academic excellence, but because they are beginners and must, like all beginners, learn by making mistakes” (p. 5). Within this contextualized understanding of students placed into basic writing courses, Shaughnessy’s pedagogy focused on

---

<sup>3</sup> Many have critiqued Shaughnessy’s approach, which, though progressive, was ideologically rooted in current-traditional rhetoric (Olson, 2013, p. 20; Soliday, 2002, p. 84).

form and correctness. Yet, Fox (1999) argued that skills approaches are inherently focused on deficits:

In addition to defining students by their deficiencies, deficit theories—especially in their application to basic writers—tend to reduce writing to a set of discrete skills to be learned, especially the countable ones such as punctuation and spelling. . . . Any approach that separates language features from intention and meaning for the purpose of ‘practice’ constitutes a skills approach. (p. 52)

If students are forced to practice grammar, expression, and mechanics exercises divorced from real writing contexts—especially their own writing—the instruction they receive will carry less value. In addition to being less effective, this type of instruction perpetuated the idea of students placed into basic writing as deficient and “underprepared” for the rigors of university study.

As basic writing courses began gaining traction, the increased presence of diverse student populations at institutions of higher education spurred a disciplinary conversation about language use. This conversation was particularly relevant to basic writing, since students from diverse groups are frequently tracked into these courses. The 1974 College Composition and Communication position statement, *Students’ Right to Their Own Language (SRTOL)*, asserted the right of students to communicate in language varieties of their own choosing in educational contexts. The statement makes the connection between linguistic discrimination and other forms of prejudice: “We need to ask ourselves whether . . . we are actually rejecting the students themselves, rejecting them because of their racial, social, and cultural origins.” Taking issue with the monolingual orientation of composition courses and with the notion of “standard” English, the statement calls for attention to the multiple valid ways that students communicate, including non-dominant varieties of English, such as African-American English Vernacular (AAVE) and

Chicano English. Scholars of composition have taken various positions on classroom language use (Canagarajah, 2013; Lu & Horner, 2013a; Lu & Horner, 2013b; Ferris, 2014; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014; Severino, 1993; Young, 2010). Fox (1999) made the connection between non-dominant varieties of English, deficit theories, and basic writing instruction:

Deficit theories tend to go underground, then resurface in new forms. . . . While deficit theories, those theories of language learning that presume ignorance and inability in students and children, may change terms, the ideas are the same and the students who most suffer from the pedagogy that springs from it are the same: speakers of nonstandard dialect . . . Deficit theories have been around a long time... and no doubt they'll be around as long as racism and sexism and classism affect education. Certainly, deficit theories have influenced the shape of basic writing programs. (p. 52)

Deficit theories may show themselves in different ways according to the sociopolitical context surrounding institutions of higher education at various times. The newest iteration of “Johnny can’t write” may indeed be in not accepting students’ own varieties of English as valid, intelligent expressions.

The field of basic writing is still trying to move toward “a disciplinary understanding of error as contextually situated” (Fox, 1999, p. 20). The original over-emphasis on form and correctness “lingers on” as “a compelling and often persuasive myth circulated through public and institutional conversations” (Olson, 2013, p. 27). To dispel this myth, basic writing courses can embrace students’ right to their own language and eschew deficit understandings of students’ first languages and dialects, even as these courses seek to help students see the ways in which standardized forms align with audience expectations (Lu & Horner, 2013a; Lu & Horner, 2013b). As another response to deficit ways of teaching basic writing, many writing program

administrators and other composition specialists acknowledge that “writing conventions, including error, are necessarily tied to genre, context, and audience” (Olson, 2013, p. 20). This acknowledgement has led to more rhetorical approaches to teaching basic writing, allowing opportunities for students placed into these courses to practice similar types of reading and writing processes as mainstream first-year composition students. A multifaceted basic writing curriculum helps turn instruction away from Freire’s banking model of education, one that views students as empty “receptacles” needing “to be filled,” toward one that positions students as “critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher” (Freire, 1968/2011, p. 81). If instructors allow students to explore real-world issues and examine the discourses around them, students will rise to the challenge. Although progress has been made in this area, there is still much work to be done in terms of instructor professional development, policy creation, and curricular change to shift basic writing courses, and first-year composition in general, away from a deficit model of viewing students.

### *Attacks on Remedial Programs*

At times, deficit frameworks for understanding students have been bolstered by public discourse. As basic writing programs began to proliferate and grow throughout the 1970s and 1980s, discourse about remedial programming created yet more institutional challenges. In the 1990s, “a coalition of critics in New York City fomented a literacy crisis in order to create a class consensus to downsize public higher education” (Soliday, 2002, p. 15). This group consisted of a “conservative/neoliberal coalition of intellectuals, politicians, and journalists” (p. 107). The particular literacy crisis that they developed lasted from 1993-2000 in New York City and was aimed at restructuring “the nation’s largest public urban system” (p. 107). The legacy of the crisis lives on in today’s debates regarding the defunding of U.S. public institutions of higher

education. While it is typically assumed that literacy crises are a result of student preparation for educational endeavors, or lack thereof, Soliday demonstrated that the need to privatize and defund higher education drove the creation of this literacy crisis. This time, instead of causing remedial programs to proliferate and expand, complaints regarding student preparation aimed to reduce or completely eliminate these experiences: “By blaming remedial programs for a constellation of educational woes, from budget crises to low retention rates and falling standards, the critics of remediation practiced an effective politics of agency” (Soliday, 2002, p. 106). They were able to convince the public that restricting access to higher education and cutting remedial programming was a necessary tactic (p. 107).

The instigators of a literacy panic in the 1990s argued that open access does not work and that the project of remediation failed (p. 15). Traub’s popular, award-winning book *City on a Hill: Testing the American Dream at City College* (1994) helped garner public support for this effort. Focusing on the one site in the City University of New York (CUNY) system that had spearheaded the open access enterprise, City College, he described a hierarchy of students with black and Latino/a students at the bottom, bringing “serious ‘academic handicaps’” and “cognitive deficits” (Traub, 1994, p. 207, p. 129). Critics of remediation emphasized lower standards and retention rates as well as the cost of remedial programs (Soliday, 2002, p. 110). Bolstered by these sentiments and claims that remedial programs had failed render substantial change in diverse student populations, many systems moved basic skills into the lower tiers of their institutions or shifted responsibility for educating these students to two-year colleges (p. 110). One legacy of the attack on remedial programs that persists to the present day is the offloading of support for diverse groups of students to separate student success units and to community college and two-year institutions (p. 110). Instead of taking responsibility for

integrating the experiences, needs, and strengths of diverse student groups into curricula and programming, higher education institutions often fall short of fully realizing their diversity and inclusion missions.

## **II. Remediation and Institutional Programming: Developmental Education, Summer Bridge Programs, and Retention Initiatives**

### *Developmental Education as Modern Iteration*

In the midst of these ‘literacy crises’ from outside the institution, remedial programs were undergoing their own transformations within institutions. In the 1970s, “remedial education” became more commonly known as “developmental education” as administrators and support staff realized that re-teaching high school subjects without providing academic support was not successful (Boylan & Bonham, 2014a, p. 59). While remediation refers to “courses that teach the basic academic skills necessary for college-level work,” developmental education comprises “the range of courses and services governed by the principles of adult learning and development” (p. vi). Drawing on burgeoning developmental psychology that established the interconnectedness of intellectual and personal development (p. 59), developmental education focused on helping students improve “personal and academic skills” that are needed for a positive college experience (p. vi). Developmental education may refer at the same time to services and information, such as study skills seminars, student success programs, and learning assistance centers as well as to collaborative programming between academic and student affairs. In the model of developmental education, remedial courses and academic support services are integrated closely. Yet, developmental education models have not always been fully realized. Remedial courses and support services are usually not coordinated with one another and with academic affairs, limiting students’ potential success (p. 60).

While developmental education programs, at their inception, appeared to be relatively new in the university space, Boylan and White (1986/2014) reminded readers that “the field of developmental education is simply the modern version of past efforts to respond to the fact that, at their point of entry, many college students are unable to succeed without some sort of special assistance” (p. 5). They trace remedial movements from the seventeenth century through the late twentieth century to demonstrate that remediation has always been a part of higher education. In a significant moment for developmental education, many colleges were founded as a result of land sales for the purpose of educating the working classes and increasing access (p. 7). In 1862, the Morrill Act, or the Land Grant Act, stimulated a great number of these institutions (p. 8). Developmental education initiatives grew accordingly as new populations of students began to access universities and colleges.

Developmental education professionals today have collaborated with academic affairs to offer first-year experience programs, such as orientation programming, first-year seminars, and supplemental instruction; learning communities, such as linked or clustered courses; student life programming, such as campus extracurriculars, internships, and engagement experiences; and service learning (Frost, Strom, Downey, Schultz, & Holland, 2014, p. 82-87). However, these partnerships face the challenges of fragmentation and demise if faculty and student affairs professionals remain in their comfortable silos (p. 88). On the whole, the success of developmental education initiatives is difficult to measure, as some studies conflate the terms “remediation” and “developmental education” and studies at times report conflicting results (Boylan & Bonham, 2014a, p. 61). Although there is a negative stigma toward developmental education through its association with remedial coursework (p. 61), many successful programs have grown from its roots.

*Summer Bridge Programs: Goals and Approaches*

One popular approach to developmental education is summer bridge programs, which are “accelerated and focused learning opportunities that help students acquire the knowledge and skills needed for college success” (Barnett et al., 2014, p. 320). They provide “intensive, short-term academic and social resources while introducing college expectations and the cultural contexts of the institution” (Gonzalez Quiroz & Garza, 2018, p. 103). The summer bridge experiences I focus on in this dissertation are geared toward incoming first-year students and take place in the summer between high school graduation and the first fall semester at a college or university. Accelerated instruction, in which students attempt one or more credit-bearing and compressed courses within the span of about three to six weeks, is a key feature. In this respect, bridge programs significantly differ from the “traditional developmental education course sequences, which may span several semesters” (Barnett et al, 2014, p. 320). In addition to reduced time toward earning academic credits, summer bridge experiences also focus on helping students successfully integrate into university life. Higher education researcher Tinto’s (1994) theoretical model of academic, social, and cultural integration is often used as a guide for developing the structure and content of bridge programs or for evaluating them and other student success initiatives (Gonzalez Quiroz & Garza, 2018; McCurrie, 2009, p. 32). From Tinto’s model of integration, other components of bridge programs developed, such as academic support (tutoring and study skills seminars), advising and mentorship, extended college orientations, social activities, and the opportunity to live on campus for the duration of the program.

In developmental education and higher education scholarship, studies of bridge programs typically focus on assessing their effectiveness quantitatively. They usually compare students who complete the program, a treatment group, with a control group of students with similar

characteristics on several measures: pass rates for certain first-year courses (Barnett et al., 2014; Gonzalez Quiroz & Garza, 2018); persistence rates, the rates by which students return for the next course or next year of coursework (Barnett et al., 2014; Bir & Myrick, 2015; Cabrera, Miner, & Milem, 2013; Gonzalez Quiroz & Garza, 2018); graduation rates (Bir & Myrick, 2015); average number of credits attempted or earned during or after the bridge program (Barnett et al., 2014; Gonzalez Quiroz & Garza, 2018); and/or grade point average (Bir & Myrick, 2015; Cabrera et al., 2013; Gonzalez Quiroz & Garza, 2018). Just as assessments of remedial education are a mixed bag, so are findings from summer bridge program studies. Although there have been statistically significant gains for bridge program participants in one or more of these areas in some studies, there have also been no significant differences in others. Some researchers in developmental and higher education have turned to mixed-methods or qualitative approaches, although these are fewer in number (Cabrera et al., 2013; Cooper, Ashley, & Brownell, 2018; McCurrie, 2009; Mitchell, 2013). Due to the preference for quantitative and mixed-methods studies in bridge program research, this dissertation attempts to address the need to provide a more complete picture of bridge programs.

### *Retention Research: Shaping the Conversation*

Bridge programs, like other student support initiatives, face increasing external pressure to “demonstrate that they are an educationally sound and economical way to help students bridge the gap between high school and college” (McCurrie, 2009, p. 30). Measures of student retention are one way to demonstrate this and are especially valued by student success administrators (p. 33). While the scholarship on retention in composition studies is only just beginning to gain a foothold in the field, Ruecker, Shepherd, Estrem, and Brunk-Chavez (2017) argue that writing studies professionals should begin “seeking opportunities to participate in national, regional,

institutional, and programmatic conversations about retention and persistence” (p. 15). To shape the conversation productively and to keep it focused on student learning, writing program administrators and instructors should be a part of these conversations (p. 9). Ruecker et al.’s edited collection, *Retention, Persistence, and Writing Programs*, is groundbreaking in terms of bringing together retention discourse and innovative writing studies programs and course designs. It spans the areas of expertise that composition professionals can bring to retention discussions and offers theoretical exposition, historical contexts, and practical examples of innovative approaches writing programs are starting to implement in order to support retention. These include critical pedagogy programming (Buyserie, Plemons, & Freitag Ericson, 2017), variations on the writing studio (Chemishanova & Snead, 2017), and developmental learning communities (Wolff Murphy & Hartlaub, 2017), among others. Yet, there are not any chapters in this collection about summer bridge programming, in keeping with the general absence of this type of scholarship in other composition studies publications.

This gap in the literature persists despite the fact that writing programs are often enmeshed in various ways in supporting bridge experiences. They send trained writing instructors to teach bridge program classes, and students’ first experiences of college writing may have been in a bridge program. Yet, in the field of writing studies, how much do we know about what is happening in bridge programs, and do these initiatives support composition studies models of teaching writing? McCurrie’s 2009 article, “Measuring Success in Summer Bridge Programs: Retention Efforts and Basic Writing,” is one of the few in composition studies that focuses on summer bridge experiences. McCurrie argued that the definitions of success from student support professionals, basic writing instructors who teach bridge program writing classes, and students themselves do not always line up. He claimed that the perspectives of

students and basic writing instructors are valuable in discussions of student success and programmatic evaluations, even though policy makers, politicians, and administrators may overlook them (p. 46-47). In expanding on MCurrie's argument for more research on bridge programs, this dissertation draws on the history, theoretical lenses, and practical applications of composition studies as well as funds of knowledge approaches.

### **III. Funds of Knowledge Approaches to Higher Education**

Funds of knowledge pedagogies center around the often-unacknowledged skills, abilities, knowledge, and experiences that diverse populations of students bring to the classroom. Taken together, funds of knowledge pedagogies comprise one approach that emphasizes students' assets, instead of their deficits. Writing studies scholars and practitioners have attempted to bring other asset-based approaches into their classrooms in recent years, albeit under different names. These pedagogies include translanguaging (Horner, 2011; Parmegiani, 2014), student-led ethnography (Murie, Rojas Collins, & Detzner, 2004), storytelling (Mlynarczyk & Babbitt, 2002; Parmegiani, 2014), students' right to their own language (Gilyard & Richardson, 2001), code-meshing (Young, 2010), and hybrid literacies (McCrary, 2005), among others. While these approaches are not specifically termed "funds of knowledge," the goal is for diverse student populations to learn how to navigate the university by using their prior experiences as important repositories of knowledge. Not all writing instructors are aware of these approaches, however. And in the context of the wider university, much work remains to bring various pedagogies and program structures to their full potential in terms of emphasizing students' knowledges.

In their groundbreaking edited collection, *Funds of Knowledge in Higher Education: Honoring Students' Cultural Experiences and Resources as Strengths*, Kiyama and Rios-Aguilar (2018) argued that a more intentional application of funds of knowledge approaches to higher

education is necessary to counter the predominantly deficit-based literature on college access, persistence, and success” (p. 4). In validating students’ funds of knowledge, administrators and instructors in higher education can build strategically from the sociolinguistic, cultural, and intellectual resources of students and their families. Kiyama and Rios-Aguilar even claim that funds of knowledge can improve teaching and learning outcomes (p. 5).

Scholars disagree on the uses of the terms “funds of knowledge” and “capital,” as the two are frequently conflated and thus misused. According to Edwards, “social capital” includes the resources that individuals and organizations have access to due to social relationships (as cited in Kiyama and Rios-Aguilar, 2018, p. 8). As a concept, social capital is most often associated with the work of sociologist, anthropologist, and philosopher Bourdieu and sociologist Coleman. Bourdieu’s concept of “cultural capital” refers to cultural and linguistic sets of knowledge and abilities that are passed on to future generations by families (p. 11). While these terms are inextricably bound up with social class, power, and economic status, the term “funds of knowledge” in general is not so. All families possess funds of knowledge in the form of specific skill sets, experiences, strengths, and abilities, and they have the potential to pass them on to their children: “students (and households and communities) from all different socioeconomic strata have funds of knowledge” (p. 18). Yet, drawing on the work of Lubienski, Kiyama (2010/2018) maintained that not all families have capital, that is to say, societal power: “For example, cultural practices in highly segregated neighborhoods do not garner enough power outside of their local expression to be considered forms of capital” (p. 12). These practices, such as linguistic diversity and the use of hip hop as a form of resistance, do not have currency outside their communities. Due to this, they are more appropriately categorized as “funds of knowledge,” not “capital.”

This debate over how the word “capital” is used in the context of funds of knowledge is crucial to this study’s analysis of bridge program websites because I draw heavily from Yosso’s (2005) article “Whose Culture Has Capital?: A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth.” Yosso argued that funds of knowledge are forms of community wealth that can be deployed strategically, and her article lists six types of community cultural wealth in terms of capital (i.e., “aspirational capital,” “linguistic capital”). These categories offer a list of knowledge areas that diverse student populations often possess. Thus, they provide an understanding of the types of knowledge bridge programs could be recognizing in their participants. Yet, Yosso’s approach is not without critique. Kiyama and Rios-Aguilar (2018) argued that Yosso’s article misconstrued the concept of capital, since utilizing funds of knowledge outside of one’s home community does not always economically benefit people. Misusing the term “capital” involves “perpetuating educational deficit models” by ignoring “larger systemic issues of power or social conflict within educational systems” (Kiyama & Rios-Aguilar, 2018, p. 20, p. 18). Kiyama and Rios-Aguilar acknowledged that it is important to recognize and validate the funds of knowledge of underrepresented students as valuable, but not to do so without also providing “the theoretical grounding to analyze power structures, domination processes, and social reproduction” (p. 21). They called for a complementary framework between larger theories of power and capital to be utilized alongside funds of knowledge approaches. Due to this critique, the categories of capital that Yosso (2005) provided should more accurately be understood as categories of knowledge, and I render them as such in this dissertation (e.g., “aspirational capital” becomes “aspirational knowledge”).

Since I draw on Yosso’s (2005) six categories throughout the dissertation to analyze the website descriptions in light of funds of knowledge, I briefly detail them below.

- “Aspirational knowledge” includes “the ability to maintain hopes/dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers” (Yosso, 2005, p. 77). Even without foreseeable means or ability to achieve the goals, aspirational knowledge involves dreaming of a different future and a better life for one’s children, despite objective obstacles (p. 78).
- “Familial knowledge” refers to kinship bonds that serve as models for caring, coping, and providing and that minimize isolation (p. 79).
- “Linguistic knowledge” includes “the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style” (p. 78). In many instances, students of color have bilingual or multilingual skill sets, as well as experience with storytelling, oral histories, and parables (p. 78).
- “Social knowledge” refers to the “networks of people and community services” that “provide both instrumental and emotional support to navigate society’s institutions” (p. 79-80). People of color might use social knowledge to attain health care, education, legal justice, or employment, and then give back to their community by sharing their knowledge with others (p. 80).
- “Navigational knowledge” includes resilience and the “skills of maneuvering through social institutions,” especially in racially-hostile spaces such as the university (p. 80).
- “Resistant knowledge” involves “cultural knowledge of the structures of racism and motivation to transform such oppressive structures” (p. 81). This knowledge includes resisting societal messages that devalue people of color (p. 81).

In my analysis, I draw on Yosso’s categories to analyze the website descriptions of a representative sample of summer bridge programs across the country, seeking to examine both

deficit-based discourse and discourse that is aligned with a funds of knowledge framework. As I coded the data, I looked for examples of the six categories, noting areas which even hinted at one of the concepts. The two most common categories across the data set, aspirational knowledge and familial knowledge, are discussed in detail in Chapter 4. I did not find examples of all categories in the data set, which suggests areas for future research (see Chapter 5).

I know of no other studies of summer bridge programs that examine funds of knowledge concepts within website descriptions. It is extremely important for writing program administrators, composition specialists, and others in higher education to examine the discourses surrounding bridge programs. As one of the first instances in which students encounter the university, bridge programs set the tone for students' experiences with higher education. This dissertation is a beginning step toward examining a modern-day student support structure, the summer bridge program, in light of the legacy of remediation.

#### **IV. Chapter Summaries**

Situated amid the diametrically opposed frameworks of remediation and funds of knowledge, this qualitative research study examines the website descriptions of bridge programs across the United States to understand the assumptions about students that are made manifest. By detailing exclusion of diverse student groups from higher education institutions in the name of standards, this chapter provided the historical context for deficit ways of viewing students.

In Chapter 2, I describe the methodological choices framing this project and review the programs in the data set. Chapter 2 presents the methodology for document analysis of twenty-two summer bridge program websites across thirteen unique institutions, including study sample, data collection, coding scheme, and the interpretive frame guiding the data analysis. In particular, the chapter explains the interpretive nature of this study's design and how Gee's

(2011a) technique for discourse analysis provided critical tools for making visible the latent assumptions in the language of summer bridge program websites.

Chapters 3 and 4 provide the results of the analysis that, taken together, demonstrate a complex discourse system. To contextualize the codes that emerged, Chapter 3 provides a brief overview of the students the programs serve and the units in which the programs are housed by discussing the *student subject position and program parameters code*. Chapter 3, at first, illustrates how deficit discourse is present in the ways that summer bridge programs define students and the support they need. In reviewing some of the most frequent codes (*academic/study skills, college knowledge, and relationships*), I argue that emphases on these concepts served to position bridge programs as the benevolent giver of these things instead of presenting students as capable of building on their skills and existing knowledges. It is as if bridge programs are saying that students' prior knowledges, skills, and experiences cannot possibly help them in the new context of university life. So, the deficit model is deeply embedded, if now more subtly than in the days of "remedial programming," in the bridge program as it imagines itself and its objectives institutionally. The majority of programs in the data set unintentionally operated from deficit-based understandings of students. However, a few programs were more oriented toward a funds of knowledge approach, which I explore in Chapter 4 as a foil of deficit discourse. Chapter 4 provides examples from eight total programs in the data set (and a thick description of one program) whose website materials contained content related to either the *aspirational knowledge* code (Yosso, 2005), the *familial knowledge* code (Yosso, 2005), or both. The chapter concludes with an analysis of bridge programs as figured worlds (Holland, Lachiotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998).

To conclude, Chapter 5 articulates this study's implications for critical higher education and composition studies conversations. In addition, it provides a series of recommendations for applying a funds of knowledge approach to summer bridge programs as well as suggestions for future research. If applied in a manner consistent with its original framing, funds of knowledge can allow colleges and universities to fundamentally re-conceptualize how they view and meaningfully respond to diverse groups of students. This would entail designing curriculum that directs students to analyze their own experiential knowledge and to weave their own strategies for success in with those suggested by university faculty and staff. It would involve professional development for instructors who teach in the bridge programs. In the best case scenario, the implementation of the funds of knowledge approach would be followed by meaningful assessment mechanisms to address its impact on various measures of student success. Ultimately, this research places the onus on the institution to become a more inclusive university space for all students.

## Chapter 2

### Methodology

#### **I. Overview of Chapter**

To situate my project, this chapter provides a researcher positionality statement, which describes my level of involvement with and personal commitment to U Arizona's New Start Summer Program. I then address the exigency for studying bridge program websites and provide contextual information for the bridge program websites in this study's data set. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the methodological choices guiding this research, including the interpretive paradigm of qualitative research, the choice to analyze existing documents, and the selection of qualitative coding and discourse analysis to make sense of patterns in the bridge program websites.

#### **II. One Program's Story Meets My Own: A Statement of Positionality**

My interest in summer bridge programs was sparked by my role as an instructor in the New Start Summer Program at U Arizona. The two summers I taught in this program comprised some of the most formative educational experiences of my life. Founded in 1969, the New Start Summer Program is "a 6-week summer program aimed at increasing the success and retention of incoming University freshmen, with a focus on Arizona residents from first-generation or lower-income backgrounds" (New Start Summer Program, 2017). As one of the oldest credit-bearing transition programs in the country, the program has long been hailed as a positive part of the UA. Students in this program have shown an increase in retention from the first year to the second year (Cabrera et al., 2013), and some administrators of U Arizona started their college journey in

this program. I have a complex relationship with the subject of my dissertation, as the New Start Summer Program is one of the programs included in the data set for this project.

Many of the students in my New Start courses were first-generation, students of color, or from rural areas or reservations. Most spoke a language other than English at home. As a result, they were highly proficient in discourses other than academic discourse. I was able to see how a program focused on Tinto's notion of "academic and social integration" could be highly influential to the first college experiences of bridge program participants (New Start Summer Program, 2017). I am deeply appreciative of several aspects of the program as it works to integrate students' identities into their intellectual and social lives on campus. I see the incredible value of the New Start Academic Conference, a two-day on-campus conference that includes presentations and poster sessions from all New Start students. And when I realized New Start fully funds students who are eligible for the Pell Grant (76.9% of New Start 2017 students), I understood this program as rooted in equity and opportunity for all students. I have donated to the New Start Summer Program Scholarship Fund in memory of my mentor Terrance Portis, the first person to encourage me to consider systemic causes of student resistance and poor academic performance. I love being a part of the New Start community, and I see it as key to my professional and personal identities.

My background as a scholar of basic writing, community engagement, and prison writing also influenced how I view the spaces of summer bridge programs—as sites of immense possibility. I have been a facilitator of Borderlands Theater's Barrio Stories Project (oral history theatrical event centering on art as social justice), a writing instructor at the Arizona State Prison Complex, and both a graduate assistant and undergraduate tutor in writing centers. Each of these spaces looks at writing and communication as powerful tools for achieving something. Whether

it is tangible, such as a theatrical production or a writing course completion certificate for a parole board, or whether it promotes a sense of self-identity or efficacy, I see writing as a site of engagement.

The New Start Summer Program, with its emphasis on writing and scholarly communication, is no exception. As I came to know my students, I found areas in which my students' prior experiences surprised and challenged me. For example, I found that over half of my students were bilingual (predominantly in Spanish and English), and one of my students spoke five languages (predominantly in Hindi and English). Many were children of immigrants, immigrants themselves, or Generation 1.5 students, a term for U.S. educated children of first-generation immigrants or other students with "life experiences that span two or more countries, cultures, and languages" (Roberge, 2009, p. 4). These students possessed aspirational knowledge; they often wrote about achieving their dreams of college graduation to honor the sacrifice of their families. They brought linguistic diversity and aspirational knowledge to the table, but I was not prepared as an instructor to recognize or respond to these sets of knowledge. As a teaching assistant with five years of experience teaching writing and one year of experience as a Graduate Assistant Director of U Arizona's writing program, I am especially attuned to issues facing instructors as they adapt their teaching for diverse student populations. I have learned much about student-centered pedagogical approaches from my U Arizona courses in Rhetoric, Composition, and the Teaching of English and from Teaching Second Language Writing, a course in Second Language Acquisition and Teaching. As an administrator of U Arizona's writing center, I helped prepare tutors to work with diverse groups of students such as students who speak English as an Additional Language (EAL) or students who use non-dominant varieties of English such as Chicano English or African-American English Vernacular (AAVE).

In U Arizona's writing program, I received an in-depth level of mentorship and professional development regarding the teaching of writing during my first year as a graduate teaching assistant as part of the preceptorship course. However, I did not receive explicit professional developing for working with diverse populations of students from the preceptorship course or from the New Start training sessions for writing instructors. I wondered if other instructors felt the same way, and the exigency for this dissertation was born. Working from the lens of my own frustration, I see the need for more theoretical applications of funds of knowledge to higher education in order to better serve all students, especially diverse student populations.

I see bridge programs and their enormous potential for making an affirming space for students on campus. They offer mentors, friendship groups, and academic assistance to thousands of students across the country every year. Yet, I also must recognize the harmful aspects of even the most well-intentioned program. Bridge programs are still part of a system of singling out students for extra help, predominantly due to cultural, sociolinguistic, and economic differences, whether we call it resources, supplemental instruction, an extended orientation, or remediation (Adams, et al., 2014; Fox, 1999; Rose, 1989). As I endeavor to work with diverse populations of students, I am committed to continue engaging in critical reflexivity about my positionality in the New Start Summer Program as well as in the world to avoid unintentionally perpetuating social inequities. As a white, middle-class, able-bodied, cisgendered, heterosexual U.S. citizen, whose first language is English, I remain cognizant of my privileged position both in the university community and in society, a positionality that in many ways contrasts that of the diverse student populations summer bridge programs are typically designed to serve (McCurrie, 2009, p. 31).

At the same time, I recognize my complicity in a system that does not always value students and their learning needs. Recall the work of Soliday (2002) from Chapter 1. Drawing on historical research, Soliday argued that remedial requirements were created by institutions to help them maintain “elite” status (p. 50). She located remediation in the desire for institutions to take care of their own needs, not those of their students. Similarly, Ruecker, Shepherd, Estrem, and Brunk-Chavez (2017) acknowledged that the privileging of retention initiatives in the last ten years has often yielded “changes grounded more in the economic interests of institutions and governments and not the ethical imperative to help students succeed” (p. 7). While initiatives that increase retention are greatly prioritized by upper-level university administrators, the way that they are implemented is sometimes at odds with effective practices for teaching and learning from composition studies (McCurrie, 2009). Taken together, the research from McCurrie (2009), Ruecker et al. (2017), and Soliday (2002) demonstrates the need for scholars in composition studies to be increasingly aware of how complicit writing and student success programs may be in larger movements toward neoliberal ideals. One place to start is by analyzing how these programs represent themselves publicly. In the next section, I will explore the exigency for studying the website materials of bridge programs as they offer a glimpse of how the programs operate within larger university structures.

### **III. Exigency for Studying Bridge Program Websites**

Despite the dearth of scholarly attention on program websites (Knight, Courant Rife, Alexander, Loncharich, & DeVoss, 2009, p. 191), these online spaces provide a valuable window into the discourses that create and shape programs (Barrios, 2004; Knight et al., 2009; Pack Sheffield, 2015). In their analysis of 150 professional and technical writing program websites, Knight et al. (2009) argued that they are “important institutional spaces that serve as

interfaces to particular values, beliefs, and practices” (p. 192). What is included or excluded from a program’s website communicates information about the values and assumptions undergirding the program, department, college, or institution. Program websites might be tailored toward “future and current students; parents; high school admissions counselors; a range of university academic advisors; prospective and current faculty; departmental and college staff; departmental, college, and university administration; peer institutions; collaborating and partner institutions; and others who are sometimes invisible and visible to us” (Knight et al., 2009, p. 191). I would also add potential and current donors as well as accrediting agencies. In examining program websites, my work is interested in how programs promote a particular mission for the institution to a range of potential audiences and how students and bridge programs come to be defined as a part of that narrative. My research offers a method for becoming critically aware of online representations of students.

While program websites can reveal latent assumptions, it is crucial to keep in mind that they “are created and live within institutional and infrastructural hierarchies, and these hierarchies are often invisible to us” (Knight et al., 2009, p. 190). Individual programs do not always have the funds or personnel to create and manage an online presence; thus, content and design can be dictated by a webmaster elsewhere in the institution, such as a university relations office or through a centralized information technology unit (p. 196). Due to this, bridge program administrators may not have the agency they desire to realize the full potential of their websites. Some aspects of design and content may be outside of the bridge program administrator’s control. I further discuss the implications of this phenomenon in the limitations section at the end of this chapter.

Yet, given institutional freedom and resources, bridge program administrators can use their websites for more than just communicating facts about the program. Websites can help maintain a relationship with stakeholders and establish a program's identity, among other possibilities. To do this, websites need to move beyond merely "the dispensing of information," which was common among sites reviewed by Knight et al. (2009, p. 191). This is easier said than done: ". . . these sites often focus less on acts we value (e.g. paying attention to users, representing our work and pedagogical beliefs, crafting and supporting a culture of writing) and more on promoting a particular image of the institution" (p. 191). Critical attention to websites can help reveal aspects that are "unhelpful or that disrupt a program's identity" (p. 200). In expanding on the work of Barrios (2004), Knight et al. (2009), and Pack Sheffield (2015), I seek to explore the ways in which institutions promote particular versions of themselves as they define students and the support they need. My analysis moves beyond "the dispensing of information" (Knight et al., 2009, p. 191) to focus on the descriptions of students in each program, the location of bridge programs within the university structure, and their approach to student support.

In the next section, I provide contextual information for the bridge program websites in this study's data set. The chapter concludes with a rationale of the methodological choices that shape this project as well as the limitations of this research.

#### **IV. Bridge Program Websites in the Data Set**

To be successful, the websites of bridge programs need to appeal to multiple stakeholders—students and their families, faculty, upper-level university administrators such as deans and provosts, and donors. The information that is included or excluded depends in a large part on the degree to which each stakeholder exerts influence over individual programs, as well

as institutional website policies and other limitations. Typical bridge program websites include an overview of the program; information about courses, including credits and scheduling; orientation requirements; student resources, such as links to the writing center, tutoring, advising, and the library; information about on-campus housing; extra-curricular events, such as karaoke nights, field trips, or sports outings; the application process; program policies and costs; frequently asked questions; and a contacts page. Additionally, some of them include photos, videos, student testimonials, and a donation form.

### *Data Selection*

As there are hundreds of bridge programs across the country, I limited this study to U Arizona and its fifteen peer institutions, as specified by the Arizona Board of Regents' Approved University Peer List (2009). I chose to use the ABOR list in order to find programs that are operating in institutionally similar ways. Even though each institution on the list is grounded in its own historical, political, socioeconomic, and cultural context, the bridge programs from institution to institution on this list may be more comparable to one another than institutions that cater to varying regional needs, such as a two-year or community college or a small liberal arts college. Of the institutions on the ABOR list, there are thirteen with at least one program that meets the data set criteria for this study. All of these institutions are listed as "Doctoral Universities: Very High Research Activity" by The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education,<sup>4</sup> and they are all large universities, with student populations ranging from 29,911-59,837.<sup>5</sup> All institutions are listed as "4-year or above" and "public." In addition, all of

---

<sup>4</sup> Information from the Carnegie Classification throughout this dissertation has taken into account the version released in 2018 (Carnegie Classification, 2019a).

<sup>5</sup> The notable exception is University of California, Merced, which is listed as "Doctoral Universities: High Research Activity" and has 7,967 students.

the institutions are listed as “full-time”<sup>6</sup> and “more selective”<sup>7</sup> under “undergraduate profile,” except University of California, Merced (UC Merced) and U Arizona. Instead of “more selective,” UC Merced is listed as “selective”<sup>8</sup> and U Arizona is listed as “inclusive.”<sup>9</sup> Of the thirteen institutions, six are listed as “lower transfer-in,” which means that “fewer than 20% of entering students are transfer students,” and seven are listed as “higher transfer-in,” meaning at least 20% are transfer students (Carnegie Classifications, 2019b). Though each university in the study is unique, the fact that they share characteristics allows for comparisons across institutions regarding how they understand students and the support they need.

I found the programs by conducting a Google Search for “name of university” and “summer program.” I also explored institutional websites to look for first-year experience, academic preparation, or summer experience programs. From these programs, I included those that satisfied the following conditions:

- (1) are exclusively for incoming first-time, first-year undergraduate students at the university they will attend in the semester immediately following the program;
- (2) occur in the summer between high school graduation and the start of the subsequent fall semester;

---

<sup>6</sup> This category signifies that at least 80 percent of undergraduates are enrolled full-time (Carnegie Classification, 2019b).

<sup>7</sup> “Test score data for first-year students indicate that these institutions are more selective in admissions (80th to 100th percentile of selectivity among all baccalaureate institutions)” (Carnegie Classification, 2019b).

<sup>8</sup> Test score data for first-year students indicate that these institutions are selective in admissions (40th to 80th percentile of selectivity among all baccalaureate institutions)” (Carnegie Classification, 2019b).

<sup>9</sup> These institutions either did not report test score data or the scores indicate that they extend educational opportunity to a wide range of students with respect to academic preparation and achievement (Carnegie Classification, 2019b).

- (3) include an on-campus residential option or requirement;
- (4) include academic courses taught on campus during a period of more than one week; and
- (5) have their own websites or own sections on official university websites.

These criteria help to differentiate bridge programs from visits of several days up to one week intended to expose younger students to college life prior to high school graduation. My research is interested in programs that specifically support students who are transitioning from high school to university life. Students in these programs are all first-year undergraduates who would have matriculated in the fall semester immediately following the program.<sup>10</sup> Narrowing the data set in this way allowed me to examine programs operating at one of the most historically-contentious positions in a student’s college trajectory—the point of access. At times, multiple programs from the same institution fit these criteria; in rare instances, none of the programs at an institution qualified. Table 1 details the twenty-two programs in the data set.

**Table 1. Data Set and Contextual Information**

<i>Program</i>	<i>Institution</i>	<i>Housed In/ Sponsored By</i>	<i>STEM/ International</i>	<i>Writing Course</i>
<i>College Summer Institute</i>	University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) (land-grant)	New Student and Transition Programs	Neither	Option
<i>Early Fall Start<sup>11</sup></i>	University of Washington (U Washington) (Seattle Campus)	Continuum College at University of Washington	Neither	Option

<sup>10</sup> Some of the programs consider students in enrolled in the bridge program to be already matriculated.

<sup>11</sup> Early Fall Start is a part of the newly-established Continuum College at U Washington, which seeks to provide educational programming tailored to the “new traditional, nontraditional learner,” which I took to mean in terms of

**Table 1. Data Set and Contextual Information (continued)**

<i>Engineering and Science Success Academy</i>	Michigan State University (Michigan State) (land-grant)	Michigan Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (MI-LSAMP) and the Diversity Programs Office at Michigan State	STEM	Required
<i>Freshman Summer Bridge Program</i>	UCLA (land-grant)	Center for Excellence in Engineering and Diversity	STEM	Not offered
<i>Freshman Summer Program</i>	UCLA (land-grant)	New Student Programs within the Academic Advancement Program	Neither	Option
<i>International Student Summer Institute</i>	University of Wisconsin-Madison (UW-Madison) (land-grant)	UW-Madison Summer Term	International	Required
<i>Learning Edge Academic Program</i>	The Pennsylvania State University (Penn State) (Main Campus) (land-grant)	Office for Summer Session	Neither	Option
<i>Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP) STEM Bridge Program</i>	The Ohio State University (Ohio State) (land-grant)	Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP) Program within the Office of Diversity and Inclusion	STEM	Technical Comm.—unclear if required

---

age based on the website. Although Continuum College is somewhat separate from U Washington as a whole, I included Early Fall Start in the data set because it meets the criteria and because it provides a window into how one university handles nontraditional students at the point of admission, the crucial threshold of access.

**Table 1. Data Set and Contextual Information (continued)**

<i>Mechanical Engineering Summer Launch</i>	UW-Madison (land-grant)	UW-Madison Summer Term	STEM	Not offered
<i>New Start Summer Program</i>	The University of Arizona (U Arizona) (land-grant)	New Student Experiences within Enrollment Management and Student Affairs Advancement	Neither	Option
<i>Special Transitional Enrichment Program</i>	University of California, Davis (UC Davis) (land-grant)	Student Academic Success Center	Neither	Option
<i>The Successful Transition and Enhanced Preparation for Undergraduates Program (STEPUP) Summer Bridge Program</i>	University of Florida (U Florida) (land-grant)	Office of Student Transition and Retention	STEM	Not offered
<i>Summer Bridge</i>	Penn State (Main Campus) (land-grant)	Millennium Scholars Program	STEM	Professional comm. skills—unclear if required
<i>Summer Bridge</i>	The University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin)	Longhorn Center for Academic Excellence in the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement	Neither	Required

**Table 1. Data Set and Contextual Information (continued)**

<i>Summer Bridge Experience</i>	Ohio State (land-grant)	Young Scholars Program within the Office of Diversity and Inclusion	Neither	Option
<i>Summer Bridge Program</i>	The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC Chapel Hill)	Academic Enrichment Programs	Neither	Option
<i>Summer Bridge Program for Scientists and Engineers</i>	University of Maryland (U Maryland) (College Park campus) (land-grant)	The Louis Stokes Alliances for Minority Participation (LSAMP) Program at the University of Maryland and the A. James Clark School of Engineering	STEM	Not offered
<i>Summer Collegiate Experience</i>	UW-Madison (land-grant)	Center for Academic Excellence in the College of Letters and Science, with PEOPLE (Precollege Enrichment Opportunity Program for Learning Excellence) and the First Wave Scholarship Program	Neither	Required
<i>Summer Start</i>	UC Davis (land-grant)	Office of Undergraduate Education & University Extension	International	Option
<i>TRIO Excel Summer Program</i>	Michigan State (land-grant)	MSU TRIO Student Support Services	Neither	Required

**Table 1. Data Set and Contextual Information (continued)**

<i>UAdvantage First Year Experience</i> <sup>12</sup>	U Arizona (land-grant)	New Student Experiences within Enrollment Management and Student Affairs Advancement	Neither	Option
<i>UC Merced Summer Bridge First-Year Program</i>	University of California, Merced (UC Merced) (land-grant)	Office of Undergraduate Education	Neither	Option—unclear if required

*Overview of Selected Programs*

The programs collectively belong to thirteen unique institutions, ten of which are land-grant universities. Land-grant colleges and universities are institutions formed out of the Morrill Acts of 1862, 1890, and 1994 (Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities, n.d.). The Morrill Act of 1862 allocated lands to states to be sold or used for profit. The proceeds were to be used to establish a college with a mission of serving working class students of the area (Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities, n.d.). Prior to this, higher education was generally not accessible to agricultural and industrial workers (Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities, n.d.). Originally offering agricultural and mechanical arts, land-grant colleges later became universities with wider areas of study. In every U.S. state and territory, there is at least one land-grant institution; in some states, there are more than one due to follow-up legislation after the original Morrill Act in 1862. The Second Morrill Act (1890) increased the presence of African-Americans in higher education institutions, and the third (1994) conferred land-grant status to Native American tribal colleges. All institutions in the data set are land-grant,

---

<sup>12</sup> Effective summer 2019, the Uadvantage First Year Experience program at U Arizona has been discontinued, although this was not the case at the time of data collection.

except for The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC Chapel Hill); University of Washington (Seattle Campus) (U Washington) and The University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin).

There are several interesting patterns across the twenty-two programs. A great majority of them offer credit-bearing courses, and most require a combination of tuition and fees. While most programs are open to all students, a few are by invitation only. Some of the programs are stand-alone, and others are part of a longer-term support structure, such as the first two years of an undergraduate student's experience. Several are part of divisions related to student affairs, new students, transitions, and student support, and a few are housed in institutional diversity and inclusion programs. Of the twenty-two programs, only four do not offer some type of writing course. In five of the programs, the writing course is required for all students. Nine of the programs offer a writing course as an option for students.

Seven of the programs are solely for students interested in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. However, STEM is one of multiple descriptors for the type of student served in these programs. Three of the STEM-focused bridge programs (Engineering and Science Success Academy at Michigan State University [Michigan State], the Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation [LSAMP] STEM Bridge Program at The Ohio State University [Ohio State], and the Summer Program for Scientists and Engineers at the University of Maryland [U Maryland]) are affiliated with the Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP) National Science Foundation programming. The goal of LSAMP is to “assist universities and colleges in diversifying” the STEM workforce nationally “by increasing the number of STEM baccalaureate and graduate degrees awarded to populations historically underrepresented in these disciplines: African Americans, Hispanic Americans, American

Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and Native Pacific Islanders” (NSF, 2019). LSAMP funds “alliances that implement comprehensive, evidence-based, innovative, and sustained strategies that ultimately result in the graduation of well-prepared, highly-qualified students from underrepresented minority groups who pursue graduate studies or careers in STEM” (NSF, 2019). Given this funding stream, it makes sense for universities to capitalize upon support opportunities for their students in STEM.

Two programs are expressly for international students: UW-Madison’s International Student Summer Institute and UC-Davis’s Summer Start. The website for UW’s Early Fall Start has a specific section of information geared toward international students. However, they are free to join the same program as their domestic counterparts. In addition, the College Summer Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) mentions international students as having a different application deadline for the program than domestic students. Beyond these exceptions, the program websites in the data set do not usually mention international students.

While some programs are local to specific populations at various institutions, others are affiliated with federal initiatives. Michigan State’s TRIO Excel Summer Program is affiliated with TRIO Support Services, one of the U.S. Department of Education’s Federal TRIO programs. These programs are “federal outreach and student services programs designed to identify and provide services for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds” (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). They are meant to assist “low-income individuals, first-generation college students, and individuals with disabilities” from middle school through postbaccalaureate programs by providing funding to public and private agencies and organizations that serve these groups (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). TRIO programs are a result of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 as well as the Higher Education Act of 1965 and its various

amendments (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). This legislation was passed in the midst of decades-long debates about remedial education, open access, developmental education, and basic writing (see Chapter 1) and serve as the federal government's attempt to level the playing field for students.

Chapter 3 provides an analysis of key patterns in the data set. In the next section, I explore the methodological choices governing this project.

## **V. Methodology and Methods**

### *Interpretive Paradigm of Qualitative Research*

Since a main goal of this project is to understand the assumptions about students and writing instruction that are made manifest by the discourse on bridge program websites, interpretivism is the most relevant approach. Subscribers of various forms of the interpretive paradigm of qualitative research “share the goal of understanding human ideas, actions, and interactions in specific contexts or in terms of the wider culture” (Glesne, 2014, p. 9). By describing ““what is”” (p. 10), researchers in the interpretive tradition focus on meaning, contextualization, and interpretation in an inductive approach: “The ontological belief that tends to accompany interpretive traditions, therefore, portrays a world in which reality is socially constructed, complex, and ever changing” (p. 9). Researchers seek to understand “these constructed realities” (p. 9) through individual perspectives of members in the same social group (p. 9). In the interpretive tradition, researchers hold that individual points of view can paint a broader picture of “some cultural patterns of thought and action for that group as a whole” (p. 9). In focusing on how individuals and groups make meaning of their world, researchers following this approach have utilized discourse analysis, ethnography, oral history, and grounded theory methodologies, among others.

This project sought to understand how bridge programs describe students and the support they need. I employed tools from the interpretive tradition to uncover latent assumptions that are being made in the website descriptions. Because I am interested not in some objective truth but in the contextual beliefs and values of bridge programs and the institutions with which they are affiliated, this paradigm is most relevant. Qualitative research is not always an appropriate fit for a given project. In comparison to quantitative orientations, it is less generalizable. The bridge programs in this study do not necessarily represent all (or even most) bridge programs in the country. Nor are the findings from this project applicable to all bridge programs. At the same time, qualitative research is less replicable than quantitative approaches. Conducting the same study with a different set of bridge programs may yield different, and even conflicting, results. Yet the benefits of qualitative research, which include rich exploration of a context and a focus on individual and group meaning-making, outweigh these limitations.

### *Document Analysis*

Most qualitative analysis focuses on interviews, observations, document or artifact analysis, or some combination of these. This study operates from an epistemological stance that values documents produced by people as important. The way language itself operates in institutions provides insights into the assumptions and perspectives guiding the words and actions of people. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained that document and artifact analysis have been “underused” (p. 180). A document refers to “a wide range of written, visual, digital, and physical material relevant to the study” (p. 162). This material may include letters, organizational promotional materials, official records, blogs, et cetera (p. 163). As opposed to “researcher-generated” documents such as questionnaires and participant reflections, many documents are already present in the world before qualitative research begins (p. 174). Bridge program website

descriptions are an example of this type of document. As the researcher, I did not generate the documents; rather, I engaged in a systematic process of mining material from its original context on institutional websites. Bridge programs are an underexplored area of study, and a focus on website documents can yield a better understanding of the programs' motivations, policies, limitations, and potential.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) asserted that materials of this nature are a benefit: "They are a product of the context in which they were produced and therefore grounded in the real world" (p. 183). In comparison to interviews and observations, analyses of documents that already exist in the world may be less affected by the researcher's agenda. Merriam and Tisdell even claimed that this approach is "independent of a research agenda" (p. 183): "Unlike in interviewing and observation, the presence of the investigator does not alter what is being studied" (p. 182). Since all research is political as it reflects the researcher's conscious and unconscious biases (Lather, 1986; Powell & Takayoshi, 2012), I disagree with the extent of Merriam and Tisdell's claim. Even if data exists in the world, the researcher decides which parts to include, exclude, or focus on. This decision-making is informed by his or her prior experiences with this type of research and views on the research topic, among other considerations. However, I acknowledge that analyzing existing documents may be less affected by the researcher's positionality since those biases do not inform the production of documents in the same way that they do in questionnaires and participant reflections.

Other strengths of document analysis include the relative ease of access of the materials in terms of time and cost as well their ability to "be used in the same manner as data from interviews or observations" (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016, p. 182): "The data can furnish descriptive information, verify emerging hypotheses, advance new categories and hypotheses,

offer historical understanding, track change and development, and so on” (p. 182). At times, these qualitative tasks cannot be accomplished due to the limitations of document analysis: “Because documents generally are not produced for research purposes, the information they offer may not be in a form that is useful (or understandable) to the investigator” (p. 181). The researcher does not have the luxury of modifying several elements of data production to ensure that there is an exact match with the study’s research questions. He or she must be flexible and work with what information is available. This flexible stance is “particularly fitting in qualitative studies, which, by their very nature, are emergent in design and inductive in analysis” (p. 189). Because knowledge is approached through an inductive lens in qualitative inquiry, researchers have turned to systematic approaches to categorize and make sense of the data.

### *Approaches to Qualitative Coding*

When I reviewed possible methods for this project, I considered that I would be handling a large amount of data and looking for patterns across them related to the two frameworks, remediation and funds of knowledge. I needed to develop an efficient system for analyzing the website discourse from twenty-two bridge program websites in a consistent way across varying contexts and institutions. One systemic approach to categorizing data is qualitative coding. “A code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 4). Qualitative coding provides a window into the assumptions, motivations, values, and beliefs embedded in bridge programs and in their institutional contexts.

I began by copying and pasting the entire linguistic text<sup>13</sup> from each bridge program website<sup>14</sup> into Dedoose, the qualitative data analysis software I chose for this project. Dedoose allowed me to record and tag data within my coding scheme and manage large sets of information. I went through the text of each program line-by-line to look for patterns. I did not code every phrase or make codes out of every section, “only the most salient portions of the corpus related to the research questions” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 17). Some areas, such as a list of important dates for the program, were less relevant than others, such as descriptions of the students or the courses they would be taking. Throughout the coding process, I created analytic memos to document reflections on code choices and revisions as well as emergent patterns (Saldaña, 2016, p. 44).

At first, I engaged in initial (open) coding of two programs to look for patterns. I chose bridge program websites that were the most different from one another, Michigan State’s TRIO Excel Summer Program and UW’s Early Fall Start, in light of Bazeley and Jackson (2013), who argued that the potential for variety in early coding is increased if the second document contrasts meaningfully with the first (p. 69-70). By highlighting portions of the data in different colors and creating initial descriptors, I documented patterns from the websites. As I developed analytic memos about patterns in the data, I found concept (analytic) coding (Saldaña, 2016, p. 119) to be especially valuable. Since concept coding generates “reflection on broader social constructs” (p. 120), it is an appropriate choice for this dissertation, which seeks to examine the broader social forces that are made manifest in bridge program discourse. Concept coding also works well with

---

<sup>13</sup> While visuals are certainly a generative area of focus for coding and discourse analysis, they are outside the scope of this project.

<sup>14</sup> I copied the full text of bridge program websites in the dataset as they existed in July 2018. Pages may have since changed.

studies that are theory-oriented as it allowed me to examine phrases and ideas related to this project’s two theoretical constructs, remediation and funds of knowledge. Concept coding affords researchers the ability to “transcend the local and particular of the study to more abstract or generalizable contexts” (p. 120), which was crucial as my analysis needed to transcend the specific contexts of each program website to compare them meaningfully across institutions. As I developed concept codes, I tracked them in Dedoose and developed a codebook including a definition of the code and examples for reference. Some codes warranted subcodes for nuance. For example, I later divided the code *college knowledge* into four subcodes. In other cases, I observed enough examples of a related concept to create a new, more precise code to describe it. See Table 2 for an excerpted codebook of the final codes.

**Table 2. Excerpted Codebook**

<i>Parent Code</i>	<i>Child Code</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Examples</i>
<i>Student Subject Position and Program Parameters</i>		Descriptions of the student populations in the bridge programs as well as information about the program’s institutional location on campus.	<p>“Housed within the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI), YSP’s [Young Scholars Program] mission is to improve pre-college preparation, retention, and degree completion among academically talented, low-income, first-generation students.”</p> <p>“Done in collaboration with the Michigan Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation...”</p>

**Table 2. Excerpted Codebook (continued)**

<i>Academic/Study Skills</i>		Skills needed to succeed in academic courses, majors, and programs	<p>“The English language courses are focused on improving your academic English skills so you can understand university texts, assignments and lectures, and can better participate in class discussions.”</p> <p>“. . . important life skills, including time management, problem-solving, and smart study habits.”</p>
<i>College Knowledge<sup>15</sup></i>		Knowledge ABOUT what college will be like	
	<i>What College in General is Like</i>	Sample of navigating a college schedule, academics, or resources	<p>“To get a taste for what college life really will be like”</p> <p>“Helped me understand how college was different from high school academically”</p>
	<i>What this Particular Institution is Like</i>	Familiarity with the university	<p>“I was able to familiarize myself with buildings so I wouldn’t get lost my first week of classes.”</p> <p>“Life as a Longhorn”</p>
	<i>Geographical Orientation</i>	Getting to know the new city and surrounding area	<p>“Food, culture, and environment of Tucson”</p> <p>“Adjust to life in the United States”</p>

<sup>15</sup> My definition of the code *college knowledge* has been modified from Barnett et al., 2014.

Table 2. Excerpted Codebook (continued)

	<i>Institutional Expectations of Students</i>	Information provided by bridge program websites that helps students understand what is expected of them	<p>“Understand the requirements and expectations of being a student at a research institution”</p> <p>“Develop an understanding of the expectations and rigors of college level coursework”</p>
<i>Relationships</i>		Connections with faculty, staff, and other students	
	<i>Family</i>	Use of the term “family” to refer to the community of people, from friends and professors to mentors and staff, that students come to know	<p>“I can happily say that YSP [Young Scholars Program] is my family. . .”</p> <p>“A small, tight community of learners, living and working together in a family-like community”</p>
	<i>Connections with Peers</i>	Relationships with other first-year students in the bridge program	<p>“Chance to make friends that are more like myself”</p> <p>“Connections with peers who looked like me”</p>
	<i>Connections with Faculty, Staff, and/or Other Students</i>	Relationships with professional staff, such as advisors, success coaches, counselors, language coaches, residential coordinators, and community directors	<p>“Build connections with faculty across disciplines”</p> <p>“. . .small-class environment promotes instructor and student interaction and collaborative learning”</p>

**Table 2. Excerpted Codebook (continued)**

<i>Funds of Knowledge</i>		Skills, strengths, abilities, and knowledges that students already possess before they enter the university space	
	<i>Aspirational Knowledge</i>	“The ability to maintain hopes/dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers” (Yosso, 2005, p. 77)	“Achieving their academic and career goals”  “AAP encourages students to explore their talents and abilities, to believe in themselves, to set the highest standards for themselves, to aspire to academic and professional excellence”
	<i>Familial Knowledge</i>	Kinship bonds that provide models for caring, coping, and providing and that minimize isolation (Yosso, 2005, p. 79)	“We expect and encourage parent engagement from Interview Weekend until graduation.”  “STEP [Special Transitional Enrichment Program] recognizes that students have many people in their lives who have supported and encouraged their success leading to admittance...”
	<i>Linguistic Knowledge</i>	Using more than one language or style of communication as a skill or resource (Yosso, 2005, p.78)	Not found in the data

**Table 2. Excerpted Codebook (continued)**

	<i>Social Knowledge</i>	“Networks of people and community services” (p. 78); “peer and social contacts that provide both instrumental and emotional support to navigate society’s institutions” (Yosso, 2005, p.79-80)	Not found in the data
	<i>Navigational Knowledge</i>	“Skills of maneuvering through social institutions” (p. 80); social and psychological skills to thrive in racially-hostile spaces (Yosso, 2005, p. 80)	Not found in the data
	<i>Resistant Knowledge</i>	“Knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality” (p. 80); “cultural knowledge of the structures of racism and motivation to transform such oppressive structures” (Yosso, 2005, p. 81)	Not found in the data

After coding the first two programs, I realized that I was developing codes related to remediation, such as *academic/study skills*, which was one of the theoretical frameworks for this project and which helped me answer Research Question 1 (What do the website descriptions of bridge programs at a range of institutions reveal regarding assumptions about students and support they need?). However, I had not been creating codes related to funds of knowledge to address Research Question 2 (In what ways, if any, do these descriptions connect to funds of

knowledge?). I made another pass through the first two programs to look for any references to funds of knowledge concepts, but they were less prominent in the data. I decided to create codes for funds of knowledge concepts, even if they were mostly absent, as the absence of concepts can make powerful arguments. Unlike the codes related to remediation, I was not able to use a fully inductive process for generating concepts that were, for the most part, absent. Instead, I used the six categories from Yosso's (2005) article<sup>16</sup> and made them subcodes under a parent code, *funds of knowledge*: (1) *aspirational knowledge*; (2) *familial knowledge*; (3) *linguistic knowledge*; (4) *social knowledge*; (5) *navigational knowledge*; and (6) *resistant knowledge*.

After developing codes both inductively from the websites and from the categories provided by Yosso (2005), I moved beyond the first two programs to the remainder of the data set. I coded each program according to the emerging patterns and modified the codes as needed. Whenever an excerpt of data seemed to fit more than one category, I returned to the codebook to make comparisons, and I tried to choose the single most closely related code rather than double coding it. As I generated new codes, I moved back and forth between material I had already coded and new material. Saldaña (2016) noted that qualitative coding is inherently cyclical: “Coding *well* requires that you read, reread and reread yet again as you code, recode, and recode yet again” (p. 41). Each pass through the data is intended to bring the researcher closer to reality, which is ultimately unknowable in an absolute, objective sense. Yet the process of looking for patterns and categories to create assertions, themes, and theories can be highly generative, especially for a project with a large data set such as the one in this study.

---

<sup>16</sup> Kiyama and Rios-Aguilar (2018) argue that the categories Yosso provides should more accurately be understood as areas of knowledge rather than capital, and I render them as such in this dissertation. For a more thorough discussion of this shift, see Chapter 1.

Regarding coding as a method of analysis, there are several critiques. Saldaña (2016) addressed the argument that coding is problematic because it tries to be objective. While noting that objectivity is a “false god,” he acknowledged that different coders will experience, interpret, document, code, analyze, and write about the world differently (p. 40-41). In this project, I employed qualitative coding to reflect more deeply on assumptions that bridge programs across the country make about students and about the support they need. This method, while far from the level of objectivity sought after in experimental and quasi-experimental studies, afforded a systemic approach for sifting through large amounts of data. Saldaña also noted that qualitative coding has been criticized as a mechanism of mere counting, but he explains that “. . . frequency of occurrence is not necessarily an indicator of significance” (p. 41). Even a code that only appears two or three times across the data set may generate an important insight (p. 25). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) corroborated this: “Quantification need not be a component of content analysis, however. Rather, the *nature* of the data can also be assessed” (p. 179) to discover “latent meaning” (p. 180). In this dissertation, I explored meaning across the codes and within their various contexts instead of counting them to determine importance and relevance. While I paid more attention to patterns that occurred more frequently in the data, my coding and subsequent analysis did not depend on counting.

#### *Discourse Analysis: Fill In and Figured Worlds Tools*

While coding is “primarily an interpretive act,” it is used as a systematic way of reflecting on the data before performing more extensive analysis (Saldaña, 2016, p. 5). I used coding in this way to identify patterns for further exploration in discourse analysis.

As a strategy to help interpret the codes, I drew on discourse analysis to explore the deeper meanings of the patterns, categories, and themes. I chose to use Gee’s (2011a) system of

discourse analysis as “the study of language-in-use” (p. ix). Gee asserted that discourse analysis focuses on “language at use in the world, not just to say things but to do things” (p. ix). Because “language has meaning only in and through social practices” (Gee, 2011b, p.12), instantiations of communication must be studied in their specific contexts and in light of the fact that we use language to “say things, do things, and be things” (p. 3). In studying language in use in the world, Gee claimed that “all discourse analysis is critical analysis,” as language is inherently involved in the distribution of social goods (p. 10). Social goods, “anything some people in a society want and value” (p. 5), include being accepted as a Native American, good student, or an avid bird watcher (p. 3). Because language is so closely tied to the pursuit of social goods, “discourse analysis can illuminate problems and controversies in the world” (p. 10). For Gee, “discourse analysis must have a point,” some area to focus on as “global citizens” (p. 12). In this project, I applied discourse analysis to illuminate the assumptions made about students in bridge programs and the support they need. The point of the analysis was to move from an understanding of how bridge programs characterize diverse groups of students to strategies for recognizing the knowledges that these students bring to the classroom space. The intended outcome of coding the websites and analyzing the codes through discourse analysis was to better support students and their learning.

I drew on two discourse analysis tools from Gee (2011a): the *Fill In Tool* and the *Figured Worlds Tool*. According to Gee (2011a), the *Fill In Tool* asks several questions: (1) “Based on what was said and the context in which it was said, what needs to be filled in here to achieve clarity?”; (2) “What is not being said overtly, but is still assumed to be known or inferable?”; and (3) “What knowledge, assumptions, and inferences do listeners have to bring to bear in order for this communication to be clear and understandable and received in the way the speaker

intended?” (p. 195). This project focused on assumptions that are being made about students and the support they need. These beliefs are usually under the surface, so the *Fill In Tool* was especially valuable for extracting meaning. I modified Gee’s final question to ask not what the speaker intended but what the speaker may have meant because I am more interested in what is being covered up by the discourse (overtly or inadvertently) than the speaker’s intention.

To use the *Fill In Tool*, analysts must “make things new and strange” (Gee, 2011a, p. 8): “By making what is natural to us—what we usually take for granted—new and strange, we can begin consciously to think about all the knowledge, assumptions, and inferences we bring to any communication” (p. 8). This process allows the researcher to bring a high level of attention and focus to discourse, a level normally reserved for outsiders new to the language. In the process of making things strange, we may even “see aspects of our taken-for-granted cultural knowledge and assumptions—or those of others—that we want to question because we conclude they are doing harm to ourselves or others in terms of things like equity, fairness, and humane treatment of people” (p. 8). Gee asserted that this is “one of the purposes of doing discourse analysis” (p. 8). As I coded the bridge program websites, I did in fact see cultural knowledge and assumptions that I resisted and questioned as they did not promote equity for all students.

In Chapter 3, I used the *Fill In Tool* to explore the assumptions about students and the support they need in the summer bridge website descriptions. Since the *Fill In Tool* asks researchers to examine what is not being said, or what needs to be filled in, it is particularly suited for reading between the lines of a set of documents. I also paid attention to what is not being said or acknowledged about students and about the program, focusing particularly on the funds of knowledge categories provided by Yosso (2005). A second discourse analysis strategy, the *Figured Worlds Tool*, helped me to expand my analysis of the absences uncovered by the *Fill*

*In Tool*. Drawing on the work of anthropologists Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998), the *Figured Worlds Tool* looks at “typical stories” (Gee, 2011a, p. 169) or “theories” (p. 173) about “how things work in the world when things are normal” (p. 173). Figured worlds are spaces whose “conceptual dimensions supply the context 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” (Holland et al., 1998, p. 60). People construct various performances of their very selves due to their cultural context; they exert agency on the world through these performances. Gee (2011a) described how to employ the *Figured Worlds Tool*:

For any communication, ask what typical stories or figured world the words and phrases of the communication are assuming and inviting listeners to assume. What participants, activities, ways of interacting, forms of language, people, objects, environments, and institutions, as well as values, are in these figured worlds? (p. 201)

He provides the example of the elementary school classroom, with a female teacher and a group of students sitting in rows (p. 170-71): The teacher does most of the talking, and the activities include filling out worksheets and taking tests. Students are labeled SPED (special education), LD (learning disabled), and ESL (English as a Second Language). This is a figured world, and it exists in the minds of many when they think of elementary school classrooms and in media portrayals of these classrooms.

Gee (2011a) connected the *Figured Worlds Tool* to the *Fill In Tool* “since assumptions about shared figured worlds is a part of context and what speakers assume listeners will be able to fill in” (p. 171). These figured worlds are often “oversimplified,” “unconscious,” and “taken for granted” (p. 172). Because of this, typical stories can foster judgment and discrimination

against people perceived to be atypical (p. 173). Reforms that threaten to disrupt the figured world can face opposition because the changes “just do not seem ‘normal’ or ‘right’ or ‘the way things should be’” (p. 171). However, headway can be made by “raising the issues to the level of consciousness and discussing them overtly or explicitly” (p. 172). In Chapter 4, the *Figured Worlds Tool* allowed me to analyze the phenomenon of the bridge program within the larger university structure. Just as the *Fill In Tool* helped to uncover assumptions about students and the support they needed, the *Figured Worlds Tool* shed light on the ways in which bridge programs see themselves as students’ only pathway to success (see Chapter 4).

## **VI. Limitations**

Several limitations for this research qualify the findings and provide insight into the challenges of conducting a cross-institutional empirical study. Although I sought to assess the website descriptions according to both deficit and funds of knowledge frameworks as completely and accurately as possible, there are two factors that merit critical attention: (1) websites as an indirect measure of program content, and (2) small sample size and limited range of institutions.

### *Websites as an Indirect Measure of Program Content*

There is a potential discrepancy between the content of program websites and what they actually do in practice. Bridge programs might imagine a range of potential stakeholders who could read the website materials, including students and parents, faculty, upper-level university administrators, and donors. Administrators and staff of bridge programs may try to limit website descriptions to discourse that is not likely to cause problems for any of the intended audiences. Because of this, some practices may be left out. For example, U Arizona’s New Start Summer Program hosts an annual academic conference for all student participants of the program. The

call for proposals for the past several years has emphasized experiential knowledge such as students' cultural identities, traditions, and experiences with language. These themes, which seem to be aligned with a funds of knowledge framework, are not explicitly explored on the website. Instead, the website, like others in the data set, emphasizes things like leadership, tutoring, social, and community engagement experiences, which are less risky, more palatable topics. As discussed earlier in this chapter, bridge program administrators may not have the time or jurisdiction to update the website regularly, and they may not even have agency over the content.

Further research is needed to explore the ways in which each of the bridge programs in the study is accurately represented by its website materials. This research could include interviews and focus groups with students, instructors, and administrators of various bridge programs in order to compare their perceptions of the summer bridge program with website materials. In addition, document analysis could be employed for other communications between the bridge program, students, and families, such as letters and email updates. Due to time constraints, I chose to focus on document analysis of publicly-available website materials in order to paint a picture of how bridge programs characterize students and the support they need. This allowed me to work with a larger data set than if I engaged in an in-depth case study of one or two programs.

Another discrepancy between website descriptions and actual practice may be unintentional; that is, bridge program administrators are usually saddled with many responsibilities and a small staff for accomplishing tasks. If they struggle to accomplish all that is asked of them with the resources provided, one of the first things that is likely to be neglected is

regular updates to the bridge program website. Despite these limitations, this study offers an initial exploration of how bridge programs conceive of themselves and the students they serve.

### *Small Sample Size and Limited Range of Institutions*

Even though each institution in this study is grounded in its own historical, political, socioeconomic, and cultural context, the bridge programs from institution to institution in this study may be somewhat comparable. Alternatively, comparing the bridge programs at a small liberal arts college, two-year college, private research university, and public research university may yield differences so great that it would be difficult to draw conclusions meaningfully across the data. For these reasons, I chose to narrow the data set to universities listed as peer institutions of U Arizona by the Arizona Board of Regents (2009). This limitation in scope necessarily excluded hundreds of other bridge programs across the country. Most significantly, the claims made in this study may be more applicable to other four-year, public research universities listed as “Doctoral Universities: Very High Research Activity” in the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (Carnegie Classification, 2009) than to other types of colleges and universities. Future research is needed to ascertain in an empirical way the extent to which the findings from this study are relevant to other kind of institutions.

## **VII. Looking Forward: Final Chapters**

In the following chapters, I engage both the *Fill In Tool* and the *Figured Worlds Tool* to answer this study’s research questions:

1. What do the website descriptions of bridge programs at a range of institutions reveal regarding assumptions about students and support they need?, and
2. In what ways, if any, do these descriptions connect to funds of knowledge?

Chapter 3 provides a brief overview of the students the programs serve and the units in which the programs are housed. It then reviews some of the most frequent codes, *academic/study skills*, *college knowledge* and *relationships*, in light of the *Fill In Tool* and the framework of remediation. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the bridge program as a figured world (Gee, 2011a; Holland et al., 1998). Shifting to the funds of knowledge framework, Chapter 4 provides examples from eight total programs in the data set (and a thick description of one particular program) whose website materials contained content related to either *aspirational knowledge* (Yosso, 2005), *familial knowledge* (Yosso, 2005), or both. The analyses from both chapters serve to make visible assumptions about students in summer bridge programs and the kind of support imagined to facilitate students' transition to the university space.

## Chapter 3

### Deficit Discourse in Bridge Program Websites

“I cannot imagine myself coming to UC Davis *with any knowledge* [emphasis added] if it wasn't for STEP [Special Transitional Enrichment Program].”

—Zainab Qaiser, participant

#### I. Overview of Chapter

The statement above is an attractive quote, to be sure, one that seems to boldly highlight the benefits of the bridge program for students at the University of California, Davis (UC Davis). This sentence comes at the end of a paragraph-length statement in which Zainab, a bridge program participant, describes how the program helped her “out of her comfort zone” and ensured that students “left with connections one way or another” (University of California, Davis, n.d.-a). What I find so interesting is the implications of her final statement, that she would not be coming to UC Davis “*with any knowledge*” [emphasis added] without the knowledge she gained in the bridge program. The student saw herself as having no relevant prior knowledges for succeeding in college on her own. It is akin to saying Zainab’s experiences, skill sets, and resources cannot possibly help her in the new context of university life. It is as if she has never transitioned to anything new before and that she does not have life experiences and strategies for dealing with challenges. Zainab is certainly not to blame for having this view, and neither is the Special Transitional Enrichment Program for featuring it on the website, although it is a bit ironic that it is located under the “Success Stories” tab. In many cases, bridge programs and other student support initiatives are reflective of a larger system for understanding students in terms of their deficits. As discussed in Chapter 1, deficit assumptions and theories have been deeply embedded into curricula and assessment in the U.S. higher education system for over a century.

This chapter explores latent connections to the deficit model across the bridge programs in this study. At times, the websites exude a desire to genuinely help students, but in other instances, their discourse implies a deficit understanding of students and their abilities. The *Fill In Tool* allowed me to examine the latent assumptions behind different types of discourse. In using this tool, I asked several of Gee's (2011a) questions:

1. "Based on what was said and the context in which it was said, what needs to be filled in here to achieve clarity?";
2. "What is not being said overtly, but is still assumed to be known or inferable?"; and
3. "What knowledge, assumptions, and inferences do listeners have to bring to bear in order for this communication to be clear and understandable...?" (p. 195)

Since the *Fill In Tool* asks researchers to examine what is not being said, or what needs to be filled in, it is particularly suited for reading between the lines in a set of documents. Perhaps unsurprisingly given the context of the remedial tradition in U.S. higher education, I found that the majority of programs in the data set unintentionally relied on deficit-based understandings of students. In not recognizing student's prior knowledges or skills, bridge programs align themselves with remedial views of students and their learning needs.

To contextualize the programs in the data set, this chapter begins by reviewing the *student subject position and program parameters* code, which consists of descriptions of the student populations who participated as well as information about the bridge program's institutional location on campus. I then review three frequently-occurring codes: *academic/study skills*, *college knowledge*, and *relationships*. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the bridge program as a figured world (Holland et al., 1998). The figured world is a "typical story" that people tell about themselves and their world (Gee, 2011a, p. 169). In this study's data set of

bridge program websites, the figured world of summer bridge defaulted to a deficit model in the absence of a funds of knowledge frame.

## II. Student Subject Position and Program Parameters

Across the board, bridge programs were affiliated with a variety of institutional units on campus, from offices and centers to divisions and larger programs. These include new student, transition, student success, and retention programs; diversity and inclusion offices; summer session offices; and specific schools and colleges. As the programs in the data set varied widely, so did the students they served, which made *student subject position/program parameters* one of the most frequent codes. Conditions of student participation in the bridge programs depended on various combinations of several factors:

- *Programs Serving Diverse Student Populations*: Demographics of diverse student populations, such as students of color, low-income students, first-generation students, and students with disabilities;
- *Programs Serving Students Affiliated with a Specific Academic Program*: Participation in an affiliated program (at times the bridge program was one component of a larger program and thus only open to students in that program);
- *Discipline-Specific Support: Programs Serving STEM Majors*: Academics, such as admission into a program only for STEM majors; and
- *Programs Serving International Students*.

In the following section, I first situate the programs and their respective student populations in terms of the above bullets before addressing three codes (*academic/study skills, college knowledge, and relationships*) later in the chapter.

### *Programs Serving Diverse Student Populations*

Twelve programs, just over half of the data set, were designed for specific student populations that are deemed “diverse” in some way. For example, the Special Transitional Enrichment Program at UC Davis “strives to enhance the academic and social experiences of first generation and low income students during their first two years of college” (University of California, Davis, n.d.-a). Students must be invited to apply, and students in this program have usually applied for Educational Opportunity Program status or have participated in UC Davis outreach programs such as Upward Bound or the Early Academic Outreach Program. The Educational Opportunity Program is a University of California initiative that “provides assistance through mentorship, academic programs, financial assistance, counseling/advising, and other campus support services to those who are first-generation college students, and/or from low-income and educationally disadvantaged backgrounds (Educational Opportunity Program, n.d.). Upward Bound is one of eight Federal TRIO programs funded by the U.S. Department of Education. In particular, Upward Bound serves “high school students from low-income families; [*sic*] and high school students from families in which neither parent holds a bachelor’s degree” (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Upward Bound programs focus on increasing the rate at which students complete high school and graduate from colleges and universities (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). The Early Academic Outreach Program is a University of California program that prepares “students at underserved schools” for admission to the University of California and California State University as well as for the workforce (Early Academic Outreach Program, n.d.). In addition to qualifying for the Special Transitional Enrichment Program at UC Davis through the Educational Opportunity Program, Upward

Bound, or the Early Academic Outreach Program, students who are former foster youth may also receive invitations to apply.

Students must also be invited to apply to UT Austin's Summer Bridge (The University of Texas at Austin, n.d.). However, the criteria for these invitations, apart from being an in-state student, is fairly vague: "It [the program] addresses some of the universal challenges of beginning the college journey and aims to equip students who have been identified to benefit from intimate learning environments." In another part of the website, a participant comments on meeting and making friends with students "from various social and ethnic backgrounds." She says, "In high school I was only around black people, but Summer Bridge exposed me to every type of person." The website helps to contextualize her comment by explaining to readers that the Summer Bridge students are more diverse than the UT Austin student body as a whole (The University of Texas at Austin, n.d.). For this student, knowing that "there is a diverse group of students that do exist" at her new university made a real difference. It can be inferred that the "students who have been identified to benefit from intimate learning environments" are considered to be diverse in terms of traditional understandings of diversity along lines of race, ethnicity, and nationality.

The Summer Collegiate Experience at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (UW-Madison) serves a similar population, "L&S [College of Letters and Science] students who have been historically underrepresented in higher education, including first-generation and low-income students, and students of color" (University of Wisconsin-Madison, n.d.-c). Some students are granted conditional admittance to UW-Madison based on their completion of the Summer Collegiate Experience. The Center for Academic Excellence Student Agreement phrases this requirement delicately:

Congratulations! You have been selected through the Office of Admissions as a candidate in the Center for Academic Excellence (CAE) in the College of Letters & Science. Your admission to the University is conditional, pending the completion of this student agreement, participation in the Summer Collegiate Experience (SCE), and other requirements.

In essence, the program is congratulating students for being conditional, which may be confusing for students. In using the language of exclusivity (“you have been selected”), the program may seek to avoid remedial discourse embedded into the history of student support initiatives (see Chapter 1). The Summer Collegiate Experience is the only program in the data set that conditionally admits students to the university on basis of completing the summer bridge program successfully. Summer bridge programs are mandatory components of participation in some affiliated programs, as described below, but completion of the program is usually not a requirement for admission to the institution.

At UW-Madison, several programs funnel students from diverse groups into the Summer Collegiate Experience. While any incoming first-year student can apply, most students enter by way of their affiliation with one of UW-Madison’s programs, including the Precollege Enrichment Opportunity Program for Learning Excellence (PEOPLE), The First Wave Scholarship Program (First Wave), and the Center for Academic Excellence (CAE). Links to website descriptions of these programs are included on the Summer Collegiate Experience homepage. “PEOPLE is a precollege [*sic*] pipeline for students of color and low-income students, most of whom are the first in their families to potentially attend college. Their journey prepares them to apply, be successfully admitted and enroll at the University of Wisconsin-Madison” (University of Wisconsin-Madison, n.d.-c). Out all of first-year students in PEOPLE,

96.7% of them persist to their sophomore year. Similarly, “First Wave is a full-tuition, four-year scholarship program for students that are seniors in high school or freshmen in college that are applying to the University of Wisconsin-Madison for the fall.” This program uses an artistic approach, such as work with nationally-renowned spoken word and hip hop artists, to help students “merge their artistic interests with professional development.” Finally, students can also arrive at the Summer Collegiate Experience through UW-Madison’s Center for Academic Excellence, whose “mission is to make the ‘Wisconsin Experience’ a reality for students who have been traditionally underrepresented in higher education (first-generation students, students of color, and students from low-economic backgrounds).” Students who are not in one of these three UW-Madison programs are eligible to apply for participation in the Summer Collegiate Experience. This is not always the case in other programs, as discussed in the following section.

### *Bridge Programs Serving Students in Affiliated Programs*

In three programs, there is less flexibility regarding applications from students who are not enrolled in an affiliated program. Students may be required to currently be in one of these programs or have previously been a participant. Many of these programs are federally funded and serve diverse student groups. For example, the TRIO Excel Summer Program at Michigan State University (Michigan State) is only for “highly-motivated students” enrolled in its TRIO Student Support Services program, which “provides preparation, orientation, and academic support programming for first-generation students, students from low-income backgrounds, and disabled students” (Michigan State University, n.d.-b). Like Upward Bound, TRIO Student Support Services is one of eight federally funded TRIO programs. The goal of Student Support Services projects is to “increase the college retention and graduation rates of its participants” (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). Just as Michigan State’s TRIO Excel Summer Program

limits student participation to those already enrolled in a federal program, others require students to be part of an institutional program.

In some of these initiatives, the summer bridge program serves as the first component of a more comprehensive program that includes academic-year advising, tutoring, career preparation, and study skills workshops. This is true for the Summer Bridge Experience at Ohio State, which is only for first-generation students who are part of the Young Scholars Program (The Ohio State University, n.d.-b). This program accepts applications from eighth grade students who are in one of nine designated urban, public school districts in Ohio and who meet financial and academic requirements. In high school, students complete pre-college programs that include college advising, academic monitoring, workshops, tutoring, and campus visits. The Summer Bridge Experience helps students in the Young Scholars Program transition to Ohio State. The goal of the Summer Bridge Experience is to “increase diversity” at Ohio State and “improve pre-college preparation, retention, and degree completion among academically talented, low-income, first-generation students.” The Freshman Summer Program at UCLA (University of Los Angeles, n.d.-c) also serves students from “financially under-resourced high schools.” The program is only open to students who are in the Academic Advancement Program, which focuses on first-generation students, underrepresented minorities, and/or students from financially under-resourced high schools.” These bridge programs are part of larger initiatives designed to open doors for students at or before the key point of access—matriculation into the university.

#### *Discipline-Specific Support: Programs Serving STEM Majors*

While most of the programs in the data set are for students of any major, some programs are only available to STEM majors as they seek to specifically prepare students for their fields of

study. At times, a program website will direct students to more appropriate programs. For example, Michigan State's TRIO Excel Summer Program is not intended for STEM students: "Excel participants may choose any major that the university offers, however, the Excel program is primarily for students who are undecided and/or not STEM . . . The university currently offers other summer bridge opportunities specifically for STEM majors" (Michigan State University, n.d.-b). One such program at Michigan State, the Engineering and Science Success Academy, is included in the data set of this study. UW-Madison's Mechanical Engineering Summer Launch is just for students majoring in mechanical engineering, while UCLA's Freshman Summer Bridge Program is limited to engineering and computer science majors. Other programs, such as Michigan State's Engineering and Science Success Academy, are for students majoring in several areas across STEM.

Several summer bridge experiences combine discipline-specific support with a focus on students from specific demographic groups. The Successful Transition and Enhanced Preparation for Undergraduates Program (STEPUP) Summer Bridge Program at the University of Florida (U Florida) focuses on "aggressive recruiting" of "underrepresented student populations (i.e. Women, African-Americans, Hispanic/Latinx and Native-American students)" who are also first-year engineering students (University of Florida, n.d.). The website notes that "many STEPUP students are from backgrounds that historically have experienced a greater risk for failure in the university setting." Because of this, STEPUP seeks "to promote first-year student persistence and academic success in the engineering major." The Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP) STEM Bridge Program at Ohio State also "serves our underrepresented minority students and assures their success in STEM" (The Ohio State University, n.d.-a). Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP) programs are

National Science Foundation projects that seek to diversify the STEM workforce “by increasing the number of STEM baccalaureate and graduate degrees awarded to populations historically underrepresented in these disciplines: African Americans, Hispanic Americans, American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and Native Pacific Islanders” (National Science Foundation, n.d.). Basing itself on the “Tinto model of student retention,” the program funds research for new approaches to STEM engagement, recruitment and retention for STEM pathways, and mentorship, among other student support initiatives (National Science Foundation, n.d.). Michigan State’s Engineering and Science Success Academy, another program in the data set, is a part of the Michigan LSAMP program. Due to their involvement with national diversity programs, U Florida’s STEPUP Summer Bridge Program, Ohio State’s Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP) STEM Bridge Program, and Michigan State’s Engineering and Science Success Academy share similarities in student population and program goals with more traditional bridge programs.

Several programs have the goal of preparing students not just for STEM-focused majors in college, but also for future careers or graduate school. The Summer Program for Scientists and Engineers at U Maryland has the “goal of increasing the number of students who earn doctorates in STEM fields, particularly those from populations underrepresented in these fields,” and is limited to students admitted into the school of engineering (University of Maryland, n.d.). The Millennium Scholars Program at The Pennsylvania State University (Penn State), which includes mandatory participation in Summer Bridge, supports a “diverse group” of “high-achieving STEM students who want to be leaders and increase diversity in their fields” (The Pennsylvania State University, n.d.-b). These students select majors from five areas: agriculture, earth and mineral sciences, engineering, information science and technology, and science. Ultimately,

STEM bridge program websites in the data set suggested missions focused on the larger picture beyond the university. They expressed commitments to positively impact the diversity of scholars and practitioners in STEM fields by designing programs for “underrepresented” populations.

*Transitioning to American University Life: Programs Serving International Students*

Two programs in the data set are designed for international students. The International Student Summer Institute has the goal of “helping students improve their academic English skills” and easing the “transition to American university life” and academic culture (University of Wisconsin-Madison, n.d.-a). Similarly, Summer Start at UC Davis offers “opportunities to strengthen language skills and intercultural competencies so that they [students] are better prepared to be a full citizen of the university” (n.d.-b). To this end, Summer Start provides “a comprehensive introduction to U.S. academic culture,” “personalized language coaching,” and one-on-one meetings with “domestic UC Davis students for intercultural exchange sessions.” The program serves more than ten percent of the institution’s incoming international first-year students, including students from Brazil, Canada, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Iran, Jordan, Mauritius, Mexico, New Zealand, Paraguay, Panama, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Taiwan, Vietnam and the United States.

Unlike the International Student Summer Institute at UW-Madison and Summer Start at UC Davis, Early Fall Start at U Washington is not limited to international students. However, it is notable that the website for Early Fall Start includes a separate page for international students inviting them to apply and describing the parts of the program that are likely to be more beneficial for them. In the remainder of the data set, I did not observe this type of inclusive, detailed approach to students with a variety of immigration statuses.

### *Programs with Few Student Restrictions*

Seven programs have fewer restrictions than others in terms of application criteria. For example, the Early Fall Start program at U Washington is “designed for those who want to strengthen their writing and learning skills to meet college-level study expectations” (University of Washington, n.d.-b). As such, it is open to “all incoming UW Seattle first-year students.” The same is true for the Learning Edge Academic Program at Penn State. In the Summer Bridge Program at UNC Chapel Hill, any North Carolina resident who is admitted to the university is eligible to apply. At U Arizona, any first-year student can apply to either the New Start Summer Program or the UAdvantage First Year Experience. UAdvantage accepts applications from any first-time student, but it focuses on “welcoming new Wildcats from outside Arizona” (The University of Arizona, n.d.-b). Programs that do not mention student restrictions on their websites include the College Summer Institute at UCLA and the Summer Bridge First-Year Program at UC Merced.

### *In Between the Lines: Bridge Programs and College Access*

Across the data excerpts in the *student subject position and program parameters* code, a pattern emerged that provides insight into the ways in which bridge programs are embedded in larger institutional initiatives to advance diversity and access. Just over half of the data set, twelve programs, are only open to diverse populations of students, which are identified differently by program. The concept of diverse student populations in this study most commonly refers to first-generation students, students of color, low-income students, students from “financially-underresourced” high schools, and other “(historically) underrepresented” minorities, but it can also refer to international students and students with disabilities. Other programs in the data set, such as the ten who do not limit themselves to specific student

demographics, may have been designed for or may seek out these groups, even though they do not explicitly say so on the website. For example, while U Arizona's New Start Summer Program is open to all students, it is heavily marketed to local high schoolers, who in many cases belong to one or more of the diversity categories listed above. It is possible that other programs use a similar approach in order to achieve their institutional commitments toward inclusion.

Across the turbulent history of composition studies, and remedial education more generally, diverse groups of students have not been viewed in this way, however. Instead of seeing diverse student populations as advancing inclusion, institutions viewed them as a threat to the university's standards of excellence. This legacy of remediation limited access of minoritized populations to university spaces. The bridge program websites in this study demonstrate how contemporary programs navigate this legacy while also publicly espousing the benefits of diversity. The programs seem to be nimble responses to a legacy of political attacks and a generation of legislation eliminating access programs. In this sense, they help universities claim diverse students, perhaps while the rest of the university maintains the status quo regarding diversity and inclusion (see Chapter 5).

### **III. Academic/Study Skills: What Students Need to Succeed**

In addition to the descriptions of students and program parameters, another frequently-occurring code was *academic/study skills*. This code referred to "skills needed to succeed in academic courses, majors, and programs." Each of the bridge programs in the data set contained at least one *academic/study skills* code. For example, Special Transitional Enrichment Program at UC Davis "provides students with skill building services to support their academic engagement. Students practice study skills and habits that promote academic success" (University of California, Davis, n.d.-a). Early Fall Start at U Washington has a course called

“Writing Ready, Learning Ready: Preparing for Success at a Global University” (English 108) which “helps prepare students for college-level writing assignments, enhancing the ability to read, write, think and pursue scholarly research at a university level” (University of Washington, n.d.-b). Commenting on the impact of study skills and academic strategies, the website for UW-Madison’s Summer Collegiate Experience claims that the program “will improve their [students’] grade outcomes in critical introductory classes” (University of Wisconsin-Madison, n.d.-c). It is an especially bold move for programs to make the claim that participation will increase students’ grades. By focusing on academic skills, strategies, and grades, programs hope to motivate prospective students to apply.

STEM programs in the data set also focused on skill development. Penn State’s Summer Bridge highlights the study skills component of the program in its list of “important life skills, including time management, problem-solving, and smart study habits” (The Pennsylvania State University, n.d.-b). Similarly, the Summer Bridge Program for Scientists and Engineers at U Maryland “is designed assist students in developing the skills and learning the strategies that *will guarantee their success* [emphasis added] in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics” (University of Maryland, n.d.). Just as UW-Madison’s Summer Collegiate Experience focused on the prospect of higher grades, the Summer Bridge Program for Scientists and Engineers uses words like “guarantee” to make the case for their program.

Some program websites commented specifically about *academic/study skills* that would benefit STEM majors. The Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP) STEM Bridge Program at Ohio State includes a course called “STEM Study Skills System,” which is “specifically designed for STEM students” (The Ohio State University, n.d.-a). It covers topics such as “Preparing for and Taking Tests,” “Understanding Memory and Using Memory

Strategies,” “Building Motivation for Learning,” and “Overcoming Procrastination and Managing Your Time.” The course is “augmented with topics in mathematics, chemistry, physics, biology, engineering, and problem solving.” In the same way, the Freshman Summer Program at UCLA, while it is not limited to STEM majors, does make claims about STEM-related skills: “For students interested in pursuing careers in the sciences or the health care professions, the Science Intensive will focus on building your skills so that you have a solid base to start your career at UCLA” (University of California, Los Angeles, n.d.-c). The website goes on to make the connection between success in undergraduate classes and future goals: “FSP’s Science Intensive program will help prepare you to succeed in your core math and science courses which will lead you to your graduate or professional school and career aspirations.” STEM-focused bridge programs seemed eager to demonstrate the value of their programs using skills-based discourse.

International student bridge programs focused on skill development as well, although in slightly different areas according to the needs of their student population. The website for UW-Madison’s International Student Summer Institute claims that students will “listen to faculty lectures, build-note taking skills, learn to be an active participant in discussion sections, and grow comfortable in the atmosphere of an American classroom” (University of Wisconsin-Madison, n.d.-a). One of the courses, English as a Second Language 113: Academic Reading and Writing, will help students to improve “speaking, reading, writing, and listening skills that are essential to your academic success at UW-Madison.” In the same vein, Summer Start at UC Davis lists a series of writing courses designed for “undergraduate students whose native language is not English” (University of California, Davis, n.d.-b) Early Fall Start at U Washington, although it is not an international-only program, also addresses the particular

academic needs of international students with “special courses for students who want to improve their English language skills” (University of Washington, n.d.-b). This course is differentiated from another course “designed to help all students improve their writing abilities.” The international programs in the data set focused on skills particular to second language learners, such as speaking, listening, and getting used to U.S. teaching styles.

### *Remedial Underpinnings of Skills Discourse*

Every freshman student, no matter how privileged or disadvantaged they are, they have a first-year transition in college. Everyone.

—Chila Thomas, Assistant Director, Ohio State’s Summer Bridge Experience

The quote in the epigraph represents the reality of students as they encounter the university space for the first time. They are going to be unprepared in one way or another; it is rare that a student will transition effortlessly in every facet of his or her life. Bridge programs seem to recognize this, based on the frequency of references to *academic/study skills* that they sought to help students master. This type of support is found in many other student success programs in the university space, from academic skills coaching to discipline-specific workshops and tutoring. In keeping with developmental education’s focus on supporting the whole student, study skills and academic review seek to support students’ transition to college. In replacing remedial approaches, which often required students to take a series of skill-based prerequisite course without credit (Adams et al., 2014), developmental education sought to more intentionally blend curricular design and student support. In this sense, the focus on skills is meant to offer students the tools for working toward their own success.

Yet, the focus on skills is a limited one. Across the data set, *academic/study skills* referred to academic knowledge or study skills that students did not yet have or did not have enough of. In this respect the use of the term “skills” is reminiscent of the remedial tradition in

higher education as discussed in Chapter 1. Students are seen as deficient in certain area, and they are given programming and coursework to remedy the deficiency. This understanding of students is a missed opportunity to recognize the funds of knowledge that diverse student groups bring to the university space. For example, the bridge program websites in the data set often refer to their program's ability to confer linguistic and communication skills. However, many bridge programs serve students who speak more than one language or who speak non-dominant varieties of English such as African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and Chicano English. Yosso (2005) frames *linguistic knowledge* as “the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style” (p. 78). Multilingual students “develop and draw on various language registers, or styles, to communicate with different audiences” (p. 79). Students of color may already be particularly versed in these tasks as they move back and forth between standardized English and non-dominant varieties of English or other languages in different rhetorical contexts in their lives.

Yet, none of the bridge programs mentioned linguistic knowledge as an asset on their website materials. Perhaps that they do not consider this area of knowledge as a notable strength; they can see only the linguistic challenges of helping students assimilate to the kind of standardized English that is valued in institutions of higher education. Recognizing linguistic knowledge as a skill that diverse groups of students may already have experience with is a key step forward for bridge programs. Diverse student populations also possess many other skills, knowledges, and experiences that bridge experiences could better incorporate into their programs (see Chapter 4).

#### IV. College Knowledge: Managing Student Expectations

The best thing about EFS was getting exposed to college and what it would be like before it actually started.

—Student quoted on U Washington’s Early Fall Start website

Another frequently-occurring code was *college knowledge*, which refers to “knowledge about what college is like.” Programs touted this benefit through student testimonials, such as the one in this section’s epigraph. I explore four subcodes of college knowledge in this section: (1) *what college in general is like*, (2) *what this particular institution is like*, (3) *geographical orientation*, and (4) *institutional expectations of students*. All programs contained at least one *college knowledge* code, except for U Florida’s STEPUP, which is discussed below.

##### *Taste Tests: Sampling What College is Like*

Across the board, bridge programs in this study seemed eager to communicate to their audience of potential students and parents the value of receiving information about college in advance. They usually featured quotes from students like the one in the epigraph for this section that espouse the benefit of this type of information. Two programs employed the metaphor of taste in their descriptions. Michigan State’s TRIO Excel Summer Program website says that students will “get a taste for what college life will really be like” (Michigan State University, n.d.-b) and the website for the UAdvantage First Year Experience at U Arizona highlights its ability to “give students an opportunity to get a taste of the academic pace of college life while also getting academic support” (The University of Arizona, n.d.-b). These websites frame their program as a “sample” of college life, whether it is navigating a schedule, academics, or resources. Using a different metaphor, the website for Summer Bridge at UT Austin assures students that they can “test the academic waters” before the start of their first semester (The

University of Texas at Austin, n.d.). The ability to “taste” or “test out” college in a short span of time may be the biggest selling point of summer bridge programs.

The websites also emphasize students’ new understanding of college culture as an important benefit. A student on the Early Fall Start website says the program “helped me understand how college was different from high school academically” (University of Washington, n.d.-b). In a similar vein, the Summer Bridge Experience at Ohio State seeks to help students “understand the attitudes and behaviors that contribute to academic success” (The Ohio State University, n.d.-b). Such statements are likely to have a reassuring effect on parents and students. One student at UT Austin said that the program allowed him to “get used to [*sic*] the academic environment of UT and figure out how UT classes worked” (University of Texas at Austin). Another student took a more macro-level view: “I gained a whole wealth of knowledge that not every freshman has.” Indeed, this is an extraordinary benefit of summer bridge programs, and not every first-year student takes advantage of the opportunity, or even is eligible to apply. Student testimonials such as this emphasize an increased understanding of student expectations as critical to the success of incoming first-year students.

There were no instances of the subcode *what college is like* among the STEM programs in the data set. However, many of these programs contained more frequent instances of the “*aspirational knowledge*” code, which is discussed in more depth in Chapter 4. In the two programs for international students, there is also somewhat of a different orientation, one that is more focused on helping students adjust to American university life. UW-Madison’s International Student Summer Institute website uses phrases such as “adjust to American academic culture” and “grow comfortable in the atmosphere of an American classroom” (University of Wisconsin-Madison, n.d.-a). In non-Western cultural contexts, there are different

expectations for participating in class and using academic citations, for example. Bridge program courses for international students seek to explicitly address cultural differences. The website for Summer Start at UC Davis uses phrases such as “comprehensive introduction to U.S. academic culture” and “introducing them [students] to their role at a research university” (University of California, Davis, n.d.-b). If international students (and domestic students, for that matter) have a better understanding of what it means to be a part of a research institution, they may look at future undergraduate research opportunities in a more positive light.

### *What This Particular Institution is Like*

Not only did the websites discuss college life in general, they also advertised the fact that students would become familiar with their new university. It was surprising how often student testimonials mentioned the perk of learning how to physically navigate the campus. One student from the Special Transitional Enrichment Program at UC Davis commented, “I was able to familiarize myself with buildings so I wouldn’t get lost my first week of classes” (University of California, Davis, n.d.-a). Another student from the same program described becoming “familiar with the campus before the school year started” as “one of the advantages that I will for sure take with me.” Out of all the tips, programs, and strategies that the students receive, why would they single out basic navigation of the campus? Because twelve of the thirteen universities in the data set are large research universities of about 29,000 to 58,000 students, it makes sense that one of first-year students’ most consuming anxieties would be related to not knowing how to get around. A participant of UT Austin’s Summer Bridge also commented on being able to physically get from point A to point B: “When I started the fall semester, I knew how the campus works, I knew how the bus system works” (The University of Texas at Austin, n.d.). This navigational knowledge can make the difference for a first-year student who may already be

encountering stressors: living away from home, making new friends, adjusting to academic expectations of college students, time management, and financial difficulties.

The websites also emphasized a more abstract form of navigational knowledge. Ohio State's Summer Bridge Experience website uses the term "navigate" in this way as it communicates one of its program goals: "Increase awareness of campus resources, academic units, majors and how to navigate the campus successfully" (The Ohio State University, n.d.-b). The idea is that students, using their knowledge about resources, units, and potential majors of study, will be able to accomplish bureaucratic tasks that they need to get done, such as having an advisor sign off on a change of major form, making sure their financial aid paperwork is complete, and registering for classes strategically. UT Austin's Summer Bridge also promotes this type of institutionally-specific *college knowledge*. According to its website, Summer Bridge introduces students to "life as a Longhorn" in terms of student familiarity with "campus resources, professors, other students, and college life" (The University of Texas at Austin). UNC's Summer Bridge mentions collaborations with "graduate schools, professional schools, and student resource offices" to communicate this knowledge to students (The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, n.d.), and Michigan State's TRIO Excel Summer Program provides "student employment and research opportunities" (Michigan State University, n.d.-b). Taken together, this kind of information offers valuable institutional information to first-year students.

In addition to navigational know-how, the websites described experiential knowledge that students would gain about a specific institution. The UAdvantage First Year Experience at U Arizona speaks directly to students about this knowledge: "Get a feel for the campus that will become your home away from home" and "Learn the ropes of living in the residence halls" (The

University of Arizona, n.d.-b). No amount of abstraction can substitute for experience, and the bridge program websites capitalize on students' curiosity, and perhaps anxieties, about how to successfully live on campus. Like UAdvantage, the Summer Bridge Program at UNC Chapel Hill also refers to the residence halls as "your home away from home" and the bridge program as a way to get to know this new home (The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, n.d.). The metaphor of home is an interesting one to choose for a residence hall, but students may find it reassuring. References to experiential knowledge also extend beyond the dorms. U Arizona's New Start Student Program allows students to "experience what it is like to be a student in a large lecture hall" (The University of Arizona, n.d.-a). Just as navigating a large campus may be intimidating, so might taking class with hundreds of other students. By experiencing a lecture-style setting during the bridge program, students may be better able to navigate them in the future.

As compared to the rest of the data set, STEM programs differed in the *what this particular institution is like* subcode, while international programs provided relatively similar information with the non-STEM programs. Ohio State's Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP) STEM Bridge Program takes students on tours of the Math/Stats lab and the Museum of Biological Diversity. Students in UW-Madison's Mechanical Engineering Summer Launch program "get to know College of Engineering facilities and resources" (University of Wisconsin-Madison, n.d.-b). By choosing discipline-specific resources, these programs can better anticipate the future needs of their participants. The international programs contained much of the same information about becoming used to life at the institution as the programs for domestic students. There was one crucial difference, however. Summer Start at UC Davis mentioned that the program would help students learn how to engage with the university

in online spaces: “Master online tools like Oasis, MyUCDavis, MyDegree, ScheduleBuilder, Canvas, and iGlobal” (University of California, Davis, n.d.-b). For international students who need to adjust to a host of additional changes as compared to domestic students, this technological literacy is likely welcome and timely.

### *Orienting Students Geographically*

In addition to helping students navigate their new campus, three of the twenty-two programs were particularly focused on helping students get to know their new city and the surrounding area<sup>17</sup>: UAdvantage First Year Experience (for out-of-state students at U Arizona), International Student Summer Institute (for international students at UW-Madison), and Summer Start (for international students at UC Davis). This is not surprising since these programs are working with student populations who are most likely not familiar with the institution's city and surrounding locale, whereas other bridge programs may attract more students from the area or a mix of local and out-of-state students. U Arizona’s Uadvantage First Year Experience website speaks directly to its population of out-of-state students about this perk:

We also know that moving to Arizona for college is a big transition, and so students will also have the opportunity to participate in programs that introduce them to campus life as well as to the food, culture, and environment of Tucson. (The University of Arizona, n.d.-b)

The website also explains how groups of students will learn how to use the Tucson SunLink Streetcar together. International students may benefit from different kind of geographical orientation, such as programming that helps them “adjust to life in the United States,” as the

---

<sup>17</sup> I coded data addressing how to navigate off-campus areas as *geographical orientation*, while I coded data providing information for getting around the campus as *what this particular institution is like*.

UW-Madison's International Student Summer Institute's website suggests (University of Wisconsin-Madison, n.d-a). In Summer Start at UC Davis, international students have the option of participating in group trips throughout Northern California. By making students feel comfortable in a new location, these programs offer students a specific type of information about college. This knowledge can make the difference between a student putting down roots or leaving after the first year.

### *Institutional Expectations of Students*

While the other subcodes of *college knowledge* deal with managing expectations students may have, from college in general to the institution and geographic area, the subcode *institutional expectations of students* refers to information provided by bridge program websites that helps students understand what is expected of them. The website for UC Merced Summer Bridge First-Year Program provides an example: "Understand the requirements and expectations of being a student at a research institution" (University of California, Merced, n.d.). According to its website, the Summer Bridge Experience at Ohio State allows students to "develop an understanding of the expectations and rigors of college level coursework" (The University of Arizona, n.d.-b). Michigan State's TRIO Excel Summer Program website emphasizes the benefit of experiencing "an intensive college-level academic schedule" (Michigan State University, n.d.-b). The premise is that students who have a clear understanding of what they need to do to succeed will begin putting these practices in place at the start of the semester.

The subcode *institutional expectations of students* was also found in one STEM program and one international program. The website for the STEM-focused Freshman Summer Bridge Program at UCLA says that the program helps to "create a built-in expectation of academic excellence to continue throughout the first year" (University of California, Los Angeles, n.d.-b).

In the Summer Start program for international students at UC Davis, all students are required to take an orientation course entitled “Academic Skills: How to Succeed as a U.S. College Student,” which covers, among other topics, “what professors expect” (University of California, Davis, n.d.-b). Universities do not always communicate their expectations of domestic and international students explicitly enough, and several bridge programs aim to mitigate this issue.

### *Deficit Assumptions about Students' Prior Knowledges*

Providing information about what college will be like is one way that bridge programs, with their roots in developmental education, seek to support the whole student. Bridge programs seek to develop in students a multi-layered sense of college knowledge, consisting of academic, recreational, social, spatial, and regional awareness, as they adjust to the university. This multi-layered approach is aligned with the work of Tinto (1987/1993) about a range of factors that together contribute to students leaving the university. Tinto's (1987/1993) *Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Cures of Student Attrition*, a foundational text of retention scholarship, addressed these individual, societal, institutional, and community-related factors. He argued that “some degree of social and intellectual integration and therefore membership in academic and social communities must exist as a condition for continued persistence” (p. 120). Students must feel there is a place for them in both the academic and extracurricular worlds of the university. Knowledge about college, whether general or specific to the institution, is key to this integration, since “most new students are left to make their own way through the maze of institutional life” (Tinto, 1987/1993, p. 99). This maze includes physical navigation as well as more abstract navigation such as knowing where resources are for a particular task and how to access them. Tinto (1987/1993) reflected on the fact that orientation programs and retention initiatives are usually informational in focus, which helps to answer students' need for “accurate

and complete information about the character of institutional life and about the requirements of the academic system they will soon be entering. They simply want and need to know what is expected of them” (p. 159). Yet, Tinto (1987/1993) goes on to claim that programs often fail to address the “informal demands institutions make upon new students. . . . Yet it is precisely that informal world of student life that many times spells the difference between staying and leaving” (p. 159). The bridge programs in the data set seem to have adopted this mindset as they often provide information about student life, such as social events, making friends, what a day in the program is like, and fun things to do off campus. Knowledge of these informal yet critical snapshots of student life in a specific program or institution may make the difference for students transitioning to that space. Bridge programs offering this information seem to be operating from a genuine desire to help students.

At the same time, bridge programs in the data set could have better incorporated students’ prior knowledges in terms of communicating information about what college is like. For example, they assume in many cases that students are completely new to the university space. While all students may not have knowledge of the inner workings of the university, some of them might, if their parents, other relatives, or friends work there (see Chapter 4). Their knowledge would be especially relevant for addressing the *what college is like* and *what this particular institution is like* codes. Students could also have some general knowledge of how universities operate through cousins and older siblings. Students in bridge programs may also have participated in similar student success programs in high school, such as TRIO, that may have provided them with knowledge about what to expect in college. In terms of geographical knowledge, some of students may be from surrounding area. These students may be aware of good hikes, places to eat, etc. Bridge programs could better feature their knowledge by having

these students serve as tour guides or ambassadors of the city in off-campus activities. In assuming that students arrive with little to no relevant knowledge about higher education, the particular institution, and the geographical area, bridge programs unintentionally communicate a deficit understanding of students. This deficit perspective helps contextualize Zainab's statement in the epigraph for this chapter: "I cannot imagine myself coming to UC Davis *with any knowledge* [emphasis added] if it wasn't for STEP" (University of California, Davis, n.d.-a). One of the reasons Zainab may not be able to recognize her own experiences and knowledges as valuable may be the deficit-oriented model of understanding students and its manifestations from elementary through post-secondary levels of education.

Additionally, even if diverse groups of students have little experience in navigating the university space, they may have *navigational knowledge*, which Yosso (2005) defines as social and psychological "skills of maneuvering through social institutions," especially those "not created with Communities of Color in mind" (p. 80). Diverse groups of people often need to develop strategies for success in social, workplace, and educational spheres despite barriers such as institutional racism/ableism and individual stereotyping. Bridge program discourse that does not acknowledge these prior experiences makes it seem like students have never transitioned to anything new before or that they have never encountered and successfully negotiated a seemingly insurmountable barrier. However, students from diverse groups who arrive at college have often already found a way to navigate microaggressions and imposter syndrome (Caplan & Ford, 2014), financial aid requirements, family caretaker obligations (Kiyama & Rios-Aguilar, 2018), and work commitments (Kiyama & Rios-Aguilar, 2018). Instead of positioning the bridge program as one that gives success strategies to students, bridge programs should center the knowledge that students already bring with them from other spaces. This centering can help

bridge programs move further away from a deficit understanding of students as empty “receptacles” needing ““to be filled”” with university-developed strategies (Freire, 1968/2011, p. 72). While providing information to students about what college will be like is certainly helpful, it is not yet aligned with a funds of knowledge approach that seeks to recognize students’ skills, experiences, and knowledges as valuable.

## **V. Relationships: Belongingness**

After I went through my first day I went to sleep comfortable because throughout the day I had shared my story with people that were complete strangers to me.

—Student quoted on UC Davis’s Special Transitional Enrichment Program website

In addition to *college knowledge*, programs seemed eager to point out the abundance of *relationships* students would develop in the bridge experience. Student testimonials, such as the one in this section’s epigraph, helped to make this claim to prospective students and their families. The student in this quote expresses her sense of well-being (“I went to sleep comfortable”) on what might have otherwise been a stressful first day of college. The student specifically cites the ability to share her story “with people that were complete strangers to me.” These beginning experiences with friends, faculty, peer mentors, academic success coaches, and others are critical in determining students’ networks of support. These support systems may ultimately have a role in whether or not they leave the university. To examine the networks of support offered by summer bridge programs, the code *relationships* refers to “connections with faculty, staff, and other students.” All of the programs contained at least one relationship code, and *relationships* was one of the most frequently-occurring codes. In the following sections, I explore three subcodes of relationships: (1) *family*, (2) *connections with peers*, and (3) *connections with professional staff, peer mentors, and faculty*.

*“I Gained a Family”: Family-Like Communities*

Several programs use *family* when referring to the community of people, from friends and professors to mentors and staff, that students come to know. Sometimes students themselves use the term in their testimonials; in other instances, the websites make this claim. One student from Ohio State’s Summer Bridge Experience says, “I can happily say that YSP<sup>18</sup> is my family and they have helped me grow in more ways than I thought possible” (The Ohio State University, n.d.-b). In the Special Transitional Enrichment Program, another student echoes this sentiment: “STEP was a family, everybody was everybody’s friend, sister, brother and so on. Not only were the students there for each other, the STEP Staff made sure we left with connections one way or another” (University of California, Davis, n.d.-a). The website also included a reference to *family*: “STEP is an Aggie family<sup>19</sup> to the first generation college students that participate in the program.” It is clear that programs want to advertise close, even familial, relationships. Doing so may make anxious high school students more likely to sign up.

STEM and international programs also used the term *family* to communicate a message of security and safety to students. Penn State’s Summer Bridge, a STEM program, described their “scholars” as “a small, tight community of learners, living and working together in a family-like community” (The Pennsylvania State University, n.d.-b). A first-year engineering student from U Florida’s STEPUP commented, “I gained a family of fellow students, who all banded together to get through the program” (The University of Florida, n.d.). Another student of the same program used the term: “STEPUP is a family that motivates you and wants you to

---

<sup>18</sup> The Young Scholars Program (YSP) is the larger program that contains Ohio State’s Summer Bridge Experience.

<sup>19</sup> UC Davis students are called “Aggies” in a nod to agriculture and the university’s origin as a land-grant institution, even though their athletic mascot is the mustang (Helland, 2013).

succeed in everything.” The family-like structure can motivate students as they face new challenges. A student from Summer Start at UC Davis also used “a family-like bond” to refer to the relationships that developed between student participants (University of California, Davis, n.d.-b). It is clear that familial support systems are valued by the students in summer bridge programs. Website designers or program administrators may view the *family* metaphor as good marketing.

*Making Friends “That Are More Like Myself”*

In addition, programs were keen to emphasize another perk—the opportunity for students to make *connections with peers*. A Summer Bridge student at UT Austin commented on the importance of building initial connections:

It is so big here, if I had just come here as a freshman—how would I have possibly been able to meet people and make friends? Now that the fall semester has started, even in some of my bigger classes of 100 plus students, I can identify a few folks that I know. It’s really been helpful academically and socially. (The University of Texas at Austin)

At a large university, students may feel isolated and unconnected. If they get the chance to experience a bridge program or similar initiative, they can start the task of building up their social networks on a smaller scale.

In other cases, students are looking for a particular kind of friendship. A Special Transitional Enrichment Program student at UC Davis referred to the program as “an awesome three weeks that helped me form connections with peers *who looked like me* [emphasis added], and made me feel welcomed in the University” (University of California, Davis, n.d.-a). Similarly, a student from Ohio State’s Summer Bridge Experience commented on the “chance to make friends that are more like myself” (The Ohio State University, n.d.-b). Both of these

programs serve first-generation, low-income students. Because U.S. society is stratified by factors such as race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic class, it is likely that a number of first-generation, low-income students in these programs are members of underrepresented racial and ethnic groups. These students may feel like they stand out in university spaces. Meeting and meaningfully engaging with students who look like themselves is important for developing a sense that they belong.

Many programs took a long-term perspective on the significance of friendships developed during the bridge experience. UCLA's Freshman Summer Program claims that these friendships "will be invaluable to you throughout your years at UCLA" (University of California, Los Angeles, n.d.-c). The Special Transitional Enrichment Program at UC Davis and Summer Bridge at UT Austin both mention "lifelong" friendships (University of California, Davis, n.d.-a; The University of Texas at Austin, n.d.). A student from the Special Transitional Enrichment Program explained these friendships as "connections to whom I could resort with academic or personal questions" (University of California, Davis, n.d.-a). Indeed, peer networks are often a first resort for questions, especially if students feel too intimidated to ask a professor or staff member. U Arizona's New Start Student Program promises "a network of peers—many of whom will become your best friends" and "unforgettable memories that will last a lifetime" (The University of Arizona, n.d.-a). These promises are likely to entice prospective participants.

In a similar vein, STEM programs also used the term "lifelong" (Michigan State's Engineering and Science Success Academy) but they more often referred to friendships developed within one's major (UW-Madison's Mechanical Engineering Summer Launch). U Maryland's Summer Bridge Program for Scientists and Engineers promises "lifelong connections with other fun and intelligent freshman students" (University of Maryland, n.d.) The

STEM programs' descriptions of friendships align with idea of "people like me" from the Special Transitional Enrichment Program at UC Davis and the Summer Bridge Experience at Ohio State. In each case, the websites hail the benefit of meeting students who are experiencing the same things, such as a challenging engineering curriculum.

International student programs also addressed the importance of their participants making *connections with peers* who are international students. The website for UC Davis's Summer Start program features a student quote: "I met a lot of good people and friends from different countries" (University of California, Davis, n.d.-b). It likely makes a difference that international students have the chance to meet other people like themselves who are transitioning to a new country. Just as programs for domestic students emphasized the promise of close friendships, so did Summer Start: "Believe it or not, the friends that I met during summer are my closest friends at UC Davis now." Across the board, meaningful friendships were seen as an important component of the summer bridge experience.

#### *Connections with Professional Staff, Peer Mentors, and Faculty*

In addition to friendships with other first-year students, bridge programs also emphasized *connections with professional staff, peer mentors, and faculty*. Professional staff members in summer bridge programs carry a variety of titles, such as advisors, success coaches, counselors, language coaches (for international students), residential coordinators, and community directors. The tasks involved in these positions range from academic support and advising to residence hall administration and coordination of social events. Ohio State's Summer Bridge Experience website explains that success coaches are "full-time professional staff members" who "provide holistic retention counseling" to students (The Ohio State University, n.d.-b). Undergraduate students can also be employed by summer bridge programs as peer mentors. Seven of the

twenty-two programs offer peer mentoring opportunities for participants. The mentors are students who have previously completed the program or are academically-successful upperclassmen. They offer a range of support, from individual check-ins to course discussion sections, study skills workshops, and social events. The website for U Arizona's UAdvantage First Year Experience describes this benefit: "Learn strategies for academic success from returning students who have been where you are" (The University of Arizona, n.d.-b). In UCLA's Freshman Summer Program, Peer Learning Facilitators conduct small groups so that students can be "part of an intellectual community that promotes discussion" and allows them to "listen to, grapple with, and articulate new and different perspectives" (University of California, Los Angeles, n.d.-c). A student from the Special Transitional Enrichment Program at UC Davis reflects on the experience of working with peer advisors: "We are assigned peer advisors who were of a [*sic*] personal huge help to my academic well being and sense of belonging in the University" (University of California, Davis, n.d.-a). In addition to these programs, Michigan State's Engineering and Science Success Academy, Penn State's Learning Edge Academic Program, Ohio State's Summer Bridge Experience, and U Arizona's New Start Summer Program also use peer mentors to provide support to students in an accessible manner.

Bridge programs in the data set sought to increase the level of meaningful student-faculty interaction early in a student's career with small class sizes, collaborative learning, and intentional faculty involvement. U Washington's Early Fall Start website includes a student's perspective on this approach: "I'm glad I had a chance to join a small class of 20 students in my first year, and to be able to enter fascinating and funny conversations and debates with both my classmates and my professor" (University of Washington, n.d.-b). Similarly, the website for Penn

State's Learning Edge Academic Program included a student testimonial about one-on-one instruction:

I'm a science person, so it was important for me to develop my writing. My rhetoric teacher was so hands on—she had a day when we would talk about our papers one on one. I had never had a teacher pay that much attention to my work, she knew everything about my writing. (The Pennsylvania State University, n.d.-a)

This comment would likely reassure parents that their students are receiving individualized academic support. At the same time, prospective students may feel that one-on-one time with instructors would make it easier to better understand course material and earn a good grade. Beyond first-year writing, the Special Transitional Enrichment Program at UC Davis addresses student-faculty interaction more broadly: “Build connections with faculty across disciplines” (University of California, Davis, n.d.-a). Taken together, the bridge programs seem eager to present faculty as approachable resources for students.

Relationships with faculty are mentioned on the websites for STEM and international programs as well. Penn State's Summer Bridge, a STEM program, contains a faculty mentorship component. “Faculty mentors provide students with opportunities to participate in research, helping students to build their laboratory skills and identify their research interests” (The Pennsylvania State University, n.d.-b). They also “talk about graduate school preparation” with students. The Summer Start program for international students at UC Davis describes faculty in the program as “renowned” and “committed to student success” (University of California, Davis, n.d.-b). By presenting faculty as both academically advanced and caring about students, the bridge programs in this study aim to market themselves successfully to potential participants.

### *Belongingness and Private Enclaves*

In this section, I situate the *relationships* code within scholarship addressing the non-academic aspects of college, especially focusing on Tinto's "sense of belonging," "the sense that they are part of a larger community" (2017, p. 258). I apply Fraser's (1990) notion of private "enclaves," spaces in which marginalized groups can withdraw from the mainstream to support one another, to explore how bridge programs can better feature students' prior knowledges in their support of social relationships.

Social relationships are one of several non-academic factors that can greatly impact in students' success in college. In their controversial book, *Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses*, Arum and Roksa (2011) attempted to measure student learning in higher education through a standardized test, the College Learning Assessment. After analyzing test results, transcripts, and surveys from over 2,300 undergraduates across the country, they claimed that "on average they are not learning very much" (p. 98). They attribute some of this failure to what they see as an inordinate amount of time students spend participating in student clubs, fraternities, and sororities; volunteering; engaging in recreational activities, and working (p. 97). Arum and Roksa's failure to recognize the importance of social activities is in stark contrast with Tinto's research on social integration. For Tinto (1987/1993), effective retention programs "go beyond the provision of information per se to the establishment of early contacts for new students not only with other members of their entering class but also with other students, faculty, and staff" (p. 159). Through these burgeoning relationships, students can develop a "sense of belonging" and "come to see themselves as a member of a community of faculty, staff, and other students who value their participation, that they matter" (Tinto, 2017, p. 258). Tinto suggested that one way institutions can foster belongingness is to ensure that the administration, faculty,

and staff are representative of the student population (p. 261). In this study of twenty-two bridge programs across the country, it is unclear whether or not the professional staff are as racially, ethnically, and nationally diverse as the students they serve. Yet, this is key in helping students develop a sense of belonging.

Several of the bridge programs in this study supported belongingness through peer mentoring, an approach that is used in other initiatives on campus beyond bridge programs. Day, Gipson, and Parker (2017) reported on a study of a first-year writing initiative, the Peer Advocate program, that they created at Northern Illinois University (NIU) to support student persistence from the first year to the second. Peer advocates, described as successful undergraduate students, were assigned to sections of first-year writing. They reminded students verbally of resources, acted as role models, and helped students make connections with one another and with the wider campus community. A survey of students whose classes had peer advocates found that they “used academic resources more often, saw greater gains in their writing skills, and reported a stronger connection to NIU.” In qualitative feedback, students reported feeling “more comfortable” asking a peer for help. Peer mentoring opportunities may help to foster the “sense of belonging” (Tinto, 2017, p. 258) that is so crucial in supporting students’ motivations to persist.

Another way in which bridge programs can better support this sense of belonging remains unacknowledged, however. Bridge programs can highlight the benefits of students from diverse groups learning from one another. Recall the student who valued the fact that she met students “who looked like me, and made me feel welcomed in the University.” So, bridge programs are not just generally supporting the development of student relationships; they often bring together students from marginalized groups such as first-generation students, students of

color, low-income students, and international students. Students from these groups may benefit from developing supportive relationships with others like themselves. Tinto (2017) posited that there should be “sufficient numbers of students of similar backgrounds on campus to allow for the development of self-sustaining student communities” (p. 261). His use of “self-sustaining” implies a funds of knowledge understanding of student strengths, one that views students as integral to establishing networks of support with each other.

In this respect, bridge programs can function as manifestations of Fraser’s (1990) private “enclaves,” spaces where marginalized groups of people can gather together to withdraw from the mainstream, regroup, and support one another. The notion of private enclaves comes from her term “subaltern counterpublics,” which are “discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs” (p. 67). In applying this approach to bridge programs, groups of students that have little discursive power can, in a private enclave, come together to support one another and to push back against stereotypes they may face in other parts of the university or wider society. Bridge programs for diverse student populations should acknowledge enclaves as a specific benefit of their programs. In doing so, they would recognize and validate the knowledges that diverse student groups bring to the university space, including but not limited to strategies for responding to instances of individual and/or institutional racism, avoiding imposter syndrome as a first-generation student, and navigating financial aid as a low-income student. The experiences and strategies of students themselves can drive the program’s relationship-building activities. Bridge programs have an opportunity to incorporate students’ knowledges in the context of existing programming. Identifying student strengths and making space for them in the program would allow bridge

programs to take the concepts of “supporting the whole student” and “belongingness” to the next level.

## **VI. Summer Bridge Programs as Figured Worlds**

In the remainder of the chapter, I apply the concept of figured worlds to the bridge program and to the understandings it seeks to make of itself within its precarious space in the university structure. I contend that bridge program and upper-level university administrators have constructed their bridge programs into “figured worlds” (Holland et. al, 1998), spaces whose “conceptual dimensions supply the context 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). People construct various performances of their very selves due to their cultural context; they exert agency on the world through these performances. Gee (2011a) described Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain’s notion of figured world as a “typical story” that people tell about themselves and their world (p. 169). These typical stories have also been called “‘folk theories,’ ‘frames,’ ‘scenarios,’ ‘scripts,’ ‘mental models,’ ‘cultural models,’ [and] ‘Discourse models’ (p. 170). Across *academic/study skills*, *college knowledge*, and *relationships* codes, bridge programs in this study told the story of themselves as the benevolent giver of skills, knowledge, and relationships instead of presenting students as capable of building on their existing experiences and abilities. Positioning themselves as students’ only pathway to success, bridge program websites used discourse that created the identity of the bridge program as savior. In this figured world, the underlying assumption goes as follows: Adjusting to a challenging new environment is possible as long as the university provides students with academic and social integration in the form of *academic/study skills*, *college knowledge*, and *relationships*. Without these supports,

students are not likely to succeed on their own due to their demographics as first-generation students, students of color, low-income students, and international students and/or due to the intensity of their chosen major.

Of course, measurable data does link participation in a bridge program with institutional measures of success such as persistence and retention rates (Cabrera et al., 2013; McCurrie, 2009). However, it is problematic to not acknowledge the abilities and resources that diverse groups of students draw upon to succeed. These abilities and resources may include *aspirational knowledge* and *familial knowledge* (see Chapter 4). In not recognizing and utilizing students' funds of knowledge, bridge programs figure themselves as the sole reason for students' success. This is a subtle form of deficit discourse since it assumes students do not already possess strategies and life experiences for dealing with challenges. It is as if bridge programs are saying that students' prior knowledges, skills, and experiences cannot possibly help them in the new context of university life. In addition, bridge programs position themselves as the only way forward, as if students are not able develop strategies on their own.

Recall the student quote featured on the website of the Special Transitional Enrichment Program at UC Davis in the epigraph for this chapter: "I cannot imagine myself coming to UC Davis *with any knowledge* [emphasis added] if it wasn't for STEP" (University of California, Davis, n.d.-a). The bridge program thought this would be a good thing to advertise—the student saw herself as having no relevant knowledge, and through the program, she gained the knowledge. Yet through the funds of knowledge lens, it is quite myopic to present students as empty vessels, as "receptacles" without anything in them when they arrive at college (Freire, 1968/2011, p. 72). So, the deficit model is deeply embedded, if now more subtly than in the days of remedial programming, in the bridge program as it imagines itself and its objectives

institutionally. Despite this finding, eight programs in this study's data set were at least partially aligned with a funds of knowledge approach, which I address in the following chapter. It is important to recognize areas that serve as starting point for student support professionals, administrators, and faculty to re-envision how they characterize students and the support they need.

## Chapter 4

### Possibilities and Potential: Funds of Knowledge as a Constructive Response

#### I. Overview of Chapter

As discussed in the previous chapter, the figured world of summer bridge, absent a funds of knowledge frame, can rely on a deficit model. The majority of programs in the data set unintentionally operated from deficit-based understandings of students. However, a few programs were more oriented toward a funds of knowledge approach. As a foil of deficit discourse, funds of knowledge is an undertheorized scholarly frame that offers a constructive response to the presence of deficit discourse on summer bridge program websites. Funds of knowledge, the resources, experiences, and skills that students and their families possess (Moll et al., 2005, p. 72), is positioned to reinscribe how bridge programs conceive of and communicate about the work they do. In her 2007 presidential address to the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Bensimon was the first person to introduce the concept of funds of knowledge to higher education, as it originated in K-12 contexts (Rios-Aguilar & Kiyama, 2012, p. 8). According to Rios-Aguilar and Kiyama, Bensimon positioned funds of knowledge as an approach that helps “faculty to see students and families in terms *possibilities* [emphasis added]” (p. 8) as opposed to “negative representations of under-represented students that plague the field of higher education” (Kiyama and Rios-Aguilar, 2018, p. 3). Funds of knowledge can potentially flip some of the deficit discourse found in strategic plans, curricula, outcomes, and assessments and shift it toward the discourse of possibility.

This chapter provides examples from eight total programs in the data set (and a thick description of one particular program) whose website materials contained content related to the code *aspirational knowledge* (Yosso, 2005), the code *familial knowledge* (Yosso, 2005), or both.

I selected these areas of knowledge from the six categories that Yosso provides since they were the two most common in the data set. Table 3 provides a list of the programs referenced in this chapter as well as contextual information. While not all aspects of these programs align with a funds of knowledge approach, it is important to recognize areas that serve as a starting point for student support professionals and faculty to re-envision how they characterize students and the support they need. The *Fill In Tool* (Gee, 2011a) allowed me to examine subtle references to funds of knowledge.

**Table 3. Selected Programs and Contextual Information**

<i>Program</i>	<i>Institution</i>	<i>Housed In/ Sponsored By</i>	<i>STEM or International</i>	<i>Writing Course</i>
<i>Engineering and Science Success Academy</i>	Michigan State (land-grant)	Michigan Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation and the Diversity Programs Office at Michigan State	STEM	Required
<i>Freshman Summer Program</i>	UCLA (land-grant)	New Student Programs within the Academic Advancement Program	Neither	Option
<i>New Start Summer Program</i>	U Arizona (land-grant)	Enrollment Management and Student Affairs Advancement	Neither	Option
<i>Special Transitional Enrichment Program</i>	UC Davis (land-grant)	Student Academic Success Center	Neither	Option

**Table 3. Selected Programs and Contextual Information (continued)**

<i>The Successful Transition and Enhanced Preparation for Undergraduates Program (STEPUP) Summer Bridge Program</i>	U Florida (land-grant)	Office of Student Transition and Retention	STEM	Not offered
<i>Summer Bridge</i>	Penn State (Main Campus) (land-grant)	Millennium Scholars Program	STEM	Profess. comm.—unclear if required
<i>Summer Bridge Experience</i>	Ohio State (land-grant)	Young Scholars Program within the Office of Diversity and Inclusion	Neither	Option
<i>UAdvantage First Year Experience</i>	U Arizona (land-grant)	Office of New Student Experiences, Enrollment Affairs and Student Management	Neither	Option

While funds of knowledge frameworks recognize students' past experiences, resources, and skills (González, et al., 2005; Kiyama & Rios-Aguilar, 2018; Yosso, 2005), I demonstrate in this chapter how *aspirational knowledge* can center a funds of knowledge orientation in discussions of students' future pathways. To connect with students' academic and career goals, bridge programs can utilize pathways discourse and approaches. Yet, bridge programs risk the disavowal of students' cultural histories if they do not fully incorporate students' aspirations. Such a pathway, despite its good intentions, depends on seeing students as empty vessels. In addition, future-oriented pathways are susceptible to corporate neoliberalism (Nordquist, 2017). Alongside pathways, *familial knowledge* offers an especially useful strategy for discourse and action in order to integrate students' assets meaningfully into the program. This chapter's

analysis begins with explicit references to students' "potential" as one approach to *aspirational knowledge*. I then provide a thick description of the Successful Transition and Enhanced Preparation for Undergraduates Program (STEPUP), a student success program for engineering students at U Florida, which utilizes *aspirational knowledge* to provide pathways to the major, discipline, and career. Following that, I address starting points for *familial knowledge* in the data set. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the obstacles bridge programs may face in implementing funds of knowledge approaches.

## II. Aspirational Knowledge: Recognizing Students' Potential

The emphasis on possibilities, student potential, and recognizing students' hopes and dreams about the future is aligned with a funds of knowledge orientation. Drawing on Yosso's (2005) definition, I subcoded these instances as *aspirational knowledge* under the parent code *funds of knowledge*. *Aspirational knowledge* involves "the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers" (Yosso, 2005, p. 77). For example, the webpage for the Summer Bridge Experience at Ohio State<sup>20</sup> claims that their program is "designed to assist Young Scholars reach [*sic*] their full potential and achieve their academic and career goals through personal, professional, and leadership development" (The Ohio State University, n.d.-b). In referring to students' potential and connecting to their professional goals, this program honors the aspirations that students bring with them to the university. Particularly, it responds to the needs of students and their own goals instead of imposing university standards or mandates upon them. This is significant as the imposition of university standards serves in many cases as the main purpose of summer bridge programs.

---

<sup>20</sup> Unless otherwise stated, all programs in this chapter are not specialized; that is, they are not specifically designed for STEM majors or international students.

UCLA's website materials also address the potential of students admitted to the Academic Advancement Program, in which the Freshman Summer Program resides: "AAP programs and services are linked together by an underlying belief that all AAP students have earned their academic right to be at UCLA and have demonstrated the academic potential to excel at, and graduate from, UCLA" (University of California, Los Angeles, n.d.-c). By referencing students' educational experiences at UCLA as a right, the Freshman Summer Program hints at the barriers to a good education that diverse student populations may face as well as educational programming that serves a gatekeeping instead of a liberatory function. Higher education institutions may hope that a bridge program will "remedy" what students lack. UCLA's statement counters that approach, arguing that the students they serve have earned the right to attend UCLA and have already demonstrated "the academic potential to excel at, and graduate from, UCLA." This statement aligns with a funds of knowledge approach, since it recognizes and espouses the intellectual abilities that students already have. In addition, it claims that the students it serves will graduate, making the implicit argument that these students are prepared to overcome challenges on the path to graduation. Beyond the Summer Bridge Experience at Ohio State and the Freshman Summer Program at UCLA, no other programs in the data set used the word "potential." These references to students' potential serve as positive examples of how other bridge programs can recognize *aspirational knowledge*.

In light of the changing demographics of U.S. college students (Nadworny, 2018), student success professionals and faculty should help students recognize their own *aspirational knowledge*. As discussed in Chapter 3, summer bridge programs may view students as empty "receptacles" needing "to be filled" upon arrival at the institution (Freire, 1968/2011, p. 81). The danger of this view is that it refuses to acknowledge the mindsets, strategies, and skills that

students of diverse groups may have developed to overcome barriers in the past, which some argue remain ever present in today's universities. If attended to, these experiences could help students successfully negotiate a variety of obstacles to their success. In a September 2018 segment of NPR's Morning Edition, Nadworny interviewed Walton Radford, who heads up postsecondary education research at the think tank RTI International. According to Radford, 74% of the 17 million college students in the United States have at least one of the following characteristics: are financially independent from their parents, work full time, have a child or other dependent, serve as a single caregiver, lack a traditional high school diploma, have delayed postsecondary enrollment for one or more years, and attend school part time. Nearly one third of all college students have two or three of these characteristics, which may cause "added stresses and pressures" (Nadworny, 2018). Radford concludes, "What we think of as 'nontraditional' is really the majority of students now" (Nadworny, 2018). For students of color, additional barriers may include dealing with microaggressions and imposter syndrome (Caplan & Ford, 2014). Student populations deemed "at risk" by higher education institutions, such as students of color, first generation students, international students, and speakers of English as an Additional Language (EAL) may face more of these barriers and to a higher degree than other students. With these challenges in mind, a funds of knowledge framework offers insights for building upon students' assets rather than their perceived deficits.

Families of diverse student populations often take steps to develop resilience in their children and communities. Yeager and Dweck (2012) define resilience as "any behavioral, attributional, or emotional response to an academic or social challenge that is positive and beneficial for development (such as seeking new strategies, putting forth greater effort, or solving conflicts peacefully)" (p. 303). All of these responses are opposed to negative responses

such as “helplessness, giving up, cheating, or aggressive retaliation” (p. 303). Yosso (2005) describes resilience as a feature of *aspirational knowledge*: “This resiliency is evidenced in those who allow themselves and their children to dream of possibilities beyond their present circumstances, often without the objective means to attain those goals” (p. 77-78). *Aspirational knowledge*, and through it, resiliency, can be developed through a combination of storytelling and cultural sayings, morals, or advice for overcoming difficult situations (p. 78). For Yosso, “these stories nurture a culture of possibility,” since they help children to hope and dream for their futures beyond what their parents had achieved (p. 78). Bridge program course assignments or activities that ask students to reflect on the role of these stories, sayings, morals, and advice in their lives may help students identify positive ways to respond to hardships. Students can claim their own resilience and that of their families as something they can draw on throughout and beyond their college careers. In addition, bridge programs that use the discourse of resilience on their website materials may be more effective at tapping into students’ resiliency.

### **III. Aspirational Knowledge: One Program’s Pathways to Major, Discipline, and Career**

A few programs emphasized *aspirational knowledge* indirectly by focusing on how students might move forward in a major, discipline, or career after the program ends. Instead of focusing on skills, behaviors, or knowledge that students lack (see Chapter 3), the *aspirational knowledge* code implies an understanding of students as motivated, goal-oriented, and focused. One program that does this particularly well is STEPUP, a student success program for engineering students at U Florida that includes a bridge program component. To more fully address how STEPUP cued *aspirational knowledge* in the design of its summer bridge program, I provide a thick description and analysis below.

U Florida’s STEPUP is housed in the Office of Student Transition and Retention within the Herbert Wertheim College of Engineering. The Office of Student Transition and Retention seeks to “enhance first year student success in transitioning into the College/University and at the same time bolster the College’s success in better retaining students within the major” (University of Florida, n.d.). Dr. Johnathan Earle, former Associate Dean of the College of Engineering, launched this initiative as “the college’s first summer-bridge transition program targeting freshman engineering students, with a particular focus on underrepresented student populations (i.e. Women, African-Americans, Hispanic/Latinx and Native-American students).” STEPUP serves a high proportion of first-generation learners and students “from backgrounds that historically have experienced a greater risk for failure in the university setting.” Across the dataset, STEPUP stood out as a program that is the closest to Yosso’s (2005) *aspirational knowledge*, which refers to the hopes and dreams that students and their families have about the future (p. 77).

#### *Emphasizing Careers of Program Graduates*

One way that STEPUP aligns itself with students’ hopes for the future is by quoting former students on the impact of the program on their careers. This can help build current students’ confidence in themselves and enable them to see their potential in attaining similar positions. After each quote, the former participant’s name is listed, along with their major and current occupational affiliation:

Participating in STEPUP allowed me to have opportunities that not many incoming freshmen students would have. I networked with upperclassmen engineers who guided me in the right direction and interacted with renowned faculty that many freshman [*sic*] would not have the opportunity to meet until their later years. . . . —Kimberly Gant,

Industrial and Systems Engineering STEPUP Alum; now at Pacific Gas and Electric Company. (University of Florida, n.d.)

Not only is Kimberly providing specific examples of how STEPUP supported her major, she serves as living evidence of the program's success through her current position at Pacific Gas and Electric Company. By providing this information for current students, STEPUP connects with their goals and aspirations.

Indeed, students' goals are even emphasized in the required portion of the cover letter for the STEPUP program application. Applicants should submit "a resume and a one-page cover letter (detailing why the applicant considers him/herself to be an ideal candidate for the program, as well as the top three goals the applicant intends to accomplish by participating in the program)" (University of Florida, n.d.). It is unclear if STEPUP uses the student-generated goals for other parts of the bridge experience; however, the mere act of inviting students to communicate their aspirations in the cover letter is one that draws on their funds of knowledge. It assumes that students already have goals before they arrive at this point, and it subtly makes the connection between what happens in the bridge program and their long-term goals.

### *Corporate Sponsors as Unlikely Partners*

In addition to providing examples of program participants who have gone on to secure careers in their field, STEPUP provides a more overt connection to students' dreams and goals through its corporate partnerships. As part of the summer bridge program, students are exposed to tours of engineering facilities as well as a corporate speaker series. Tours provide students "a behind the scenes look at engineering in process" and typically involve a "3-4 hour tour of the company site, along with presentations from engineering staff, Q&A session, etc." (University of Florida, n.d.). One particular statement from STEPUP's website materials hints at how these

events may be funded: “Prior to the creation of EFTP [The Entering Freshman Transition Program],<sup>21</sup> the STEPUP program was limited to a maximum of 50 students *based on corporate funding*” [emphasis added]. Since students were turned away from participating due a lack of corporate funding, it can be inferred that corporate engineering sponsors play a crucial role in STEPUP’s overall budget. The website provides information for “corporate representatives, STEPUP and UF [U Florida] alum interested in *sponsoring* [emphasis added] a STEPUP corporate tour.” Perhaps the engineering companies provide these tours for free, or they may pay STEPUP for the exposure of their facility and its internship and job opportunities. Engineering companies could also be financially sponsoring the presentations they make to students in the bridge program. In the Corporate Speaker Series, STEPUP and U Florida alumni are invited to give 60-90 minute presentations on their companies, including “history, overview, job/internship opportunities, professional advice for first-year engineering students, Q & A.” Corporate sponsors can also mentor students on research projects (University of Florida, n.d.). STEPUP’s website includes a section that asks local engineering corporations to become sponsors, and it frames corporate involvement as a great benefit: “Increasing the ability to enroll more students into STEPUP is the primary goal! The more students we are able to involve and grow, the better served our engineering community will be.” This statement is another indicator of STEPUP’s reliance on corporate funding to operate.

While corporate sponsorship and involvement in bridge programs might initially seem suspect, STEPUP website materials suggest that a balance has been struck between meeting industry needs and tapping into students’ aspirations for the future. *Aspirational knowledge* helps students maintain hopes for their dreams, even as they face barriers to fulfilling them (Yosso,

---

<sup>21</sup> EFTP, a “sister program” to STEPUP, is a non-residential version of the program, which necessarily excluded it from the data set for this study (see criteria Chapter 2).

2005, p. 77). For first-generation engineering students, these barriers could include unfamiliarity with different types of engineering in the major, lack of procedural knowledge in how to find internships and job opportunities, not having personal contacts who are engineers, and little knowledge of the range of potential careers. STEPUP aims to reduce some of those barriers by introducing students to contacts in the field and potential internships and employment opportunities. In addition, it provides an inside look at the engineering industry as early as students' first six weeks at the university. This valuable information nurtures the *aspirational knowledge* that students bring with them to the university space. Instead of treating students as empty vessels (see Chapter 3), arriving at college with no goals, or treating these goals as if they are irrelevant to the work of the bridge program, STEPUP works with students and their aspirations by providing specific contacts, tools, and information designed to help them realize their dream of becoming engineers.

#### *Limitation of Pathways Discourse*

In an institution charged with academic preparation and not job training, what should we make of STEPUP's emphasis on preparing students for their future careers? Nordquist (2017) examined the danger of educational movements that are overly focused on the "future orientation" and pushing students through the system (p. 71). His research depicted the limitations of designing programs around future pathways and provides a counterexample to STEPUP's approach. Nordquist examined the attempts of large national movements such as the Gates Foundation's Educational Pathways project, the Career Pathways project by the U.S. Department of Education, and the efforts of the Lumina Foundation to streamline education and to provide students with an educational credential as quickly as possible. In the era of neoliberalism, high schools are facing more pressure than ever to increase standardized test

scores and send more students to college. As a result, they can at times over-focus on students' educational futures.

As an example, Nordquist (2017) focused on a public high school in Louisville, Kentucky that he refers to as Hughes, which represents a “web of surveillance” that can develop as a result of such pressure (p. 66). In order to immerse teachers and students in the “rhetoric of readiness,” banners with the names of various colleges and universities were hung up in the main hallway of Hughes (p. 68). This effort sought to focus attention on state standards and accountability targets. The school also displayed the photos of 44 graduating seniors who had been accepted to colleges on a large bulletin board with the caption “Wildcats Have Options” (p. 69). However, they did not display options of 144 other graduating seniors who were not going to college (p. 69). This kind of display reveals the danger of seeing colleges and universities as the only “sanctioned pathways” for the future (p. 69). While Nordquist acknowledged that education can certainly prepare students to take a place in the economy, he lamented perspectives that engage in the “reduction of literacy education to exchange value” (p. 65). This reduction is always a possibility, and it illustrates a limitation of pathway discourse. Yet, STEPUP offers effective strategies to curb the effects of this limitation.

In comparing the future orientation of Hughes with the one found in STEPUP, there are clear differences. At Hughes, which represents the situation of many high schools in districts now focused on accountability, testing, and “readiness,” students are pressured to choose higher education as the only “correct” choice. Students in these schools are subject to a high level of surveillance through frequent standardized tests and their curriculum is strictly monitored: “. . . our studies and assignments anticipate and our assessments measure readiness for the next unit, grade level, the first year of college, an academic discipline, a global marketplace” (Nordquist,

2017, p. 129). If students choose an alternate route instead of higher education, their efforts and dreams go unrecognized. By contrast, STEPUP encounters students at a very different point in their trajectory. All of the students in the program have chosen to major in engineering at U Florida. The program does not need to prepare students to perform well on standardized tests or convince them of the value of a college degree. Instead, the future orientation that STEPUP provides is one that is specific to students' existing aspirations. It is a particular kind of future preparation that acknowledges the paths students have already chosen for themselves by providing information, resources, and contacts for them to continue advancing successfully along the path. The program can help students in this way precisely because it does not follow a one-size-fits-all model, as high school college preparatory endeavors so often do.

In addition, bridge programs such as STEPUP that foreground *aspirational knowledge* help students in a particular type of mobility. Nordquist (2017) addressed the concept of mobility in educational contexts among underrepresented students: “. . . poor and minority students are, by and large, still segregated from their middle-class peers through mechanisms of enclosure and networked mobility systems; i.e. academic tracking, in-school suspension, English language learning, and special education programs” (p. 25). Indeed, the review of the literature for this study in Chapter 1 revealed these kinds of limitations for diverse student populations, especially as these constraints are embedded into first-year writing and student success programming. Students may be required to complete basic writing, ESL, and study skills courses before advancing in their coursework. Nordquist drew on Kaufman and Montulate's definition of “motility” as “the manner in which an individual or group appropriates the field of possibilities relative to movement and uses them” (p. 25). Individuals, due to their “diverse abilities and intersectional raced, gendered, classed, and ethnic subjectivities,” may have “low motility in

terms of capacities and choices for movement” (p. 25). When diverse student populations face extensive barriers to completing college, such as a string of prerequisites to first-year composition (Adams et al., 2014), they experience this low motility and are less able to make choices that determine their future.

In contrast to Hughes, STEPUP is not a requirement for students to complete before they advance. It is an option, one that provides engineering students with contacts, discipline-specific strategies for success, and possibilities for reaching their career goals. As such, it affords them greater motility. Other bridge programs should seek to emulate this aspect of STEPUP in providing students pathways instead of barriers and connecting with their aspirations. In addition, STEPUP explicitly addresses the fact that it is not a remedial initiative. On the Frequently Asked Questions page, one question reads, “Is any level of the program for remedial students or remediation?” (University of Florida, n.d.). The answer reads:

No. The Herbert Wertheim College of Engineering does not offer any form of remedial or remediation programming. Instead, our summer bridge programs are designed to give participants a real world perspective of the classes at UF [U Florida] (i.e. exams, quizzes, homework assignments, etc.,) [*sic*] taught by engineering faculty or highly qualified graduate students. (University of Florida, n.d.)

In eschewing a remediation model (see Chapter 1), STEPUP seeks to provide a way forward for students, instead of keeping them out of certain classes, programs, and majors. If other bridge programs adopted this orientation, students may be better positioned to graduate on time, persist in their degrees, and meet the demands of their future coursework.

### *Programmatic Areas for Growth*

As in all the programs in the data set, there are areas in which STEPUP does not fully recognize the skills and resources that students already possess when they enter the program. For example, the website states that it uses “project-based experiential learning” to “*train* [emphasis added] students with what we term the Attributes of a Gator<sup>22</sup> Engineer” (University of Florida, n.d.). It is unclear whether or not STEPUP views these qualities as attributes that students do not already have or attributes in which they have some experience that they would be building on. The website includes a graphic entitled “Attributes of a Gator Engineer” that lists keywords affiliated with each attribute. Five bubbles contain large header words (see italics below) and smaller descriptor words and phrases (listed after each colon below):

- *Creativity*: imagination, versatility, artistry, ingenuity, curiosity, resourcefulness
- *Leadership*: entrepreneurial, engaging, effective, professional, visionary, inspiring
- *Integrity*: honest, ethical, hardworking, persistent, drawn to right action
- *Professional Excellence*: technical competence, area expertise, insight, resolve
- *Service to the Global Community*: tolerance; respect; interdependence; cooperation; compassion; expanded awareness of financial, societal, legal and cultural influences  
(University of Florida, n.d.)

It is unreasonable to expect that students will already have all or even most of these attributes at the start of the program. Surely, they will not yet have qualities of professional excellence such as “technical competence” and “area expertise” in engineering, for example. However, the design and organization of the graphic reinforces the idea that students lack the majority of these qualities. The student is off to the far right, and her image is in the background. The bubbles

---

<sup>22</sup> The gator is the mascot of U Florida.

seem to float in the environment instead of being connected to her. All of this contributes to an understanding of students as lacking the skills featured in the bubbles.

On the contrary, students from diverse communities may already have some of these skills. Moll et al. (2005) examined the household practices in working class, Mexican communities in Tucson, Arizona to uncover the knowledges that students could bring to the classroom space, if given the opportunity. They conducted ethnographic observations, open-ended interviews, life histories, and case studies to uncover the “cultural and intellectual resources” within students’ households (p. 71). These resources encompass “strategic knowledge and related activities essential in households’ functioning, development, and well-being” (p. 85). For example, diverse groups of students may learn types of construction such as carpentry, masonry, and roofing from their families as well as how to repair cars. Moll et al. (2005) characterized this type of knowledge as “material and scientific knowledge” (p. 73). Diverse student populations may also have medicinal knowledge such as midwifery, herbal knowledge, and folk medicine in addition to religious knowledge.

In comparing these areas to STEPUP’s “Attributes of a Gator Engineer,” they are aligned with the attribute “creativity” in that they involve the qualities of “resourcefulness,” “versatility,” and “artistry,” all listed under this attribute in the graphic. These areas of knowledge may also help students to be “hardworking” and “persistent,” which are descriptors under the attribute of “integrity.” Additionally, Moll et. al (2005) identify moral knowledge and ethics, especially as related to the practice of religion, as key areas of knowledge for diverse households (p. 73). These areas most closely align with the attribute of “integrity” and its related descriptors: “drawn to right action,” “ethical,” and “honest.” In order for STEPUP to further validate students’ aspirations, the program should make it clear that students would be building on what they

already know. This acknowledgement resolves an issue of the future orientation, which is that it can unintentionally ignore assets that students are already bringing to the university space.

One example of how to do this comes from another program, Michigan State’s Engineering and Science Success Academy, a bridge program for STEM majors. Their website is fairly sparse, consisting of a program brochure, and application, and a file of parent testimonials. The parent letter from Johnny and Helena Rogers to the program director acknowledges the existing skills and abilities of their son, Jared, before he started the program: “The summer spent on the campus of MSU [Michigan State] allowed him to become familiar with the campus, develop lifelong friends, and gave him additional tools to *build upon the skills, talents and gifts he had already developed for success*” [emphasis added] (Michigan State University, n.d.-a). Across the entire data set, the only direct acknowledgement of students’ strengths and abilities before attending a summer bridge program came from a student’s parents. They write that ESSA gave Jared additional tools to build upon what he already knew. In phrasing it this way, they acknowledge that their son did not arrive at the program as what Freire would call an empty “receptacle” (Freire, 1968/2011, p. 72); rather, he is a complex being with a wide array of previous experiences, knowledges, strengths, skills, abilities, and interests. This finding suggests that summer bridge programs and other student success initiatives on campus have much to learn from the way a parent views their child—as more than their standardized test scores or GPA.

#### **IV. Familial Knowledge: Connecting with Students’ Existing Support Systems**

The parent testimonial on the ESSA website is an example of both *aspirational knowledge* and *familial knowledge*. For Yosso, *familial knowledge* refers to “the importance of maintaining a healthy connection to our community and its resources” (2005, p. 79). Our family

“model lessons of caring, coping, and providing (*educación*)” (p. 79). To truly support students, bridge programs should avail themselves of support from their families. I subcoded *familial knowledge* under the parent code *funds of knowledge*.

### *Beginning Steps Toward Recognizing Families' Potential*

Beyond simply hosting informational sessions for parents, there is an alternative approach to tapping even more intentionally into *familial knowledge*. Kiyama (2010/2018) examined the role of educational ideologies and funds of knowledge in Mexican American families. Contrary to the perception that Mexican American families do not value education, Kiyama (2010/2018) found *aspirational knowledge* among the parents of young children in a university-based Parent Outreach Program. She encouraged educational institutions to be more expansive in the ways that they involve parents by “identifying the ways that parents are already involved, specifically tapping into families’ funds of knowledge” (Kiyama, 2010/2018, p. 88). For example, she interviewed Rogelio, a grandfather who participated in the Parent Outreach Program and a vending machine repairman at the university. He shared that he knew how to navigate the physical campus and personnel in order to accomplish various tasks. In addition, he commented that he probably knew of a few places on campus that even the program director didn’t know existed. Kiyama found this kind of knowledge to be relevant to the larger goals of the Parent Outreach Program:

I argue that this grandfather’s knowledge of the physical campus is quite valuable. Not only might this grandfather extend this knowledge to his family and introduce them to the educational setting, but the Parent Outreach Program could have expanded upon that knowledge to help him and other parents navigate campus. As previously expressed, he said that he could show us places on campus most people would not know about. Why

not encourage the grandfather to do so? Such an act validates his role, builds confidence in his knowledge, and provides a concrete example of household expertise<sup>23</sup> to other parents. Incorporating parents into leadership roles provides a sense of ownership, and can result in long-term maintenance of college-knowledge within the community. (p. 96)

The knowledge of Rogelio was not fully recognized by the Parent Outreach Program. While this is not typical curriculum for parent programming, Kiyama argued that it could be. She saw potential in recognizing *familial knowledge* as relevant to the work of preparing students to transition to college. In the same way, there is potential to more fully acknowledge and build from the funds of knowledge of families in bridge programs. Rogelio's knowledge seems to be particularly connected to Yosso's (2005) concept of *navigational knowledge*, or abilities in "maneuvering through social institutions" (p. 80). Kiyama emphasized this fact: "Although this grandfather did not know *how* to make college a reality, he did know *where* to make college a reality. For some parents, the physical campus itself serves as a barrier, accessible only to a select few" (p. 96). Students' families may not know how to navigate campus or even feel comfortable asking for help. Rogelio's knowledge, if activated by the Parent Outreach Program, has the potential to fill that gap.

Bridge programs in this study's data set also have the potential to more fully recognize the role of families in broader retention and student success initiatives. Yet, several of the websites only mentioned families in terms of limiting their involvement. In the Frequently Asked Questions section of the website for the UAdvantage First Year Experience at U Arizona, one of the questions addresses family involvement. Written from the perspective of a parent, it asks,

---

<sup>23</sup> Household maintenance and expertise is one of the original funds of knowledge, referring to such skills as masonry, appliance repairs, and midwifery (Moll, et al., 2005, p. 73).

“Can I participate with my student?” (The University of Arizona, n.d.-b). The response is less than encouraging:

The UAdvantage First Year Experience is only for incoming freshmen and is an opportunity for new students to connect with other new students. As such, we will not have an opportunity for parents or family members to participate. However, we will stay in contact with our Family and Advocate weekly newsletter during the program! (The University of Arizona, n.d.-b)

While it is of course necessary to limit parental involvement in bridge programs, this approach fails to recognize the funds of knowledge that parents can offer programs. Perhaps parents and other family members have specific kinds of career or disciplinary knowledge to share or other life experiences that could be valuable to students as they begin exploring their options. In the same way, the offer of weekly newsletter communications leaves much to be desired, since this communication is a one-way street. The program is sharing the information; the parents are on the receiving end.

The Special Transitional Enrichment Program at UC Davis includes a similar question and answer on its website. Writing from a student’s perspective, it asks, “Am I allowed to visit home on weekends?” (University of California, Davis, n.d.-a). The answer reads, “No. Students are required to stay for STEP on the weekends. . . . Students are not allowed to go home during the program.” Students from diverse groups may especially struggle with this as they may have family support systems that play a significant role in their lives.

The Summer Transitional Enrichment Program website does have a “STEP Parents and Families” tab in which it recognizes this important relationship. At the top of the page is a header that reads “Welcome to the Aggie Family” and the following message:

STEP recognizes that students have many people in their lives who have supported and encouraged their success leading to admittance to UC Davis, and we know families come in many forms from all walks of life. Whether you're a parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, sibling, partner, spouse, legal guardian, mentor or friend, welcome to the Aggie family!

(University of California, Davis, n.d.-a)

This message serves to acknowledge the role of families in supporting student success. Though it does not go as far as recognizing the areas of knowledge that families can bring, it is a beginning step in this direction.

Another beginning step to more fully involving parents and drawing on their areas of expertise lies in the information parents are given about the institution and the bridge program. The Special Transitional Enrichment Program at UC Davis provides a series of links to campus resources for parents, such as the student health resource guide and the Aggie Parent Association. Similarly, the New Start Summer Program at U Arizona provides an orientation tailored for families who have a student in the program. The New Start Family and Advocate Orientation is an optional event for parents, members, and other student advocates. Attendees receive information about financial aid, the bursar's office, and the New Start Summer Program. The orientation is designed "to make sure parents and advocates can still get the information they need to provide helpful and meaningful support for their students during the program" (The University of Arizona, n.d.-a). By acknowledging the role of parents and other student advocates in students' successful completion of the program, the New Start Summer Program is moving toward recognizing the family support system as integral to broader retention goals.

*Utilizing Familial Knowledge: One Program's Example*

Across the data set, one program stood out as an example of how to use parents' time, commitment, and skills as strengths—the Millennium Scholars Program at Penn State, which includes Summer Bridge. This bridge program is just one component of the larger program for STEM majors, and parental involvement is utilized across several areas. There is a tab on the website of the Millennium Scholars Program which reads “Support the Millennium Scholars” (The Pennsylvania State University, n.d.-b). The webpage associated with this tab is directed toward parents and provides a description of various areas of support:

The parents of Millennium Scholars are vital to the program's success. We expect and encourage parent engagement from Interview Weekend until graduation. The Millennium Scholars Parent Association enables parents to engage with each other and support the program. The Association assists the program with Interview Weekend, Summer Bridge welcome events, and various activities throughout the academic year. (The Pennsylvania State University, n.d.-b)

In claiming that parents are “vital to the program's success,” the Millennium Scholars Program comes the closest of all the programs in this study to recognizing families' funds of knowledge. Parents are given a venue to network specifically not just with other parents at the institution but with other parents whose son or daughter is in the program. At the same time, this association asks for parents to assist with events and activities. All summer bridge experiences, whether or not they are part of a larger student support program, can follow the lead of the Millennium Scholars Program in utilizing the skills of students' families.

## V. Obstacles to Funds of Knowledge Approaches

Funds of knowledge is a constructive response to the deficit discourse and remnants of remedial education (see Chapter 3) that are present in summer bridge program website descriptions. The emphasis on student strengths in a funds of knowledge lens can play a crucial role in assisting universities and colleges in rethinking the enterprise of higher education, including its goals, initiatives, objectives, and priorities, to reflect and meaningfully support an increasingly diverse student body. In recognition of this great potential, why is the funds of knowledge approach not more widely present in bridge programs?

One reason could be that program staff are not always aware of students' extra-curricular knowledges, expertise, or skills. In many cases, bridge program staff are tasked with being aware of student deficits, designing an effective bridge program intervention, assessing its impact, and reporting on its effectiveness to upper-level university administrators. Their very work often presupposes a deficit model, one in which the bridge program is positioned to intervene. This is especially true for programs affiliated with larger federal programs such as the TRIO Excel Summer Program at Michigan State. According to the TRIO webpage on the U.S. Department of Education website, TRIO programs are “designed to identify and provide services for individuals from *disadvantaged* [emphasis added] backgrounds” (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). In particular, the webpage lists “low-income individuals, first-generation students, and individuals with disabilities” (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). Students in these categories must qualify as “disadvantaged” through a comparison of their individual circumstances with a set federally-mandated guidelines by the Department of Education. Administrators of TRIO programs receive a “training program” (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). After the training, they may be predisposed to view students' differences through a deficit orientation. In light of

this model, it makes sense that bridge program staff may not be aware of students' funds of knowledge. And depending on their educational backgrounds, they may not be familiar with the funds of knowledge theoretical framework, which originates in education and anthropology. Further research could be conducted to understand the extent to which bridge program administrators operate from a deficit model when designing and facilitating their programs.

A less innocuous explanation is that bridge programs are not able to acknowledge student strengths without threatening the very existence of the bridge program itself. Born out of the desire to remedy students' individual deficits and to mainstream students more effectively into the wider university (see Chapter 1), bridge programs, like first-year composition classes, were created to identify the ways that students don't yet fit into the academic discourse community and to provide them with solutions and resources. If bridge program administrators shifted their website discourse from "give students skills to succeed" to "help students build on skills they already have to reach their full potential," would they be implying that bridge programs are not necessary? And as a result, would some bridge programs experience reduced funding or cease to exist altogether? McCurrie (2009) addressed the precarious position of bridge programs in institutional structures:

More and more business models applying cost-benefit analyses to value-added products are replacing discussions of students, curriculum, and learning. As a result of these critiques, summer bridge programs have found themselves trying to demonstrate that they are an educationally sound and economical way to help students bridge the gap between high school and college. (p. 30)

Due to this precarity, bridge programs may not be able to emphasize students' prior strengths and knowledges, at least not on publicly-available materials such as websites. To keep the bridge

program up and running, administrators may unintentionally or intentionally rely on the discourse of student deficiency.

Bridge programs may adopt a “‘one-stop-fix-it’ approach that focuses on models of student deficiency” (McCurrie, 2009, p. 40) to survive in the neoliberal university focused on accountability measures, retention and persistence rates, and return on investment. Yet, designing bridge programs to reduce student deficiencies makes sense from a student affairs perspective. For this group, bridge programs “succeed when their at-risk students are ‘made acceptable’ to the institution by meeting admissions requirements for basic academic standards” (p. 31). McCurrie noted that success to administrators of these programs may look different than success to instructors or students: “Administrators feel successful when their programs advance the school’s mission and use resources responsibly” (p. 45). To be fair, bridge program administrators may be given this definition of success as part of an institutional mandate for the program’s continued existence or as a requirement for maintaining current funding levels.

If bridge programs can successfully negotiate these obstacles, they take the first step toward re-figuring themselves in the world of the university. In service of this transformation, pathways discourse and approaches can help bridge programs to meaningfully incorporate *aspirational knowledge* and *familial knowledge*. Bridge programs should not only recognize the past experiences and abilities of students and their families, but they can communicate the relevance of that knowledge for supporting students’ future goals. The funds of knowledge framework asks bridge programs, and other student success initiatives across the university, to rethink their assumptions about students’ prior knowledges and strengths. This would entail designing curricula that directs students to analyze their own experiential knowledge and to weave their own strategies for success in with those suggested by university professionals. It

would involve professional development for instructors who teach in the bridge programs. In the best case scenario, the implementation of the funds of knowledge approach would be followed by meaningful assessment mechanisms to address its impact on various measures of student success.

## Chapter 5

### Funds of Knowledge Applications and Future Directions

#### **I. Overview of Chapter**

In this chapter, I summarize this study's analysis of twenty-two summer bridge programs across the United States. I briefly review the method of analysis as well as the conclusions I drew about the extent to which each bridge program aligned with the funds of knowledge framework. From the conclusions, I articulate this study's implications for critical higher education and composition studies conversations as well as provide a series of recommendations for applying a funds of knowledge approach to summer bridge programs. I conclude with suggestions for future research.

#### **II. Summary of Dissertation**

In examining summer bridge programs, this study focused on a particular type of student support at one of the most historically-contentious positions in a college student's trajectory—the point of access. As discussed in Chapter 1, the history of first-year composition, basic writing, remediation, and developmental education is inextricably bound up with larger national movements to exclude diverse groups of students from colleges and universities in the name of standards. Yet, diverse student populations bring specific strengths, resources, skills, and knowledge, or “funds of knowledge,” to the university space from other parts of their lives (Kiyama & Rios-Aguilar, 2018; Moll, et al., 2005). Funds of knowledge approaches to instruction and program design offer models that more fully describe the abilities and potential of diverse groups of students.

Drawing on the diametrically opposed frameworks of remediation and funds of knowledge, this qualitative research study examined the website descriptions of bridge programs to answer the following research questions:

1. What do the website descriptions of bridge programs at a range of institutions reveal regarding assumptions about students and support they need?, and
2. In what ways, if any, do these descriptions connect to funds of knowledge?

I used two discourse analysis tools from Gee (2011a) to analyze the data: the *Fill In Tool* and the *Figured Worlds Tool*.<sup>24</sup> Throughout the data set, the emphasis on *academic/study skills*, *college knowledge*, and *relationships* (see Chapter 3) positioned bridge programs as the benevolent giver of these things instead of presenting students as capable of building on their skills and existing relationships. In the figured world of summer bridge programs, the underlying assumption goes as follows: Adjusting to a challenging new environment is possible as long as the university provides students with academic and social integration. Without these supports, students are not likely to succeed on their own due to their demographics as first-generation students, low-income students, or students of color or due to the intensity of their chosen major (in the case of the STEM-affiliated bridge programs). In not recognizing and utilizing students' funds of knowledge, bridge programs figure themselves as the sole reason for students' success. So, the deficit model is deeply embedded, if now more subtly than in the days of remedial programming (see Chapter 1), in the bridge program as it imagines itself and its objectives institutionally.

In addition to identifying bridge program discourse about students and the support they need, the *Fill In Tool* allowed me to examine small instances of funds of knowledge that can serve as a model for other programs. Through the funds of knowledge framework, bridge

---

<sup>24</sup> Gee (2011a) draws on the work of anthropologists Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998) for the *Figured Worlds Tool*.

programs can re-figure themselves in the world of the university. This constructive response to deficit discourse asks bridge programs, and other student success initiatives across the university, to rethink their assumptions about students' prior knowledges and strengths.

### **III. Implications for Critical Conversations**

As I explored the funds of knowledge framework over the course of this study, I began to realize its vast potential to restructure curricula, student success programming (including and beyond bridge programs), and university-wide retention initiatives. If applied in a manner consistent with its original framing, funds of knowledge can help colleges and universities fundamentally re-conceptualize how they view and meaningfully respond to diverse groups of students. As discussed in Chapter 3, bridge program website discourse implies that students are empty “receptacles” needing “to be filled” (Freire, 1968/2011, p. 72) with student success strategies. While these strategies are certainly an important step in the right direction, they unintentionally reinforce deficit frameworks for understanding students when they fail to acknowledge the strategies, skills, and resources that students already possess (see Chapter 4). As discussed in Chapter 4, *aspirational knowledge* and *familial knowledge* are particularly applicable to the contexts of summer bridge programs. Recognizing and honoring students' prior experiences and knowledges is key to helping them build on their assets in future educational and career endeavors. Below I detail some of the implications of this study for critical scholarly conversations in higher education and composition studies in particular.

#### *Strengths-Based Retention Initiatives*

One conversation that this study contributes to is the increased national focus on retention, especially in the last several decades. As discussed in Chapter 1, current retention

statistics paint a bleak picture: “For first-time, full-time degree-seeking students who enrolled at 4-year degree-granting [U.S.] institutions in fall 2015, the retention rate (i.e., the percentage of students returning the following fall) was 81 percent” (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). And at two-year institutions, the retention rate was 62 percent (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). In response, retention initiatives are in many instances tasked with increasing the rate of students who persist between their first year and second year of college, as well as graduation rates and average GPAs, among other measures. In pursuing these goals, retention initiatives have generated academic skills courses and workshops; stretch, studio, and accelerated learning program (ALP) courses; and academic learning communities (Ruecker, et al., 2017). Of course, these initiatives have helped many students to succeed in college; however, their unintended premise is one that views students as inherently deficient. Students are seen as not having knowledge or skills to progress in a way that the institution deems successful; therefore, they are provided with resources and tools to do that.

This study suggests that program missions can be reframed toward social justice. Instead of designing interventions for students whom the institution deems “underprepared,” administrators, student success program staff, and faculty members should create programming and courses that ask students to reflect on assets and skills they already possess. For example, specific curricular modifications can direct students to analyze their own experiential knowledge and to weave their own strategies for success in with those suggested by university professionals. Students can begin to recognize culturally-specific areas of knowledge, such as linguistic, cultural, and familial, that have played a role in helping them to overcome previous obstacles in their lives. This research provides a starting point for the funds of knowledge framework to be applied more specifically to department-, college-, and university-level retention projects. Based

on the success of prior funds of knowledge applications (Kiyama and Rios-Aguilar, 2018; Moll, et al., 2005), projects using this framework are likely to both increase retention and graduation rates and provide students with a more complete understanding of their own skills and abilities.

In addition to curriculum and program revision, particular attention should be paid to the website discourse that communicates the objectives and purposes of bridge programs and other retention initiatives. The data from this research suggests that bridge programs are not always acknowledging the strengths and abilities that diverse groups of students bring to the university space. Sometimes the first university discourse that students and their families encounter is on program websites. This means that program websites have a critical role in helping students feel that they belong and that they have something to offer. Revision of program website materials can also spur change in other official communications between universities and students. When programs use language that values students and their abilities, they take beginning steps toward making the university a more inclusive space for all students.

### *Funds of Knowledge for Composition Studies*

A second conversation that this study contributes to is the scholarship of administration, especially in terms of the administration of writing programs. Throughout the field's professional documents, such as the Council of Writing Program Administrators' Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition (2014) and the Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing (2011), there is little to no acknowledgement of the assets, knowledges, and skills that students bring to the writing classroom. Even in Adler-Kassner and Wardle's (2016) *Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts of Writing Studies*, an edited collection that reviews five main concepts

(with 30 sub-concepts), funds of knowledge frameworks are not utilized.<sup>25</sup> In reviewing the literature of composition studies, especially in light of the legacy of remediation and various iterations of basic writing, this research identifies a need for applications of the funds of knowledge framework across placement mechanisms, instructor professional development, policies, curriculum, and assessment.

### *Bridge Programs and Inclusion Work*

This study has significant implications for student success research, particularly research on bridge programs, in light of another conversation—diversity and inclusion on campus. As bridge programs serve first-generation students, students of color, low-income students, and students who speak English as an Additional Language (EAL), they have the potential to meaningfully enact institutional diversity and inclusion goals and to serve as examples of inclusion work for other campus units. There are educative benefits when different kinds of students have the opportunity to shape the campus culture. By emphasizing the funds of knowledge that diverse student populations bring to the university, bridge programs can prompt other units on campus to do the same.

This does not always happen, and there is a risk that bridge programs allow institutions of higher education to take the easy way out on diversity and inclusion. It is crucial that bridge programs are not seen as “taking care of” institutional obligations to support diverse student populations so that the rest of the university can maintain the status quo. This approach mirrors that of remedial education (see Chapter 1), in which “underprepared” students (read: students from diverse groups) were separated out from mainstream students and given skills-and-drills

---

<sup>25</sup> Lunsford’s contribution to this collection, “3.3: Writing is Informed by Prior Experience,” comes closest to, yet stops short of, a funds of knowledge approach (Adler-Kassner & Wardle, 2016, p. 54).

instruction until they could demonstrate an acceptable standard (read: write like middle- and upper-class white students) (Fox, 1999). If bridge programs are seen as “remediating” student deficits, then the legacy of remediation lives on.

Instead, inclusion should be embedded into initiatives across campus, including academic programs, departments, and colleges; student success programs such as writing, language, math, and study skills centers; student affairs programming; community engagement projects; and research endeavors. In this way, bridge programs could serve as one part of a larger system of inclusion initiatives. By emphasizing student assets, the funds of knowledge framework is positioned to support the inclusion of diverse student populations in the university space.

#### **IV. Recommendations for Bridge Programs**

In light of this study’s finding that deficit frameworks still circumscribe the discourse of summer bridge programs, the suggestions below are intended to help summer bridge programs more fully integrate funds of knowledge into their program offerings. Of course, bridge programs should modify these general suggestions to make them more responsive to their local contexts in terms of demographics, geographical location, and the historical and current role of the bridge program in their particular institution. Changes to summer bridge programming should be followed by changes to their websites, other marketing materials, and communications with students and their families. At the end of this section, I offer a heuristic for implementing a funds of knowledge framework.

##### *Connecting to Aspirational Knowledge*

Across the data set, there were few direct and indirect references to students’ *aspirational knowledge*, or their future hopes, dreams, and goals (Yosso, 2005, p. 77). Given this absence,

bridge programs should seek to make intentional connections to students' aspirations and the pathways that can get them there. In Chapter 4, I noted that beyond the Summer Bridge Experience at Ohio State and the Freshman Summer Program at UCLA, no other programs in the data set used the word "potential." Other bridge programs should seek to emulate their direct discussion of students' possibilities and future goals by specifically referring to the skills, strategies, knowledges, and resources that students already possess that speak to their potential to succeed in higher education.

Similarly, bridge programs that emphasize the career success of program graduates, provide internship connections, and ask students to reflect on their long-term goals are making meaningful connections to students' *aspirational knowledge*. STEPUP, a student success program for engineering students at U Florida that includes a bridge program component, offers an illustrative example. Instead of focusing on skills, behaviors, or knowledge that students lack, STEPUP's website materials demonstrate an understanding of students as motivated, goal-oriented, and focused. First, the website includes quotes from program graduates who discuss the impact of STEPUP on their careers. This kind of personal information can help build current students' confidence in themselves and enable them to see their potential in attaining similar positions. Other bridge programs should seek to feature successful program graduates on their websites. Second, STEPUP provides corporate connections to area engineering companies through a speaker series and facility tours. This allowed students to learn more about potential career paths, internships, and job opportunities in their chosen area of study. If more bridge programs provided substantial career preparation and knowledge of how to navigate the job search process, they would be better able to honor students' *aspirational knowledge*. A third way that STEPUP validates students' goals was through the program application, which asked

applicants to list their top three goals for participation in STEPUP. This writing prompt subtly makes the connection between the bridge program and students' long-term goals. Other bridge programs should aim to more fully integrate students' aspirations into various program components.

### *Incorporating Familial Expertise*

In addition to students' *aspirational knowledge*, bridge programs should seek to meaningfully integrate familial experiences and knowledges into their curricula. Across the data set, there were small instances toward this integration of university and *familial knowledge*. Bridge program websites sometimes mentioned relying on parent or family volunteers to help facilitate welcome events and other functions. These roles, while certainly helpful, may not fully incorporate *familial knowledge*, especially in terms of allowing families to contribute their expertise to the curriculum. As discussed in Chapter 4, the Millennium Scholars Program at Penn State is one program that utilizes the time, commitment, and skills of families. Through the Millennium Scholars Parent Association, parents assist the program with Interview Weekend, Summer Bridge welcome events, and various activities. This program comes the closest among all the programs in this study to acknowledging families' funds of knowledge. However, it is unclear the extent to which parents' involvement fully utilizes their skills and experiences. Recall the experience of the grandfather, Rogelio, that Kiyama (2010/2018) interviewed as part of her study of the Parent Outreach Program at a university in the American Southwest. Although Rogelio had extensive physical knowledge of how to navigate the campus due to his role as a vending machine repairman, his specific expertise in this area was not incorporated into the program. In the same way, I wonder whether parents' specific areas of expertise are fully incorporated into the Millennium Scholars Program. Of course, an extra pair of hands at

functions such as welcome events is bound to be valuable and welcome in the context of bridge programs, who usually operate under limited budgets. Parents and other family members who have strong organizational and communication skills would likely have many opportunities to contribute. Bridge programs, for their part, would need to invest time in managing and organizing family volunteers.

On the other hand, these kinds of roles may preclude participation in ways that more clearly draw on families' experiences and knowledges. Moll et al. (2005) examined the various "household" areas of knowledge that are sometimes present in communities of color (p.73). These include agriculture and mining (soil and irrigation systems, timbering), material and scientific knowledge (masonry, design and architecture), economics (renting and selling, loans, building codes), medicine (folk medicine, herbal knowledge), and household management (budgets, cooking, appliance repairs). Presentations by parents on one or more of these areas of expertise could enrich the curriculum of bridge programs and further highlight familial funds of knowledge. For example, most students would benefit from an in-depth explanation of how to obtain and manage a loan and how to maintain a budget. Other areas of knowledge may integrate well into curriculum for specific majors, such as architecture, engineering, and pre-health professions. The families of students have the potential to provide real-life applications of disciplinary knowledge. To facilitate this deeper level of involvement with students' families, parent associations for the bridge program should be formed, if they are not already present. As various institutions already have parent associations for the larger university, these can provide models for moving forward.

### *Addressing Linguistic Knowledge*

*Aspirational knowledge* and *familial knowledge* were marginally present in the website descriptions of a few programs in the data set. However, other categories from Yosso (2005) that became codes, such as *social knowledge*, *navigational knowledge*, *resistant knowledge*, and *linguistic knowledge* were even less present. The absence of *linguistic knowledge* (see Chapter 3) was particularly interesting given that many of the bridge programs serve students who speak more than one language or who speak non-dominant varieties of English such as African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and Chicano English. For Yosso (2005), *linguistic knowledge* “includes the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style” (p. 78). This area of knowledge draws on more than a half century’s research about the value of bilingual education for helping students “develop and draw on various language registers, or styles, to communicate with different audiences” (p. 79). Two of the programs in the data set, International Student Summer Institute at UW-Madison and Summer Start at UC Davis are expressly for international students, who likely speak at least one other language. However, none of the twenty-two summer bridge programs mentioned *linguistic knowledge* as an asset on their website materials. Possibly summer bridge programs do not recognize how many of their students possess linguistic capabilities beyond standardized English. An alternative explanation may be that they do not consider this area of knowledge as a notable strength; they can see only the linguistic challenges of helping students assimilate to the kind of standardized English that is valued in institutions of higher education.

The failure to recognize students’ linguistic strengths is especially disappointing as eighteen out of the twenty-two bridge programs in the data set offered first-year writing as a

mandatory or optional course (see Chapter 1). The *Students' Right to Their Own Language (SRTOL)* position statement asserts the right of students to communicate in language varieties of their own choosing in educational contexts. Yet, almost fifty years later, the promises of openness to linguistic variation have yet to be realized in most college composition classrooms, which may contribute to the failure to recognize *linguistic knowledge* in bridge programs. In Chapter 1, I illustrated the interconnectedness between bridge programs and first-year writing programs as I acknowledged that bridge programs in many cases rely on composition instructors to staff their writing courses. In her discussion of *linguistic knowledge*, Yosso (2005) cites Faulstich, who studied bilingual children who translate for their parents. Faulstich finds that these children gain “metalinguistic awareness,” “cross-cultural awareness,” and “teaching and tutoring skills,” among others, as they fill this role (as cited in Yosso, 2005, p. 79). Many of these skills are referenced in the Council of Writing Program Administrators' Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition (2014), which was created as a representation of the field's collective “priorities for first-year composition.” For example, metalinguistic and cross-cultural awareness are both related to the first outcome of “Rhetorical Knowledge,” which asks students to “develop facility in responding to a variety of situations and contexts calling for purposeful shifts in voice, tone, level of formality, design, medium, and/or structure.” Students of color may already be particularly versed in these tasks as they move back and forth between standardized English and non-dominant varieties of English or other languages in different rhetorical contexts in their lives. As such, featuring linguistic variation as a funds of knowledge would be particularly relevant way to teach writing in a summer bridge program. It would acknowledge the agility and rhetorical awareness required to move back and forth between languages.

How can bridge programs honor their students' linguistic variation? One approach would be to provide professional development for instructors who teach in the bridge program, especially those who will teach writing to some extent. Workshopping can be embedded into instructor orientation programs and would be most successful if it was in collaboration with the writing program as well as language programs. In addition, more instructors would be willing to teach linguistic variation if resources and materials for doing so, such as readings, sample syllabi, and sample assignments, were made available to them. As discussed in Chapter 1, composition instructors are not always prepared to recognize the strengths and knowledges of diverse groups of students. By providing specific development and resources in this area to instructors, bridge programs can create the conditions for more inclusive classrooms.

Inclusive pedagogies have the potential to be transformative for students, given that many students may have internalized negative cultural attitudes toward their mother tongues or their own use of non-dominant varieties of English. Since the Western rhetorical tradition and U.S. insistence on "standard" English are both rooted in centuries of linguistic and cultural colonization (Baca, 2008, p. 4), "linguistic discrimination can be deeply embedded within formal sites of English literacy instruction" (p. 22). The *SRTOL* statement (1974) makes the connection between linguistic discrimination and other forms of prejudice: "We need to ask ourselves whether . . . we are actually rejecting the students themselves, rejecting them because of their racial, social, and cultural origins." Anzaldúa (1987) describes the shame and low self-confidence that results from this rejection: "If a person . . . has a low estimation of my native tongue, she also has a low estimation of me" (p. 80). Anzaldúa reminds instructors of the dangers of rejecting students' linguistic diversity as "wrong" (p. 80). In response to instances of linguistic discrimination in higher education and in the wider world, this research on summer bridge

programs asks student success programs and first-year writing courses to examine the ways in which they can better support students' intersectional identities. Recognizing *linguistic knowledge* as an area of strength for many diverse groups of students is a crucial step forward.

#### *Heuristic for Integrating Funds of Knowledge*

In bridge programs and other student success programs, various stakeholders such as administrators, instructors, tutors, residence life staff, peer mentors, and students must work together to accomplish goals. To implement funds of knowledge, each stakeholder group must interrogate their prior assumptions and expectations about students. In order to communicate across groups, they must have access to a metalanguage. In light of this need for multiple perspectives to inform program creation, reflection, and revision, I developed a heuristic (see Table 4) for integrating funds of knowledge into bridge programs and student success initiatives.

**Table 4. Heuristic for Integrating Funds of Knowledge**

<i>Stakeholder</i>	<i>Generative Questions</i>	<i>Practical Questions</i>
<i>Administrators</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What obstacles have the students at your institution successfully negotiated in order to arrive at college?</li> <li>● How much do you know about the varying prior educational experiences of students from diverse groups?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How can program outcomes, placement, staff professional development, and assessment reflect students' prior knowledges?</li> <li>● How can students' funds of knowledge be incorporated into core program elements, such as conferences, final projects, and internships?</li> <li>● In what ways could program materials use discourse that points to students' assets instead of their deficits?</li> </ul>

**Table 4. Heuristic for Integrating Funds of Knowledge (continued)**

<i>Instructors</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What prior remedial experiences inform students' understanding of this program or institution?</li> <li>● What are your assumptions and expectations about what the ideal student is like?</li> <li>● What scholarship and educational experiences most inform your approaches to teaching?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What writing assignments and research projects can help students to recognize their own funds of knowledge?</li> <li>● How can assignments serve the goals of learning outcomes as well as funds of knowledge?</li> <li>● What are your classroom language policies?</li> <li>● How can students understand "standard" English as one way of communicating?</li> <li>● In what ways can course themes, assignments, and activities engage students' aspirational knowledge as well as familial areas of expertise (see Chapter 4)?</li> </ul>
<i>Tutors</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What are your assumptions and expectations about what the ideal student is like?</li> <li>● What prior knowledges do you possess that aren't always recognized in academic spaces?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How can tutoring sessions strike a balance between validating students' prior knowledges and addressing students' questions?</li> <li>● What multiple forms of intelligence might you recognize in tutoring sessions?</li> </ul>
<i>Residence Life Staff/Peer Mentors</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What were some of your personal experiences in adjusting to college?</li> <li>● What prior knowledges do you possess that aren't always recognized in academic spaces?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● In what ways can you feature students' aspirational, linguistic, and cultural knowledges in social activities?</li> <li>● What social and interpersonal challenges arise in making program activities inclusive?</li> </ul>

**Table 4. Heuristic for Integrating Funds of Knowledge (continued)**

<i>Students</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What are your academic, personal, and social strengths?</li> <li>● What prior knowledges do you possess that aren't always recognized in academic spaces?</li> <li>● What do you hope to gain from participating in this program?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● In what ways can you recognize and validate the areas of knowledge that your family possesses?</li> <li>● How can you recognize the funds of knowledge of other students (see Chapter 3)?</li> </ul>
-----------------	---	---

Writing programs may also find it useful to adapt the heuristic to their own needs. For each stakeholder group, the heuristic addresses generative questions for interrogating assumptions about students (e.g., *Administrators*: “What obstacles have the students at your institution successfully negotiated in order to arrive at college?”) as well as questions of application that are more practical in orientation (e.g., *Instructors*: “What writing assignments and research projects can help students to recognize their own funds of knowledge?”). These questions offer a starting point for individual programs to incorporate students’ prior experiences, knowledges, and strengths. As a tool for reflexivity, this heuristic can be adapted to the specific context of local programs.

## V. Suggestions for Future Research

The results of this study have several interesting implications for future research. This section will detail suggestions in the following areas: (1) bridge program research; (2) multimodal website analysis; and (3) composition studies, student success, and retention program applications.

### *Bridge Program Research*

There are several areas of research that would further illuminate bridge programs' crucial role in student success and retention in spite of their precarious place in the university structure. In this dissertation, I focused on *aspirational knowledge* and *familial knowledge*, two of six categories that Yosso (2005) enumerates as part of an assets-based approach to recognizing student strengths. I chose these categories because they were more relevant to this particular data set. Future research might explore the other four categories in the context of bridge programs or consider the work of other scholars (Kiyama and Rios-Aguilar, 2018; Moll, et al., 2005; Rodriguez, 2013; Zipin, 2009) to further explore the potential of this framework for revitalizing bridge programs.

Some of this study's limitations provide rich areas for future research. As discussed in Chapter 2, this research focused on four-year, public research universities, most of which had large student populations and are listed as "Doctoral Universities: Very High Research Activity" by The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (2019). Replication of this study with another sample of bridge programs from institutionally similar universities could speak to the generalizability of this study's conclusions across larger, public research universities. In addition, future research may focus on samples from other types of institutions, such as small liberal arts colleges, two-year colleges, and private research universities to see whether this study's findings are applicable. Another limitation of this study was that bridge program websites may not provide accurate or complete perspectives of what programs actually do in practice. Future research could include interviews and focus groups with students, instructors, and administrators of bridge programs. Document analysis could be employed for other communications between the bridge program, students, and families, such as letters and

email updates. Exploring bridge programs through a range of methods can yield a better understanding of their role in institutions of higher education.

In particular, these methods could be used to glean more information about the mandatory and optional writing courses that are taught in bridge programs. While these writing courses were an original focus of this research, I realized that there was not enough consistent information across summer bridge program websites in the data set to make claims about the teaching of writing. Many websites simply provided a generic course description of a few sentences or a paragraph per program. In Chapter 1, I addressed the ways in which writing programs are often enmeshed in various ways in supporting bridge programs. Writing programs send trained writing instructors to teach bridge program classes, and students' first experiences of college writing may have been in a bridge program. Apart from McCurrie (2009), there is little research in composition studies about the teaching of writing in bridge programs, despite the pervasiveness of writing courses in bridge program curricula across the country. Of the twenty-two bridge programs in this study, only four did not offer some type of writing course (see Chapter 1). Research particular to curricular choices, such as themes, major assignments, and in-class activities, of these courses would be an especially generative area for exploration.

More qualitative studies of bridge programs are needed in general, since research on bridge programs in developmental education and higher education scholarship typically focuses on assessing program effectiveness quantitatively (Barnett et al., 2014; Bir & Myrick, 2015; Cabrera et al., 2013; Gonzalez Quiroz & Garza, 2018). As a complement to quantitative assessments, research on how students experience bridge programs would be especially valuable and could lead to program creation and revision that is centered on students and their feedback.

### *Multimodal Website Analysis*

In addition to future research focused on bridge programs, this dissertation also identifies a need for multimodal analyses of program websites, bridge programs and otherwise. Due to time constraints, I chose to narrow the data set for this study to the entire linguistic text of each website. This necessarily excluded other texts such as photos, videos, graphs, and charts as well as website design features such as usability and spatial arrangement. Expanding on the work of Barrios (2004), Knight et al. (2009), and Pack Sheffield (2015), multimodal discourse analysis of bridge program websites would be a generative area of focus in future research. The addition of multimodal texts may yield insights regarding the funds of knowledge approach other than those I found in my analysis of the linguistic text.

### *Composition Studies, Student Success, and Retention Program Applications*

As mentioned in the implications section above, this study identifies a need for research that explores practical applications of funds of knowledge to writing courses as well as to various programs across campus. Imagine the potential of the funds of knowledge approach to restructure composition placement mechanisms. There may be more opportunities to connect with students' *aspirational knowledge* through directed self-placement (Royer & Gilles, 2003) than through more traditional algorithms that take into account students' high school GPAs and standardized test scores. Policies for writing courses and writing programs that use a funds of knowledge approach would necessarily recognize *linguistic knowledge* as a strength, rather than as a deficiency or detriment. In addition, initial and ongoing instructor professional development in funds of knowledge could give rise to curricula that recognizes and honors students' prior experiences as strengths. A funds of knowledge approach to writing assessment may help answer Inoue's (2015) call for antiracist writing assessments as opposed to the "conventional writing

assessment that uncritically uses a dominant discourse” and “hurt[s]” students of color and multilingual students (p. 14). The funds of knowledge framework is uniquely positioned to address many of the key debates and practices of composition studies.

In the same way, research on student success units and retention initiatives can explore practical applications of funds of knowledge approaches. For example, writing centers or academic skills units on campus can help students to recognize what they are doing well in addition to what they are deficient in. These centers on campus may want to examine how they talk about students and the support they provide. Do they use phrases like “at risk”? Do they avoid terms like “deficits” in favor of terms such as “areas for growth?” In order to fully recognize the extent of the legacy of remediation, future research focused on the discourse of student success and retention initiatives is needed. In particular, there is a need to identify programs whose discourse serves as an exemplar for other programs in terms of acknowledging students’ prior knowledges and abilities.

The contribution I hope to make in this dissertation is to demonstrate the enormous potential of the funds of knowledge framework for bridge programs, student success programs, university courses, and retention initiatives. In countering a deficit view of students and their experiences, funds of knowledge frameworks challenge upper-level administrators, faculty, and staff to recognize the resources, knowledges, abilities, experiences, interests, and skills that diverse student groups bring to the university space. The emphasis on student strengths in the funds of knowledge framework can play a crucial role in assisting universities and colleges in rethinking the enterprise of higher education, including its goals, initiatives, and priorities, to reflect and meaningfully support an increasingly diverse student body.

## VI. References

- Adams, P., Gearhart, S., Miller, R., & Roberts, A. (2014). The accelerated learning program: Throwing open the gates. In H.R. Boylan & B.S. Bonham (Eds.), *Developmental education: Readings on its past, present, and future* (pp. 303-320). Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Adler-Kassner, L., & Wardle, E. (2016). *Naming what we know: Threshold concepts of writing studies, classroom edition*. Logan, UT: Utah State University Press.
- Anzaldúa, G. (1987). *Borderlands/la frontera: The New mestiza*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987.
- Arizona Board of Regents (2009). Peer institutions. Retrieved from <http://www.azregents.edu/arizonas-public-universities/peer-institutions>
- Arum, R., & Roksa, J. (2011). *Academically adrift: Limited learning on college campuses*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (n.d.). Land-grant university FAQ. Retrieved from <http://www.aplu.org/about-us/history-of-aplu/what-is-a-land-grant-university/index.html>
- Baca, D. (2008). *Mestiz@ scripts, digital migrations, and the territories of writing*. New York City: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Barnett, E. A., Bork, R. H., Mayer, A.K., Pretlow, J., Wathington, H.D., & Weiss, M.J. (2014). Bridging the gap: An Impact study of eight developmental summer bridge programs in Texas. In H.R. Boylan & B.S. Bonham (Eds.), *Developmental education: Readings on its past, present, and future* (pp. 320-324). Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Barrios, B. (2004). Reimagining writing program web sites as pedagogical tools. *Computers & Composition*, 21(1), 73.
- Bazeley, P., & Jackson, K. (2013). *Qualitative data analysis with NVivo* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.
- Bensimon, E. M. (2007). The underestimated significance of practitioner knowledge in the scholarship on student success. *Review of Higher Education*, 30(4), 441-469.
- Bir, B., & Myrick, M. (2015). Summer bridge's effects on college student success. *Journal of Developmental Education*, 39(1), 22-30.
- Bloom, L. Z. (1995). A name with a view. *Journal of Basic Writing*, 14(1), 7-14.

- Boylan, H.R., (2014). Targeted Intervention for Developmental Education Students (T.I.D.E.S.). In H.R. Boylan & B.S. Bonham (Eds.), *Developmental education: Readings on its past, present, and future* (pp. 325-339). Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Boylan, H.R., & Bonham, B.S. (2014a). Developmental education and the present. In H.R. Boylan & B.S. Bonham (Eds.), *Developmental education: Readings on its past, present, and future* (pp. 59-63). Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Boylan, H.R., & Bonham, B.S. (2014b). Introduction. In H.R. Boylan & B.S. Bonham (Eds.), *Developmental education: Readings on its past, present, and future* (pp. v-vii). Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Boylan, H.R., & White, W.G., Jr. (2014). Educating all the nation's people: The Historical roots of developmental education. In H.R. Boylan & B.S. Bonham (Eds.), *Developmental education: Readings on its past, present, and future* (pp. 5-10). Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's. (Reprinted from 1986)
- Buyserie, B., Plemons, A., & Freitag Ericsson, P. (2017). Retention, critical pedagogy, and students as agents: Eschewing the deficit model. In T. Ruecker, D. Shepherd, H. Estrem, & B. Brunk-Chavez (Eds.), *Retention, persistence, and writing programs* (pp. 151-166). Logan, UT: Utah State University Press.
- Cabrera, N. L., Miner, D. D., & Milem, J. F. (2013). Can a summer bridge program impact first-year persistence and performance?: A Case study of the New Start Summer Program. *Research in Higher Education*, 54(5), 481-498.
- Canagarajah, S. (2013). *Translingual practice: Global englishes and cosmopolitan relations*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Caplan, P.J., & Ford, J.C. (2014). The Voices of diversity: What students of diverse races/ethnicities and both sexes tell us about their college experiences and their perceptions about their institutions' progress toward diversity. *Aporia*, (6)3, 30-69.
- The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (2019a). Institution lookup. Retrieved from [http://carnegieclassifications.iu.edu/classification\\_descriptions/undergraduate\\_profile.php](http://carnegieclassifications.iu.edu/classification_descriptions/undergraduate_profile.php)
- The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (2019b). Undergraduate profile classification. Retrieved from [http://carnegieclassifications.iu.edu/classification\\_descriptions/undergraduate\\_profile.php](http://carnegieclassifications.iu.edu/classification_descriptions/undergraduate_profile.php)
- Chemishanova, P., & Snead, R. (2017). Reconfiguring the writing studio model: Examining the impact of the *PlusOne* program on student performance and retention. In T. Ruecker, D. Shepherd, H. Estrem, & B. Brunk-Chavez (Eds.), *Retention, persistence, and writing programs* (pp. 167-184). Logan, UT: Utah State University Press.

- College Composition and Communication (1974). *Students' right to their own language (SRTOL)* [position statement]. Retrieved from <https://cccc.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/srtolsummary>
- Cooper, K. M., Ashley, M., & Brownell, S. E. (2018). Breaking down barriers: A Bridge program helps first-year biology students connect with faculty. *Journal of College Science Teaching*, 47(4), 60-70.
- Council of Writing Program Administrators, National Council of Teachers of English, National Writing Project. (2011). Framework for success in postsecondary writing. Retrieved from <http://wpacouncil.org/files/framework-for-success-postsecondary-writing.pdf>
- Council of Writing Program Administrators. (2014). WPA outcomes statement for first-year composition (v3.0). Retrieved from <http://wpacouncil.org/files/WPA%20Outcomes%20Statement%20Adopted%20Revisions%5B1%5D.pdf>
- Crowley, S. (1998). *Composition in the university: Historical and polemical essays*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Day, M., Gipson, T., & Parker, C.P. (2017). Undergraduate mentors as agents of engagement: Peer advocates in first-year writing courses. In T. Ruecker, D. Shepherd, H. Estrem, & B. Brunk-Chavez (Eds.), *Retention, persistence, and writing programs* (pp. 237-56). Logan, UT: Utah State University Press.
- Early Academic Outreach Program (n.d.). About EAOP. Retrieved from <http://eaop.org/about.html>
- Educational Opportunity Program, (n.d.). Educational Opportunity Program (EOP). Retrieved from <http://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/campuses/specific-populations/educational-opportunity-program/index.html>
- Ferris, D. R. (2014). *Language Power: Tutorials for Writers*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Ferris, D. R., & Hedgcock, J.S. (2014). *Teaching ESL composition: Purpose, process, and practice*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Fox, T. (1999). *Defending access: A Critique of standards in higher education*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc.
- Fraser, N. (1990). Rethinking the public sphere: A Contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy." *Social Text* 25/26, 56-80.
- Freire, P. (1968/2011). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. (M. B. Ramos, Trans.) London: Continuum. (Original work published 1968)

- Frost, R.A., Strom, S. L., Downey, J., Schultz, D. D., & Holland, T.A. (2014). Enhancing student learning with academic and student affairs collaboration. In H.R. Boylan & B.S. Bonham (Eds.), *Developmental education: Readings on its past, present, and future* (pp. 81-92). Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Gee, J.P. (2011a). *How to do discourse analysis: A Toolkit*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
- Gee, J.P. (2011b). *Introduction to discourse analysis*, 3rd ed. New York, New York: Routledge.
- Gilyard, K., & Richardson, E. (2001). Students' right to possibility: Basic writing and African-American rhetoric. In A. Greenbaum (Ed.), *Insurrections: Approaches to resistance in composition studies* (pp. 37-51). Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Glesne, C. (2014). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An Introduction*. Boston: Pearson.
- González, N., Moll, L., and Amanti, C. (2005). *Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households, communities, and classrooms*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Gonzalez Quiroz, A., & Garza, N. R. (2018). Focus on student success: Components for effective summer bridge programs. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 17(2), 101-111.
- Gunner, J. (2004). Doomed to repeat it?: A needed space for critique in institutional recovery. In B. L'Eplattenier & L. Mastrangelo (Eds.), *Historical studies of writing program administration*, (pp. 263-278). Anderson, SC: Parlor Press.
- Helland, K. (2013, September 25). How did the Aggies get their name? *Davis Enterprise*. Retrieved from <https://www.davisenterprise.com>
- Holland, D., Lachicotte, W., Skinner, D., & Cain, C. (1998). *Identity and agency in cultural worlds*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Horner, B. (2011). Relocating basic writing. *Journal of Basic Writing*, 30(2), 5-23.
- Inoue, A.B. (2015). *Antiracist Writing Assessment Ecologies: Teaching and Assessing Writing for a Socially Just Future*. Fort Collins, CO: The WAC Clearinghouse.
- Kiyama, J. M. (2010/2018). College aspirations and limitations: The Role of educational ideologies and funds of knowledge in Mexican American Families. In J.M. Kiyama & C. Rios-Aguilar (Eds.), *Funds of knowledge in higher education: Honoring students' cultural experiences and resources as strengths*. New York, NY: Routledge. (Reprinted from Kiyama, J. M. (2010). College aspirations and limitations: The role of educational ideologies and funds of knowledge in Mexican American families. *American Educational Research Journal*, 47 (2), 330– 356.)

- Kiyama, J. M., & Rios-Aguilar, C. (2018). *Funds of knowledge in higher education: Honoring students' cultural experiences and resources as strengths*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Knight, A., Rife, M. C., Alexander, P., Loncharich, L., & DeVoss, D. N. (2009). About face: Mapping our institutional presence. *Computers & Composition, 26*(3), 190-202.
- Lather, P. (1986). Research as praxis. *Harvard Educational Review, 56*(3), 257-77.
- Lu, M. & Horner, B. (2013a). "Translingual literacy, language difference, and matters of agency." *College English, 75*(6), 582-607.
- Lu, M. & Horner, B. (2013b). "Translingual literacy and matters of agency." In S. Canagarajah (Ed.), *Literacy as translingual practice: Between communities and classrooms* (pp. 26-38). New York, NY: Routledge.
- McCrary, D. (2005). Represent, representin', representation: The efficacy of hybrid texts in the writing classroom. *Journal of Basic Writing, 24*(2), 72-91.
- McCurrie, M. (2009). Measuring success in summer bridge programs: Retention efforts and basic writing. *Journal of Basic Writing, 28*(2), 28-49.
- Merriam, S.B., and Tisdell, E.J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A Guide to design and implementation*, 4th ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Michigan State University (n.d.-a). Engineering and Science Success Academy [website]. Retrieved from <https://www.egr.msu.edu/dpo/programs/essa>
- Michigan State University (n.d.-b). TRIO Excel summer program [website]. Retrieved from <http://trio.oss.msu.edu/>
- Miller, S. (1993). *Textual carnivals: The Politics of composition*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Mitchell, C. E. (2013). *Making the adjustment: A Qualitative investigation of the potential of community college developmental summer bridge programs in facilitating student adjustment to four-year institutions* [Doctoral dissertation]. Retrieved from ERIC (ED555336).
- Mlynarczyk, R. W., & Babbitt, M. (2002). The power of academic learning communities. *Journal of Basic Writing, 21*(1), 71-89.
- Moll, L., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & González, N. (2005). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect communities and classrooms. In N. González, L. Moll, & C. Amanti (Eds.), *Funds of Knowledge: Theorizing Practices in Households, Communities, and Classrooms* (pp. 71-87). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates,

- Inc. (Reprinted from “Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms,” 1992, *Theory into Practice*, 31(2), pp. 132-141.)
- Mora, J. & Rios-Aguilar, C. (2018). Aligning practice with pedagogy: Funds of knowledge for community college teaching. In J.M. Kiyama & C. Rios-Aguilar (Eds.), *Funds of knowledge in higher education: Honoring students’ cultural experiences and resources as strengths* (pp. 145-159). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Murie, R., Collins, M. R., & Detzner, D.F. (2004). Building academic literacy from student strength: An interdisciplinary life history project. *Journal of Basic Writing*, 23(2), 70-92.
- Nadworny, E. (Host). (2018, September 4). Today’s college students aren’t who you think they are [Radio broadcast episode].
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2018, May). *The Condition of education: Undergraduate retention and graduation rates*. Retrieved from: [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator\\_ctr.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_ctr.asp)
- National Science Foundation (n.d.). Louis Stokes Alliances for Minority Participation (LSAMP). Retrieved from [https://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm\\_summ.jsp?pims\\_id=13646](https://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=13646)
- Nordquist, Brice. (2017). *Literacy and mobility: Complexity, uncertainty, and agency at the nexus of high school and college*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- The Ohio State University (n.d.-a). LSAMP STEM bridge program. [website]. Retrieved from <https://odi.osu.edu/ohio-state-lsamp-scholars/lamp-stem-summer-bridge-program.html>
- The Ohio State University (n.d.-b) Summer bridge experience [website]. Retrieved from <https://odi.osu.edu/ysp/ysp-for-scholars/summer-bridge-experience.html>
- Olson, W. (2013). The Politics of pedagogy: The Outcomes Statement and basic writing. In N. N. Behm, G. R. Glau, D. H. Holdstein, D. Roen, & E.M. White (Eds.), *The WPA Outcomes Statement: A Decade later* (pp. 18-31). Anderson, SC: Parlor Press.
- Pack Sheffield, J. (2015). *Writing program administration and technology: Toward a critical digital literacy in programmatic contexts* [Doctoral dissertation]. Retrieved from *Dissertation Abstracts International*. (DA3701608)
- Parmegiani, A. (2014). Bridging literacy practices through storytelling, translanguaging, and an ethnographic partnership: A Case study of Dominican students at Bronx Community College. *Journal of Basic Writing*, 33(2), 23-51.
- The Pennsylvania State University (n.d.-a). Learning Edge Academic Program [website]. Retrieved from <https://summersession.psu.edu/first-year-students/leap-program>

- The Pennsylvania State University (n.d.-b). Summer bridge [website]. Retrieved from <https://www.millennium.psu.edu/the-scholar-experience/>
- Powell, K.M., & Takayoshi, P. (2012). Introduction: Revealing methodology. In K. M. Powell & P. Takayoshi (Eds.), *Practicing research in writing studies: Reflexive and ethically responsible research* (pp. 1-28). New York, NY: Hampton Press.
- Rios-Aguilar, C., & Kiyama, J.M. (2012). Funds of knowledge: An Approach to studying Latina(o) students' transition to college. *Journal of Latinos and Education, 11*(1), 2-16.
- Roberge, M. (2009). A teacher's perspective on Generation 1.5. In M. Roberge, M. Siegal, & L. Harklau (Eds.), *Generation 1.5 in college composition: Teaching academic writing to U.S.-educated learners of ESL* (pp. 2-24). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Rodriguez, G. M. (2013). Power and agency in education: Exploring the pedagogical dimensions of funds of knowledge. *Review of Research in Education, 37*(1), 87-120.
- Rose, M. (1989). *Lives on the boundary*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Royer, D.J., & Gilles, R. (2003). *Directed self-placement: Principles and practices*. New York, NY: Hampton Press.
- Ruecker, T., Shepherd, D., Estrem, H., & Brunk-Chavez, B. (2017). Introduction. In T. Ruecker, D. Shepherd, H. Estrem, & B. Brunk-Chavez (Eds.), *Retention, persistence, and writing programs* (pp. 3-18). Logan, UT: Utah State University Press.
- Saldaña, J. (2009). *The Coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Severino, C. (1993). "The Sociopolitical implications of response to second language and second dialect writing." *Journal of Second Language Writing, 2*, 181-201.
- Shaughnessy, M. (1977). *Errors and expectations: A Guide for the teacher of basic writing*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Soliday, M. (2002). *The Politics of remediation: Institutional and student needs in higher education*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Tinto, V. (1987/1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (2nd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Tinto, V. (2017). Through the eyes of students. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice 19*(3), 254-269. (Reprinted from 2015).
- Traub, J. (1994). *City on a hill: Testing the American dream at City College*. Boston: Da Capo.

- The University of Arizona. (n.d.-a). New start summer program [website]. Retrieved from <https://newstart.arizona.edu/>
- The University of Arizona. (n.d.-b). UAdvantage First Year Experience [website]. Retrieved from <https://thrive.arizona.edu/uadvantage>
- The University of Arizona. (2017). New start program overview: Welcome to all-staff training [PowerPoint slides].
- University of California, Davis. (n.d.-a). Special transitional enrichment program [website]. Retrieved from <https://opportunity.ucdavis.edu/programs/step>
- University of California, Davis. (n.d.-b). Summer start [website]. Retrieved from <https://summerstart.ucdavis.edu/>
- University of California, Los Angeles. (n.d.-a). College summer institute [website]. Retrieved from <http://newstudents.ucla.edu/college-summer-institute/about/>
- University of California, Los Angeles. (n.d.-b). Freshman summer bridge program [website]. Retrieved from <https://www.ceed.ucla.edu/bridge/>
- University of California, Los Angeles. (n.d.-c). Freshman summer program [website]. Retrieved from <https://www.aap.ucla.edu/units/new-student-programs/>
- University of California, Merced. (n.d.). UC Merced summer bridge—first-year program [website]. Retrieved from <https://summerbridge.ucmerced.edu/>
- University of Florida. (n.d.). The Successful transition and enhanced preparation for undergraduates program (STEPUP) summer bridge program [website]. Retrieved from <https://www.eng.ufl.edu/students/students/star-office/stepup/>
- University of Maryland. (n.d.). Summer bridge program for scientists and engineers [website]. Retrieved from <http://cmse.umd.edu/bridge>
- The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (n.d.). Summer bridge program [website]. Retrieved from <http://summerbridge.unc.edu/>
- The University of Texas at Austin (n.d.). Summer bridge [website]. Retrieved from <http://diversity.utexas.edu/academiccenter/summer-bridge/>
- University of Washington (n.d.-a). Continuum college [website]. Retrieved from <https://www.continuum.uw.edu/>
- University of Washington. (n.d.-b). Early fall start [website]. Retrieved from <https://www.earlyfallstart.uw.edu/>

- University of Wisconsin-Madison. (n.d.-a). International student summer institute [website]. Retrieved from <https://summer.wisc.edu/intl-summer-institute/>
- University of Wisconsin-Madison (n.d.-b). Mechanical engineering summer launch [website]. Retrieved from <https://www.engr.wisc.edu/department/mechanical-engineering/academics/mechanical-engineering-summer-launch/>
- University of Wisconsin-Madison (n.d.-c). Summer collegiate experience [website]. Retrieved from <https://cae.ls.wisc.edu/summer-collegiate-experience/>
- U.S. Department of Education (2018, December 4). Programs: Upward bound program. Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/trioupbound/index.html>
- U.S. Department of Education (2019, January 9). Programs: Student support services program. <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/triostudsupp/index.html>
- U.S. Department of Education (2011). History of the federal TRIO programs. Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/trio/triohistory.html>
- Wolff Murphy, S., & Hartlaub, M. (2017). Enhancing alliances and joining initiatives to help students: The Story of how we created developmental learning communities at Texas A&M University—Corpus Christi. In T. Ruecker, D. Shepherd, H. Estrem, & B. Brunk-Chavez (Eds.), *Retention, persistence, and writing programs* (pp. 219-236). Logan, UT: Utah State University Press.
- Yeager, D.S., & Dweck, C.S. (2012). Mindsets that promote resilience: When students believe that personal characteristics can be developed. *Educational Psychologist*, 47(4), 302-314.
- Yosso, T.J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race, Ethnicity, and Education*, 8(1), 69-91.
- Young, V. A. (2010). Should writers use they own english? *Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies*, 12, 110-117.
- Zipin, L. (2009). Dark funds of knowledge, deep funds of pedagogy: Exploring boundaries between lifeworlds and schools. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 30(3), 337-331.