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**AVID PROGRAM GRADUATES:
NEGOTIATING THE FIRST YEAR OF COLLEGE**

by

Leslie J. Hays

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of
San Diego State University and the University of San Diego
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education

Dissertation Committee:

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August 2004

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ABSTRACT

Although the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program has been operating in San Diego County for more than twenty years, there was a lack of research investigating how AVID program graduates experienced the transition to college. A well-established positive correlation between acceptances to four-year universities by AVID program graduates exists, but research on AVID lacked individual student narrative needed to give more depth to the data.

The purpose of this case study was to investigate the transition experiences of AVID program graduates who were beginning their second year of college at competitive four-year public universities. All eight participants, in the AVID pre-college program for at least three years, had successfully transitioned to the university. The study was framed by two research questions: (1) How did AVID program graduates adapt academically and culturally to a four-year public university during their first year? (2) In what ways did they attribute their persistence in college to their high school AVID experience?

The findings indicated that the participants, all first generation college, felt both academically and culturally challenged during the transitional year, especially in the areas of critical reading and expository writing. Some participants, not accustomed to the academic reading and writing standards of the university, used a trial and error method to attempt to meet the requirements and did not consistently execute the strategies learned in AVID. These students reported missing classes and avoiding reading assignments. This lack of academic persistence was troublesome for AVID trained students, especially in the critical early stages of college transition.

As the students moved through the transition phase, they showed evidence of developing an academic identity, and increasing skill navigating university culture. All participants still utilized several AVID study techniques such as Cornell note-taking and study groups.

Support given by participants' families was a reoccurring theme, but their families lacked the knowledge to help these students enter college. AVID teachers filled this gap by becoming surrogate school parents who provided social and cultural capital in the form of information, study skills and organizational structure, which allowed the participants to navigate their way into college and persist.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my husband Barton and my daughters Heather and Hillary whose support, encouragement and patience helped me to make this life goal come true.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to many who have helped me move through the doctoral journey and toward the completion of my dissertation. My heartfelt thanks goes to the members of my dissertation committee who gave me feedback along the way, answered all questions and gave me guidance for making this work stronger. I would like to thank Dr. Doug Fisher for serving as my chair and helping me think through all the stages of this project. He gave unstintingly of his time and always encouraged me with thoughtful comments and instructive personal insights. I am also grateful to Dr. Robert Infantino for his persistent questions, reality checks and attention to detail during the many phases of this project. A big thank you also goes to Dr. Cheryl Mason with whom I share a love of science literacy, and who encouraged me to think about doctoral work over ten years ago. Her assistance and unflagging support kept me going when finishing looked like a distant dream.

To the eight AVID program graduates who are persisting in their goal of a four-year university degree, I owe my deepest gratitude and respect. Without their cooperation and willingness to share their personal lives with me, this study could not have been completed.

To my respected colleague and friend, Ms. Cyndy Bishop, I want to thank you for being my mentor in AVID and for allowing me to work on this research while balancing other responsibilities. To the rest of the SDCOE AVID team, Becky, Mary, Jean, and Joyce, your friendship, coaching and belief in me have helped me give back to the AVID teachers and students who make our work worthwhile.

This doctoral program has been a journey of opportunity and change. As the first cohort in a new program, we experienced the thrill and terror of being the trailblazers. I had the good fortune to meet both students and faculty who both challenged and supported me. To the first SDSU/USD cohort, I enjoyed the many hours we spent together learning deeply about issues that concerned us all. I know our paths will cross in the future.

A special thanks goes to my good friend Dr. Cindi Davis Harris who lived the program with me and became my confidant, co-researcher, technology advisor and writing partner. Your relentless energy and enthusiasm for learning kept me moving forward through all our shared projects, even when I didn't want to.

To my family, I owe a deep debt of gratitude for your love, patience and support. To Bart, my cherished husband of 33 years, who believed unwaveringly in my potential and always pushed me to achieve. To my beloved daughters, Heather and Hillary, who told me I was their role model and wouldn't ever let me quit, this work is for you. A warm thanks to my sister, Lynn, who always wanted to talk about what I was learning and sent me regular peppy emails from Bolivia. To my amazing father, Dr. Bert Johnson, the first in his family to go to college, and who instilled in me a love of learning, service to humanity and hard work. To my mother, Jeremy Milbank, who taught me at an early age about the oneness of mankind and the importance of fighting for social justice. Thank you all for supporting me over the last four years as I did this work that meant so much to me.

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AVID PROGRAM GRADUATES: NEGOTIATING THE FIRST YEAR OF COLLEGE

Introduction

In "Closing the Achievement Gap," Haycock (2001) reported that despite years of concentrated effort by schools, states and national programs, the achievement gap between African American and Latino students and white students has increased. She attributes this disturbing trend to the lack of good teaching and rigorous curriculum in high poverty and ethnic neighborhood schools. "For the last several decades there has been widespread consensus that something is wrong with the pipeline that leads to and through higher education for minority students" (Gandara, 2002, p. 81). This is of concern for all educators since society cannot afford to waste the potential talent of our African American and Latino students. It is this very persistent achievement gap between underrepresented ethnic groups and the white majority that is troubling to many in both secondary and postsecondary education.

Alongside ethical concerns, there are also pragmatic economic reasons for insuring that large segments of the population will have the knowledge and skills needed to contribute to a post-industrial economy. If Latinos and African-Americans had the same education and earnings as whites, there would be an upsurge in national wealth of \$113 billion annually for African-Americans and \$118 billion for Latinos (Business Higher Education Forum, 2001). Garcia (2002) stated in a report titled, *Increasing Access and Promoting Excellence: Diversity in California Public Higher Education*, "The need for ensuring access to a college education has never been more pressing" (p. 1). In addition, possession of a college degree has become a prerequisite for entry into mainstream society. "A college degree can no longer be considered a luxury, but is rather

a necessary passport to the middle class” (Tierney & Hagedorn, 2002, p. 3). In the age of knowledge and information, those without access to post-secondary education will be left with increasingly low paying jobs and limited futures. In a research study on college persistence by Chicano students, Attinasi (1986) reported:

Not unexpectedly, racial and ethnic minorities, who have not participated equitably in American higher education, have not participated equitably in the social, economic, cultural, and political life of the greater society either. Blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans have largely been denied the monetary and other personal advantages that accrue to the holder of a college degree. (p. 200)

A number of obstacles exist for college bound high school students preparing to enter California’s public university system. “Many K-12 students do not have a good sense of what is expected of them in college. K-12 students must take many courses, and pass many tests to graduate from high school and attend college, but those hurdles often have little to do with the academic expectations that students face in their first year in college” (Venezia, Kirst, & Antonio, 2003, p. 22). To become eligible to apply to a public university in California, high school students are required to take a series of 15 college preparatory courses, termed the a-g requirements, in specific subject areas earning grades of ‘C’ or better in each course (see Appendix F). California secondary schools submit annual reports to the state reporting how many graduates have met public university requirements. Table 1 shows the data published by the California Department of Education (2003) for San Diego County 12th grade public high school graduates from the class of 2002, disaggregated by ethnic group, who completed all ‘a-g’ courses

minimally required for entrance to the University of California (UC) and the California State University (CSU).

Table 1. Completion Rates of 'a-g' Requirements by High School Graduates in 2002

Ethnicity	Percent of San Diego County public high school graduates meeting a-g requirements	Number of public high school graduates in San Diego County meeting a-g requirements
Asian	57.8%	1,659
White	45.5%	5,952
African American	21.7%	405
Latino	21.7%	1,804
American Indian	25.6%	73

Note. Data obtained from California Department of Education, 2002. See Appendix F for 'a-g' courses.

As Table 1 illustrates, there is a significant university admission eligibility gap for African American, Latino and American Indian students in San Diego County. Similar conditions exist across the state in California. "Currently three out of four African American, and nearly four out of five Latino high school graduates are not eligible for the UC/CSU system, for lack of access to, and enrollment in, an appropriate high school curriculum" (Russlynn & Jenkins, 2002, p. 6). A policy report by Education Trust-West titled, *The High School Diploma: Making It More Than An Empty Promise* warned that, "The current secondary education system simply is not giving these students the tools they need to succeed in postsecondary education and an increasingly competitive workplace" (Russlynn & Jenkins, 2002, p. 5).

In short, 65% of California's high school graduates in 2002 were not even eligible to apply for admission to our public university system—University of California (UC) or California State University (CSU). "More to the point, beyond basic skills, far too few of our students complete—or are even enrolled in—a high rigor curriculum. This

achievement gap is well known to most involved in secondary education. It has, however, remained stubbornly in place for the last several decades” (Russlyn & Jenkins, 2002, p. 6). A number of intervention programs have been developed to attempt to bridge this achievement gap. An underlying assumption of all of these academic intervention programs is that “schools are failing to adequately prepare underrepresented students for college” (Tierney & Hagedorn, 2002 , p. 6).

One pre-college program, Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) has been active in San Diego County middle and high schools for the last twenty years (Guthrie & Guthrie, 2000; Mehan, Villanueva, Hubbard, & Lintz, 1996; Swanson, Marcus, & Elliott, 2000). The program began in 1980 with a single English teacher in one San Diego Unified District high school. By 1991, fifty high schools in San Diego County had certified AVID programs, and by 2002, 109 San Diego County high schools were offering AVID programs. This represents a significant annual investment in personnel, professional development training and curricular materials by the sponsoring schools and school districts. Since its inception the AVID program has systematically collected annual data on its program participants by school, district and region and has used this data to demonstrate the program’s effectiveness.

The AVID program can be categorized as a student-centered model in which students are “untracked.” The distinction between untracking and detracking is that “untracking places low-track students in high-track classes as a way to slowly atrophy the tracking system; detracking attempts to dismantle the entire tracking system at once” (Gandara, Larson, Mehan, & Rumberger, 1998, p. 6). Although most secondary schools no longer track a group of students, academic tracking persists. Now, secondary school

courses, rather than students, are labeled as Advanced Placement (AP), honors, college-prep, basic, and remedial (Watt, Yanez, & Cossio, 2002). The resulting effect, however, is the same. “Nearly five decades after landmark *Brown*, the practice of tracking, though varied and most often disguised, remains institutionalized in American secondary schools” (Watt et al., 2002, p. 45).

In order to counteract the institutionalized tracking system found in most secondary schools, AVID teachers recruit academically average, low-income students from historically underrepresented ethnic groups who have between a 2.0 and 3.0 grade point average (GPA), high to average test scores, and who have aligned themselves with the goal of going to a four-year college. Once enrolled in the AVID elective (one period per day for four years), students are required to take courses that meet four-year college entrance criteria. They are also placed in advanced coursework with twice weekly tutorial support during the AVID class from college students. For many, this means moving out of the lower or average “academic track” for the first time. The AVID program mantra is academic “acceleration not remediation” (Swanson et al., 2000, p. 27).

Longitudinal data support the fact that the AVID program has been narrowing the secondary achievement gap in San Diego County. In June 2002, 951 AVID program high school seniors graduated in San Diego County and 82.3% met the specific 'a-g' course requirements for four-year university entrance. Of these 951 AVID program graduates, 63% were Latino, 12% African American, 11% Asian, 10.6% White, 0.4% American Indian and 3% declined to state or were multiracial. Seven hundred and twenty six were accepted to four-year universities, a 76% admission rate. These program results are termed the “AVID Effect” (Guthrie & Guthrie, 2000) and refer to the impact of the AVID

program on underrepresented students' college enrollment success. Despite this success, little research has been done with regard to program elements that are documented to make a difference from the students' point of view.

AVID students, whose goal is to enroll in four-year universities, must navigate within a new academic community and acquire what Mehan et al. (1996) and others have termed as social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1973, 1977; Coleman, 1988). In *Constructing School Success*, Mehan concluded, "AVID pulls the rug out from the assumption lurking in American education that suggests ethnic and language minority kids cannot do well in college bound classes" (p. 54). As underrepresented students become boundary crossers they must negotiate two worlds, that of school and that of the home community.

Even though the AVID program has been operating in San Diego for over twenty years, there has been a lack of qualitative research investigating how graduates of the AVID program experienced the academic and social transition to their first year of college. The relevant literature has focused mainly on AVID program implementation elements or generalized statistical analysis of groups of student participants. Although a positive correlation exists between underrepresented AVID students being accepted into four-year colleges (Guthrie & Guthrie, 2000; Mehan et al., 1996), the data have been reported in statistical way and lack the personal student narrative that can give depth to the data. Student voices have been noticeably absent in the research discussion and their narratives about how they experienced high school or the transition to college have rarely been included in research findings (Nieto, 1994; Thompson & Joshua-Shearer, 2002).

By documenting the experiences of underrepresented AVID graduates, we can begin to understand the challenges they face as first year college students. They can report their own understandings about what high school experiences they have found to be helpful, including reflections on the contribution of their AVID training to their lived college experience. If AVID is indeed a program that supports students' postsecondary academic success, as it claims to be, then educators need to know in a deeper way from the students themselves how the program skills have transferred, or have not transferred, into college. Therefore, a need existed for an in-depth study that began to investigate how AVID program graduates described their college experiences with regard to their academic preparation and cultural adaptation to university life.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the transition experiences of AVID program graduates who were beginning their second year of college at competitive four-year public universities. This study describes the academic and cultural experiences of eight AVID students who graduated from high school in June 2002, and who were enrolled as sophomores at San Diego State University (SDSU) or the University of California, San Diego (UCSD), both competitive four-year public universities. The study investigated how the participants experienced the transition to college, both academically and culturally. This study also explored the factors AVID graduates attributed to their persistence behaviors and what types of barriers they encountered. By connecting their experiences to AVID program elements and other related research on college persistence, factors illuminating the effectiveness of the AVID program emerged. Documenting their

narratives began to illuminate how these Southern California AVID program graduates have negotiated the transition to college.

Research Questions

The research questions investigated driving this study were: (1) How did AVID program graduates adapt academically and culturally to a four-year public university during their first year? (2) In what ways do former AVID program graduates attribute their persistence in college to their high school AVID experience?

Theoretical Framework for the Study

The theoretical lens used in this study is that of sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1986). Sociocultural theory addresses the issues of how cultural and political forces act on systems such as schools to influence the experience of their members. This influence is often reflected in one's status level in the dominant culture (Bourdieu, 1973, 1977; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Coleman, 1988; Stanton-Salazar, 2001). Social theory emphasizes the role of meaningful events in a person's life, and how these effect human development over time.

Sociocultural theory also describes the importance of social and cultural capital, and how these assets can be leveraged by underrepresented students to gain access to the avenues of social and financial power represented by postsecondary education. The term "cultural capital" represents the collection of non-economic forces such as family background, social class, as well as varying investments in and commitments to education, which then influence academic success (Bourdieu, 1977). It is related to, but distinct, from "social capital" which describes the value resulting from the flow of information available to those who belong to and participate in social networks. In

schools, social capital refers to the available information about getting into post-secondary education (testing, applications, financial aid) and the formation of social networks (mentors and peers) that help group members reach a common socially valued goal, such as higher education (Bourdieu, 1977).

Mehan et al. (1996) used the framework of social and cultural capital to interpret the data his team collected on AVID. In that study he stated, “When we examine the day-to-day educational practices operating in educational settings such as lessons, tests, and counseling sessions, we learn that students...and their ascribed characteristics such as gender, race, ethnicity, and social class influence the resulting representations” (p. 229). Underrepresented students in the social and cultural system of the high school are frequently categorized as less able and placed into less rigorous courses due to the perceptions of underperformance by the adults in power: teachers and counselors (Venezia et al., 2003).

The applicability of sociocultural theory to the findings of this study will be examined more closely in Chapters 4 and 5 by documenting how the participants described their experiences. Their use of key metaphors or phrases that reflect the acquisition of social and cultural capital supports the relevance of sociocultural theory to this case.

Significance of the Study

This study documented the lived college transition experience of eight traditionally underrepresented students who had been in high school AVID programs in San Diego County for at least three years and who were currently in their second year of college. This study was designed to reveal the types of academic and cultural adaptations AVID program graduates made when enrolled in competitive four-year public

universities. It also provides some insight into the perceived effectiveness of the AVID program and how this program may help other underrepresented high school students make a successful transition to college. Through the students' narratives a deeper understanding of how eight underrepresented AVID students adjusted to their new environment can be seen. Underrepresented students who have successfully adapted to the academic and cultural college environment have key pieces of information to offer educators and policymakers concerned about the unequal access to, and graduation from, postsecondary educational institutions. The participants in this study were drawn from ethnic groups that have been referred to in the literature as 'underrepresented.' These ethnic groups include African Americans, Latinos, and native American Indians. These underrepresented ethnic groups, historically, have been the least successful in entering and persisting in higher education. This study collected the words and experiences of underrepresented students who had successfully made the transition to college and who had participated in the AVID pre-college program. It also provided an opportunity to the participants who experienced the transition to higher education to bring their perceptions to the attention of both secondary and postsecondary educators and administrators.

After a search of published research and doctoral dissertations, no qualitative studies researching AVID program graduates in college were found. An in-depth exploration from the underrepresented AVID students themselves is missing from the research. This study attempted to add more detail to what we know about how underrepresented students transition from a multi-year pre-college program, AVID, to university life.

Limitations of the Study

This qualitative study was intentionally designed to include a small number of participants (eight) who were attending one of two San Diego area public universities. The primary concern of this study was to investigate, using qualitative case study methodology, the experiences of students who have been in an AVID high school program for at least three years, who had enrolled in a competitive public university immediately after high school, and who represented groups that have been statistically underrepresented in university communities. The strength of this study lies in the use of phenomenological interviews that added participant voices to the existing research on factors contributing to college persistence. Since this was an exploratory study, the findings contribute to beginning research in this area. "In fields such as education, social work, and counseling--fields in which there is a concern with individuals, not just aggregates--all research findings are tentative" (Donmoyer, 1990, p. 183). A qualitative study like this one cannot address causality; however it can communicate detailed human portraits through the use of rich description, which has the potential to influence the work of others who work with underrepresented students or are concerned with closing the achievement gap.

Because of the limited number of participants in the study, the emergent data applied only to the eight participants in the study and will not be generalizable in the traditional sense to other populations of students. However, since the study does reflect underrepresented students' voices and relates to a specific program, it may be of interest to those working with the AVID program as teachers, administrators or policy makers. The students' stories may also influence a wider audience who work with

underrepresented students and who are concerned about improving pre-college programs and admission and retention of such students into institutions of higher education.

Since I am an employee of the San Diego County Office of Education and was working for the AVID program during the study period, the potential for insider bias existed. However, studies that include primary data providing the reader with the actual words and comments of the participants reduce the need for internal validity checks (Wolcott, 1990). The guide for the interview protocol was designed to eliminate leading questions and to encourage participant response to open ended inquiries (Appendix B). I did not have any former relationship with the students who participated in this study, which reduced the impact of my insider status. The advantage of my insider status was having access to longitudinal and current data about AVID program graduates and the means to contact potential participants.

In qualitative studies, subjectivity or researcher bias is often considered an issue that confounds the results. In order to be aware of my own subjectivity during the study, I documented my thoughts and was alert to the forms my subjectivity could take (Peshkin, 1988). I kept track of my own mental processes through the use of field notes and memos throughout the data collection and analysis process. Wolcott's (1990) advice to qualitative researchers was pertinent to this study: "To the extent that my feelings and personal reactions seem relevant to a case, I try to reveal them: The greater their possible influence, the more attention they receive and the earlier they appear in the account " (p. 131). During all phases of this study, I carefully paid attention to my own subjectivity and sought feedback from colleagues to reduce its influence.

Definition of Key Terms

Since this study uses terminology that may be loosely defined by educators and others, these terms are specifically defined as used in this study.

1. **Achievement gap** - The stubborn discrepancy, evident by second grade, between the academic performance of different groups, most noticeably between African American, Latino and Native American Indian groups and their Asian and white peers. It is also closely linked to low socioeconomic status.
2. **Advocacy** – Institutional agents, such as teachers, who can directly transmit information, knowledge, resources and opportunities to directly benefit those in their charge who may not otherwise have these needs met.
3. **a-g requirements** - Describes the fifteen courses in core areas (English, Mathematics, Science, Social Science, Performing Arts and College Prep electives) needed for admission to California Public Universities - the CSU and UC Systems.
4. **AVID** - Advancement Via Individual Determination, a pre-college program for underrepresented middle and high school students with college potential. The program is offered as an elective class during the school day. Students are encouraged to enroll for all four high school years.
5. **AVID Effect** - Refers to underrepresented students who have been in the AVID Program for three or more years and who are able to enroll in four-year college and universities at much higher than expected rates (Guthrie & Guthrie, 2000).
6. **Competitive four-year university** - These institutions have published pre-requisites for admission that include applicants having an above average high

school GPA, passing scores on SAT admission tests between 1000 and 1100, and are at least Masters-degree granting.

7. **Cultural capital** - The term cultural capital represents the collection of non-economic forces such as family background, social class, as well as varying investments in and commitments to education, which then influences future academic success (Bourdieu, 1977).
8. **Highly Competitive four-year university** – Published pre-requisites for admission include an above average high school GPA, median scores on SAT admission tests between 1,150 and 1,250, very selective student admission policies, and are doctoral granting institutions.
9. **Historically underrepresented students** – A term higher education institutions frequently use to refer to the groups that enroll in four-year institutions at rates lower than their population share. This group includes African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans and the economically disadvantaged.
10. **Marginalization** - The process of being tacitly denied access to the benefits of the educational or social system. Groups that are less economically powerful in the community, in particular ethnic minorities and low SES families, are not able to gain access to the services that others in the dominant culture take for granted.
11. **Non-competitive colleges** - Community colleges in California that do not require applications or pre-requisites, such as high school graduation, for entry.
12. **Pre-college programs** - Programs that are designed to help high school students gain the skills and knowledge needed to be successful in college.

13. **Social capital** - This term describes the value resulting from the flow of information available to those who belong to and participate in social networks. In schools, social capital refers to the available information about getting into post-secondary education (testing, applications, etc.) and the formation of social networks (mentors and peers) to help group members reach a common socially valued goal, such as a college degree (Bourdieu, 1977).
14. **Socioeconomic status (SES)** - Socioeconomic status is based on family income, the highest level of parental education, occupation, and social status in the community. (Demarest et al., 1993).

CHAPTER 2

This chapter will review research from four areas, all of which impact the study of AVID program graduates transition to higher education. First, the research findings on pre-college programs that have successfully increased college enrollment of underrepresented students will be reviewed. This will provide a framework for understanding the reasons for the creation of pre-college intervention programs as well as the most common types of programs found in secondary schools. Next, the theoretical research describing the systemic practices operating in schools, often termed the hidden curriculum (Mehan et al., 1996), will be examined in closer detail. This study used sociocultural theory as a lens for understanding the barriers to postsecondary opportunities and examined the evidence for the applicability of this theory to the study. Third, the existing body of research on the AVID Program will be summarized, including the type and scope of previous research. This research is important for understanding the impact of this specific pre-college program on students and where gaps in the research still exist. The final area to be reviewed is the large body of research on college persistence. The factors influencing why students persist in college and how underrepresented students adapt to college represent a major benchmark for evaluating the data found in this study. The intersection of these four lines of research will shed light on the questions investigated; namely, how underrepresented students access college and how they adapt once they arrive.

Pre-College Preparation Programs

Since the late 1980's increasing numbers of college preparation programs have proliferated nationally (Tiernery & Hagedorn, 2002) in an effort to close the persistent

achievement gap. The general goals of these intervention programs include “smoothing the transition from school to college, improvement of study habits, increase of general academic readiness and expansion of academic options” (Tierney & Hagedorn, 2002, p. 3). These pre-college programs seek to close the achievement gap, and the available research has attempted to identify specific program elements that actually increase college entrance eligibility among high-risk groups of entering freshmen (Swanson, 2000; California State Post Secondary Education Commission, 1996; Tierney, 2002; Plank & Jordan, 2001; Mehan, 1999; Nieto, 1994, Singham, 1998).

The final six-year longitudinal report released by Stanford University’s Bridge Project (Venezia et al., 2003), which studied the difficult transition students experience from high school to college in six representative states, raised the following alarm: “Not only are African American and Latino students not obtaining postsecondary education degrees at the same rate as their White, non-Latino counterparts, they are not graduating from high school with the same level of academic skills” (p. 10).

A number of secondary school intervention programs have been developed in an attempt to bridge this seemingly intractable achievement gap. The pre-college programs serving underrepresented students fall into two main categories (Gandara, 2002). One type focuses on specific students (student-centered) who have an identified profile. These programs are often referred to as niche programs. The student-centered intervention programs have a primary goal to identify and help promising minority students become qualified for university entrance. Programs of this type include Upward Bound, Puente and AVID (Slavin & Fashola, 1997).

The second program type is school-centered. These pre-college programs attempt to improve the quality of education school-wide and to increase access to higher education for large groups of students. They often use a partnership approach with local universities or colleges to achieve systemic goals (Oakes, Rogers, Lipton, & Morrell, 2002). Programs of this type are often initiated by a university and based on grant funding for a specific project over a finite time span. A national example of this type of initiative is Gear-Up, in which an entire grade level cohort of middle school students was identified and provided with additional academic experiences to improve their achievement. These types of programs are usually funded on grant monies and tend to disappear when the funding ends; therefore their long-term impact is often limited.

An underlying and often unstated assumption of all of these academic enhancement preparation programs is that “schools are failing to adequately prepare underrepresented students for college” (Tierney & Hagedorn, 2002, p. 6). Part of the reason for the existence of these programs may lie in the social dynamics of school systems, which have been historically organized to sort and categorize students according to their perceived ability levels (Plank & Jordan, 2001). In this context, minority students are part of a system infused with inequities based on historical practices that have resulted in maintaining a significant achievement gap between higher-achieving White and Asian students and the lower achieving African American, Latino and American Indian population. “In practice, public schools have magnified the differences between children from wealthy and impoverished backgrounds as well as between students of different ethnic backgrounds. Schools have directly influenced the opportunities and

outcomes provided for children through the practice of tracking” (Watt et al., 2002, p. 45).

Sociocultural Theory and Schooling

By using the lens of sociocultural theory, factors characteristic of successful pre-college programs can be examined. It is not enough to offer underrepresented students a study skills or reading class that only addresses academic issues. “The nature of college-going in the freshman year is influenced profoundly by experiences that occur much earlier in life” (Gonzalez, 2001, p. 237). If the student cannot become part of a developing community of practice in which the learning is imbedded in complex social interactions, then their ability to persist diminishes (Alford, 2000). In this view of persistence, all learning takes place within a cultural context. A number of researchers have found that a positive connection to school is crucial to the development of an academic identity for marginalized students (Freeman, 1997; Jackson, 2003; Kuykendall, 1992; Lattuca, 2002; Nieto, 1994; Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003).

Cultural interactions take place during both social and cognitive activities and are often mediated by a teacher advocate in pre-college programs. It is through the development of this type of a cultural safe space that students of differing ethnicities and backgrounds can create a new context of communication and experience academic growth together. Minority students, in order to successfully navigate the white majority culture of academia, must be able to boundary cross (Mehan et al., 1996) and develop mainstream academic skills while at the same time maintaining their own cultural identities (Gonzalez, 2001; Nieto, 1994; Pugach, 1998). This balancing of cultures, academic versus social, can be difficult for first time university students to maintain over

time due to the competing influence of economic and social factors from the student's home community (Bourdieu, 1973; Mehan et al., 1996). Findings by other researchers reinforced these previous studies.

In a two-year longitudinal study of six racially mixed high schools attempting to end *de facto* tracking practices, Yonezawa, Wells, and Serna (2002) noted, "The segregated nature of tracked spaces shapes the relationships and identities of students, parents, and educators by limiting their supportive and informative relationships with diverse groups" (p. 39). In other words, tracking blocks the transmission of social and cultural capital. This research suggested moving students into a more rigorous academic environment may be psychologically and emotionally risky for underrepresented students, since they have not typically accessed these 'elite' tracks before. This becomes important when placing students in ability group tracks that are, "often established bounded, predefined expectations not only for what they can do but also for what they cannot do. The expectations that follow from these labels shape the daily life of a classroom in ways that may alienate students from content or school life itself" (Agee, 2000, p. 309). Underrepresented students may be particularly sensitive to this systemized school marginalization that may, in part, account for the relatively high dropout rates of Latino and African American students from high schools across California (Singham, 1998).

Freeman (1997), using qualitative methodologies, investigated how a cross-section of African American high school students from five large U.S. cities felt about their opportunities to attend higher education. She used student interviews and focus groups to collect qualitative data on how African American students perceived their

respective high schools had prepared them for postsecondary options. Freeman emphasized how underrepresented students, wishing to participate and be successful in American college culture, had to acquire the necessary cultural capital in order to successfully negotiate the transition to academia. Freeman (1997) argued,

In simplest terms, the concepts of cultural and social capital mean assets, in the form of behaviors, on which individuals and/or families can draw to meet a certain set of established values in a society. These societal values are generally established by majority groups in society and encompass such behaviors as the way individuals speak and the way they dress. The more individuals are able to meet these established standards, the more they are accepted by different institutions (e.g. schools) in society. (p. 525)

The necessity for underrepresented students to acquire academic literacy and to adopt the necessary academic behaviors in order to obtain entry into a competitive university is strongly supported by Freeman's research.

Forming an Academic Identity

An important part of becoming the first in your family to attempt college is developing an academic identity starting in the middle school years. To be called a "school-girl" or "school-boy" is a serious insult in many urban high schools (Orenstein, 1994). "In traditional schools, students not already strongly committed to an academic identity face powerful pressures, both internal and external, to define themselves in ways that minimize identification with schooling" (Jackson, 2003, p. 580). The acquisition of this academic identity can threaten the student's position in both the family and social culture, if it deviates too far from the norm. To counter the external environmental

influences, pre-college programs for underrepresented students can be more successful if they construct a safe space for students to “boundary cross” their cultural norms and to create new academic identities by engaging in typically ‘white’ academic behaviors (Tierney & Hagedorn, 2002).

Jackson’s (2003) study of urban Latino high school students in California, who had experienced multiple academic failures, suggested that a common set of behaviors form an essential part of developing an academic identity. These behaviors include, “completing homework, reading independently, studying seriously for tests, striving for good grades, mastering and using proper English, paying attention to the teacher, asking questions and getting help, signing up for specific academic courses, and choosing to obey loosely enforced rules” (p. 581). He elaborated on how some schools, through the use of “oasis” programs, created safe spaces in which students developed an academic self, reinforced by others who shared the oasis with them. Jackson (2003) described the necessary elements of a successful pre-college program:

What all the oasis programs have accomplished is a focus on student agency—they have simply created small but powerful microcultures in which students from every background are able to develop an academic identity that is compatible with their other components of self. That academic identity, in turn, has empowered individual students to change how they respond to the still powerful outside social pressures, to develop reactions of ‘resilience’ or immunity. They can make success-related behavioral choices that would otherwise have been impossible. (p. 583)

It has been the role of pre-college preparation programs, such as AVID, to value and nourish the cultural identities that underrepresented students bring to the learning environment through the agency of trained teachers. These teacher advocates create a classroom environment that both supports and academically challenges the students in their care (Swanson et al., 2000). This view has been validated by research on the support networks of Mexican-American adolescents by Stanton-Salazar (2001) who described the effect of the teacher-advocate from his high school study site: "The AVID teacher embodies the functions of mentor, academician, coach, and cheerleader. Students are encouraged to bring not only their academic problems into the classroom, but their personal issues as well, particularly those that may be interfering with their ability to study and excel in school" (p. 186).

Research on AVID

The seminal, although somewhat dated, research on the AVID program was conducted by Mehan, Villanueva, Hubbard and Lintz (1996). They reported the impact of the AVID program from three years of implementation in eight San Diego urban high schools from 1990 to 1992. In this study, *Constructing School Success: The Consequences of Untracking Low-Achieving Students*, the researchers analyzed multiple sets data on the AVID students' academic records supplied by San Diego City Schools. The Mehan research team also conducted brief interviews with a sample of those close to the program, including students, parents, teachers, administrators, and counselors. The researchers also collected observational data in AVID classrooms. Through high school exit interviews, they recorded data from 248 AVID students who had been in the program for at least three years. They found that 120 (48%) reported attending four-year colleges

and 99 (40%) reported attending two-year colleges. The Mehan team attempted to follow the AVID students who were attending four-year colleges, but were only able to locate one third of the original cohort. Of the students found one year after high school graduation, 54 (32%) were enrolled in four-year colleges and 74 (44%) were in two-year schools (Mehan et al., 1996). The study concluded,

Although the results of our research are generally positive, we have attributed the success of the [AVID] program to different factors than the program does (i.e., more to social scaffolds and social networks, less to inquiry-based curriculum and collaborative instruction in academic courses. (p. 24)

This research indicated that participation in the AVID program helped underrepresented students move into two and four year colleges and universities by providing information and support, rather than a specific curriculum. (Mehan & Hubbard, 1999; Mehan et al., 1996).

Other evidence on the effects of the AVID program from a variety of researchers offers some insights into what other factors have been found to influence academic achievement for this group of students.

Stanton-Salazar (2001), in *Manufacturing Hope and Despair*, described findings from a multi-year mixed method study about the social support networks of low SES Latino adolescents from immigrant families attending an urban high school in San Diego County. He elaborated on the types of school support lacking in many educational areas, especially in providing college-going information and scholarship opportunities for low SES Latino students. During his case study located at an urban San Diego high school,

Stanton-Salazar (2001) interviewed both the AVID teacher and some of the students. He found that the program deliberately transmitted cultural capital to the AVID students via college application support, bi-weekly academic tutoring plus other study skills, and information needed to prepare for college. Stanton-Salazar (2001) highlighted the AVID program as a place where other rules apply. He said,

AVID, however, is not merely an innovative high school program that prepares low-status students for college who otherwise might never go. AVID also represents a cultural space where social life is organized on very different principles than those normally found throughout the school. (p. 185)

In the research findings, Stanton-Salazar (2001) reported that the AVID program, “primarily through the active advocacy of the teacher, was able to connect these Latino adolescents to an academic future that ‘transformed students’ lives in very positive and lasting ways” (p. 162).

In a study on the effectiveness of pre-college programs conducted by Hagedorn and Fogel (2002), a structural model was developed based on statistical path analysis of factors that predicted college entrance in connection with participation in selected pre-college programs, including AVID. The control group used was matched to the pre-college program participants (treatment group) in ethnicity, gender, family support for higher education and socioeconomic status. The study identified several key factors that enhanced the acquisition of academic capital, a necessary prerequisite of college success. These factors included academic self-efficacy, performance goal orientation, mastery goal orientation, and college preparation program involvement. Hagedorn and Fogel (2002) reported that pre-college programs were producing statistically significant results

by increasing underrepresented students' enrollment in higher education and concluded that the most critical variable was for students to take advanced courses. "The model proposes that the increase in college readiness courses and higher grades lead to an increase in college enrollment" (Hagedorn & Fogel, 2002, p. 179). Furthermore, they found "in the year following high school graduation, only 9 percent of the treatment group students were not enrolled in college as compared to 24 percent of the control group students" (p. 180). These findings strongly support the national longitudinal study conducted by Adelman (1999) who found that taking rigorous courses (e.g., Advanced Placement) before college significantly increased the chances of graduating from college, especially for underrepresented groups.

The AVID program has been the subject of longitudinal research studies by the Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence (CREDE) led by Mehan and Hubbard (1999) and by the Center for Research, Evaluation and Training in Education (CREATE) led by Guthrie and Guthrie (2000). Both studies have collected data that supported the value of the AVID program as a vehicle for underrepresented students to access higher education. As underrepresented students move from a four-year academic pre-college support program into a university setting, they face both academic and cultural challenges. The AVID program has been designed not only to insure that AVID students can access advanced courses that tracking creates in secondary schools, but also to provide AVID students with mentoring and assistance in confronting the academic and cultural barriers associated with boundary crossing.

The California Postsecondary Education Commission (1996) produced a report titled *Effectiveness of Collaborative Student Academic Programs*, which examined nine

programs in California. This study presented statistical evidence that AVID was effective in delivering services to students with historically low college-going rates. The report emphasized the contribution of direct services (daily contact in an elective class) and a focus on the transition between secondary and higher education as being contributing elements to the success of AVID secondary programs in California.

Another study on the efficacy of the AVID program was completed by Slavin and Fashola (1997). They used strict conditions for selecting which pre-college programs merited evaluation. All qualifying programs had to meet the criteria of having a significant impact on lowering dropout rates, promoting college attendance, improving school performance, benefiting Latinos, and being replicable across a broad range of secondary schools. AVID was evaluated, along with three other pre-college programs. Slavin and Fashola (1997) identified common program themes, which they attributed to successful programs. These included creating meaningful relationships between teachers and students, connecting students to an attainable future, giving students help with specific courses, providing generic study strategies, recognizing students for academic efforts, and increasing parental involvement (Slavin & Fashola, 1997).

A small dissertation study conducted by Bailey (2002) looked at a middle school AVID class in Virginia with 21 students, and examined the effectiveness of the AVID program in helping students improve their academic performance and college preparation. Although the sample size was small, the researcher found AVID students earned significantly higher grades than the matched control group on the state's academic achievement test. No interview data were collected in this study and only quantitative

methods were employed. The positive implications for having students begin the college path in middle school are suggested by the findings from this study.

A more comprehensive longitudinal study surveyed one hundred 1997 AVID graduates about their post high school activities (Guthrie & Guthrie, 2000). Of the one hundred respondents, “Nearly three-fourths reported attending 4-year colleges—a rate almost three times that of the state average—and nearly 80% of AVID graduates enrolled continuously in college since leaving high school” (p. 13). AVID graduates also gave the program a high rating for college preparation. Although survey data do indicate areas of overall program strength, students reported that gaps do exist, especially in the area of academic writing, expository reading and preparation for tests. Only 29 percent of the respondents rated their preparation for college writing highly. The study found that, “despite the emphasis given in the AVID curriculum on writing and inquiry, the amount and level of writing in college still left many students feeling inadequately prepared” (Guthrie & Guthrie, 2000, p. 28). Although based on a relatively small statistical sample size, this study indicated some additional areas for further qualitative study directly from AVID program participants.

The studies on AVID have focused on evaluating secondary program elements, implementation issues and over-all academic gains by middle and high school students participating in the AVID program. The studies discussed above primarily used survey methods and statistical data analysis from grades, test scores, and attendance rates to draw conclusions about the program’s effectiveness. What this body of research on AVID lacks is in-depth interview data gathered directly from the student participants who

were currently experiencing the college journey by finding out what they had to say about their college transition experiences.

Nevertheless, it is of concern that even with the preparation and advocacy found in pre-college programs, students may fail to enter college or, once admitted, fail to graduate. "Even if programs were able to equip children with the capital that delivers them to the college door, they often do not have the requisite capital to actually graduate from college. Simply stated, the academic capital that brings a student to the college door may not accrue the requisite interest to sustain him/her through until college graduation" (Tierney & Hagedorn, 2002, p. 6). In order to more fully examine the persistence experience, it is necessary to look at the existing theoretical research on student college persistence in general, and at research on underrepresented students in particular.

Factors Influencing College Persistence

An important dimension to the college experience is the ability to persist once admittance and enrollment have occurred. In a study released by the National Center for Education Statistics on Postsecondary Education, which followed the 1995-96 high school graduate cohort, the percentage of college beginners who actually completed a bachelor's degree within 6 years was 58.2 percent (Berkner, Ho, & Cataldi, 2003). The study also reported that African American students completed a bachelor's degree within six years at a 45.7 percent rate and Latinos a 47.3 percent rate. Whites, using the same six-year comparison, completed college at a 66.8 percent rate, while Asians completed at a 70.5 percent rate. These data support other widespread research findings that African American and Latino students are much more likely to leave college without degrees than their white and Asian classmates (Eimers & Pike, 1996). In order to look at possible

reasons for this unequal exodus, the theoretical basis underlying current models of student persistence must be examined more closely.

The basic premise of the theoretical models of persistence developed in the early 1970's reflected the paradigm, "that an individual's decision to persist at an institution of higher education is contingent upon the existence of a 'match' between the individual and the institution—and person-environment congruence models of persistence/attrition have dominated the theoretical literature" (Attinasi, 1986, p. 55).

Vincent Tinto has published the most influential theoretical work on college retention and persistence over the last twenty-five years. In his 1975 article, "Dropout from Higher Education: A Theoretical Synthesis of Recent Research," Tinto presented a schema for college-leaving and proposed an "integration model" based on factor analysis of the key hypothetical variables involved. This model examined the process students experience as they move toward dropping out. In this work, he defined college persistence in terms of achievement motivation and students' psychosocial characteristics such as motivation and efficacy. The model was further developed and supported by his research in *Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Cures of Student Attrition* (Tinto, 1987). In this book, Tinto further developed the longitudinal predictive theory postulated in the integration model. According to Tinto's integration model, persistence is a result of the interaction of social and academic factors that together interact and influence each other. The higher the levels of integration in each area, the more likely the student will be committed to college and will stay in school and earn a degree (Tinto, 1975; 1988; 1998). "Tinto conceptualized student withdrawal from college as the consequence of a longitudinal process of interactions between the student and the

academic and social systems of the college” (Attinasi, 1986, p. 57). From this standpoint, underrepresented students who may feel marginalized by their college experiences would be more likely to dropout.

Part of adjusting to a college environment in Tinto’s model requires that the student separate from his/her former pre-college life and assimilate new behaviors as part of the transition experience. Students, in order to persist, must perceive a benefit (a personal cost-benefit) in staying and must feel that they fit into the college environment, both socially and academically. Factors influencing student persistence are three-fold: family background, individual attributes and pre-college schooling. If students form a goal commitment (to obtain a degree) measured by grade performance and intellectual development, the result is academic integration with the university. In this model the academic elements are balanced by peer-group interactions and faculty interactions. Tinto calls this social integration, which makes up the social system at the university (Tinto, 1975; 1987; 1993; 1998).

Tinto’s theory of persistence has been the most widely tested and reported in the literature over the last twenty-five years. In fact, at least 170 dissertations have been written using it as a theoretical platform (Braxton et al., 2000). The majority of these research studies have employed quantitative methods and used various forms of survey instruments in multiple university settings and, for the most part, have supported Tinto’s model (Cabrera, Castaneda, Nora, & Hengstler, 1992; Eimers & Pike, 1996; Gohn, Swartz, & Donnelly, 2001; Nora, 2002; Nora & Cabrera, 1996).

Braxton et al. (2000) identified four main factors that have been consistently found to be influential in predicting college success in the research literature: “student

entry characteristics (family background, parental education and socioeconomic status), individual attributes (ability, race, gender), pre-college schooling experiences (academic preparation) and the level of a student's integration into the social community of the college" (p. 569).

In contrast, some research studies have focused on minority students and have tested the fit of Tinto's model for diverse student groups. The findings from these studies are mixed, with some supporting the Tinto model, while others found it limiting and non-predictive for Latino and African American students (Attinasi, 1986; Eimers & Pike, 1996; Gonzalez, 2001; Tierney, 1992).

One criticism of Tinto's model is that it fails to define adequately the complex variables responsible for dropout behavior. "The studies from which Tinto marshals evidence for the components of his model invariably analyze data of two kinds: (1) fixed-choice responses to written questionnaires and (2) institutional records. The analysis of such data cannot be expected to reveal processes of social interaction" (Attinasi, 1986, p. 68). Another critique addresses the underlying theory of the integration model. The sociological theory of person-environment congruence on which Tinto's model is based may, in fact, be inadequate to satisfactorily explain the complexity inherent in the observed data. The strongest criticism of Tinto's theory is its claim that adjustment to college requires assimilation. This is problematic for underrepresented students and fails to adequately explain the contribution to persistence from strong family and community ties documented by other researchers (Attinasi, 1986; Cameron & Heckman, 1999; Gonzalez, 2001; Stanton-Salazar, 2001).

Eimers and Pike (1996) conducted a study to examine the differences and similarities in minority and non-minority students' adjustment to college. The variable measured was dropout rates between the two groups using 799 freshmen respondents from a large residential, mid-western university. The questionnaire used the Tinto model parameters. The findings included a positive correlation between academic achievement and lower levels of entry ability (particularly for minority students), intent to persist, and institutional commitment, and a negative correlation between perceptions of discrimination and academic integration. Eimers and Pike also found a highly positive correlation between encouragement from family and friends and intent to persist. One of the key differences found between the minority and non-minority groups was that academic integration had the highest statistical significance in predicting the academic success of minority students. Two other important factors found to predict persistence were the external encouragement of family and social integration.

The Eimers and Pike study (1996) supported a previous study on a large university commuter campus by Nora and Cabrera (1996). "Despite the presence of discrimination and prejudice, both of these studies revealed that minority students who were successful, in general, did not let the presence of discrimination interfere with their academic and career goals" (Eimers & Pike, 1996, p. 19). The most important, and somewhat counterintuitive, finding of this study was the authors' conclusion that "there are few substantive differences between minority and non-minority students" (p. 20) with regard to factors influencing college persistence.

However, another researcher using qualitative methods did not find similar results. In a two-year qualitative study, with two freshman participants attending a large

Southwestern university, Gonzalez (2001) reported that the two male Chicano students “resisted and took action against the dominant culture that was responsible for their marginalization” (p. 78). Such a wide discrepancy in research findings from two different methodologies is of concern and indicates that additional qualitative studies are needed in this area.

Students who persist in college, especially those from underrepresented groups, have to negotiate an unfamiliar social system, as well as face academic challenges. In response to the high attrition in college during the first year, some researchers have begun doing more intensive studies on the influence of pre-college factors that contribute to persistence. A study conducted by Nora and Lang (2001) investigated the relationship and impact of pre-college psychosocial factors and found that, “skills and attitudes developed prior to enrollment in higher education have an impact on a student’s transition to the college environment and the decision to remain enrolled in college” (p. 1). They also reported that there has been little research into this area to date. “The influence of pre-college experiences and perceptions, the ability to form new relationships and friendships and academically related beliefs developed during high school that enable first-year college students to create social structures and engage in academic endeavors, is relatively un-established” (p. 8).

In another recommendation for further research, Nora (2002) stated, “Yet, none of the models explore the pre-college or high school psychosocial factors that might affect a student’s ability to become involved and ultimately persist in college” (p. 70). Nora further suggested that, “For high school students who have made a decision to attend

college, it is also believed that they develop different anticipatory levels of confidence or efficacy related to their expectations of future academic and social experiences" (p. 71).

In order to explore this area of need, the current study, using the AVID pre-college program, collected narrative data on the relationship between academic and cultural preparation for college and evidence of the durability of such behaviors in college. These findings are presented in Chapter 4.

Summary

To date, there has been a lack of qualitative research exploring how AVID graduates utilized their pre-college experiences during their subsequent transition into four-year universities, where underrepresented students are at higher risk of dropping out (Berkner et al., 2003). Tierney and Hagedorn (2002) also noted the research gap in this area by stating that, "most of the information that we have had available as indicators of success about college preparation programs are anecdotal stories of individuals, or brief project summaries by those who have conducted a particular study" (p. 4). In order find out whether the AVID pre-college program influenced students' persistence behaviors, this study focused more deeply on the experiences of individual underrepresented students who have successfully negotiated the transition to college.

Educators and the larger society cannot ignore the threat of the widening academic achievement gap to the fabric of our democratic ideals of equality and social justice. Americans believe that we are an open opportunity society. We believe in the constitutional right of all citizens to have equal access to higher education and the opportunity for individual advancement.

As Tierney and Hagedorn (2002) have advised, "We must cultivate the kind of cultural capital that will not only sustain students to college, but will evolve and grow to nurture students through college" (p. 5). By exploring successful underrepresented students' stories, we can come to a deeper understanding of how some have been able to make it and to learn from their experiences. Underrepresented AVID students who have successfully negotiated the first year of college have key pieces of information to offer educators, administrators and community members concerned about the historically low college-going rates reflective of underlying equity and access issues that impact our African American, Latino and American Indian students.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to investigate the transition experiences of AVID program graduates who were beginning their second year of college at competitive four-year public universities. The basic research questions that guided the study were: (1) How do AVID program graduates adapt academically and culturally to a four-year public university during their first year? (2) In what ways do they attribute their persistence in college to their high school AVID experience? (See Appendix A, Research Question Matrix, for a summary of the purpose, assumptions, and method used for answering each of the research questions.)

In the spring of 2003, the researcher conducted a naturalistic (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) pilot case study with two AVID program graduates during the spring of 2003. This pilot served as an exploration of the research topic and methodology. The preliminary study found that the two UCSD freshmen, one Latino and one American Indian, attributed their current college attendance and academic success to the AVID program. Their academic identity development and persistence behaviors emerged from their responses to a one-hour semi-structured interview. They gave similar accounts of common study behaviors, Cornell note-taking, and efforts to build social networks with fellow students while maintaining an academic focus. Each student navigated their college transition differently, but both experienced a successful social and academic transition. The results from that study, including the interview guide, coding categories and themes, influenced me and helped to refine the methodology and interview topics for this larger dissertation study.

A case study methodology was chosen to answer the stated research questions. As Yin (2003) explains, “Case studies are the preferred strategy when ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context” (p. 1). In order to come to a greater understanding of the lived experiences of AVID Program graduates, an interpretive case study approach was used (Merriam, 2001). According to Merriman (2001), an interpretive case study “contains rich, thick description” (p. 38). She continued, “These descriptive data are used to develop conceptual categories or to illustrate, support, or challenge theoretical assumptions held prior to the data gathering” (p. 38). The complex nature of the experiences reported by the former AVID program participants demanded a methodology that could holistically represent their cases.

The case study offers a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon. Anchored in real-life situations, the case study results in a rich and holistic account of a phenomenon. (Merriman, 2001, p. 41)

It was important to the research questions asked in this study to collect the student voice as a means of interpreting their AVID, transition and persistence experiences in college. Therefore, the initial question areas explored during the in-depth interview sessions sought to collect a wide variety of information on the participants’ high school and early college experiences.

Phenomenological questions are best addressed through a qualitative case study design that allows for multiple in-depth interviews and collection of rich participant descriptions (Seidman, 1998; Stake, 2000). The first semi-structured interview (Appendix

B) was constructed to elicit information on the following topic areas: high school academic and cultural experiences, the first year in college, college academics, college culture, the impact of the AVID program, and participant recommendations for current AVID teachers and students. The data from the first interview drove the formation of more open-ended questions used during the second in-depth interview sessions.

Participants were invited to reflect on their own lived experiences, which enabled them to expand on an open-ended question or to bring in additional material not specifically asked for in the question. Lincoln (1995) wrote about the effectiveness of this technique and stated, "Encouraging student voices may be facilitated by the old-fashioned Socratic method: a form of questioning that develops, on the part of the respondents, increasingly sophisticated, reflective, evaluative, and critical answers as the dialogue proceeds" (p. 89).

Utilizing this type of semi-structured interview technique provided the researcher with flexibility and encouraged participant retrospection, which was required by the nature of the research questions driving the study. Having situational flexibility to pause, repose or revisit a question, is a strength of qualitative methods, and the reason why such methods were employed in this particular study. In addition, the interaction and rapport between the participants and the researcher developed over the course of the study resulting in more extensive participant responses. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) alleged, "The nature of reality asserts that there is not a single reality on which inquiry may converge, but rather there are multiple realities that are socially constructed" (p. 75).

Study Design

Selection of Participants

The San Diego AVID Regional office, located at the San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE), keeps records on the names, addresses, telephone numbers and intended college matriculation reported by AVID students during the last semester of high school. Underrepresented students were purposefully selected (Patton, 2002) as potential participants for this study and included African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans who were in their second year of college, attending San Diego State University (SDSU) or the University of California at San Diego (UCSD). In order to be selected, participants also had to be AVID program graduates with three or more years of the AVID elective in a San Diego area high school and come from a variety of geographical areas of San Diego County.

The screening protocol began with an examination of AVID graduates' records on file at the SDCOE AVID Regional office. Those meeting the university requirement were sorted into one pile. A second examination of students' records focused on their stated ethnicity and was used to further sort the pile by ethnicity. All students from the indicated underrepresented groups and with three or more years of AVID were invited to voluntarily participate in the study by telephone calls and email. Unfortunately, the AVID 2002 database had many errors due to the self-reported nature of the exit questionnaire. Of the 77 potential study candidates, 49 had either not attended the indicated university or had erroneous phone numbers, addresses and/or emails and therefore could not be contacted by the researcher. Of the 26 remaining potential participants, eight agreed to be in the study. All eight participants met the study criteria and were from underrepresented

groups in their second year of college. One factor impacting the participant selection process was that significantly fewer AVID program graduates are admitted to the highly competitive UCSD campus, and although SDSU is competitive, more AVID students are admitted there. Therefore, five of the participants (four females and one male) were selected who attended SDSU and three participants (two males and one female) attended UCSD. The eight participants attended high schools located in the northern, southern, central and eastern areas of San Diego county and captured a range of AVID experiences (Patton, 2002).

Relevant to this study, AVID program graduates who receive San Diego Foundation scholarships are tracked through their college of attendance by the San Diego County AVID office. These scholarship students are required to attend San Diego County universities, and the universities send regular grade reports to the AVID office. The \$1,000 scholarships are renewable annually if students are enrolled in full time study and maintain an overall GPA of 2.0. Five of the eight participants received a San Diego Foundation scholarship, one at UCSD and four at SDSU.

As stated earlier, the participant students voluntarily responded to an initial letter inviting them to participate in the study. The letter clearly indicated the voluntary nature of participation in the study and the research topic being investigated. Each participant was then contacted by telephone and email to set up an initial meeting once he/she indicated an interest in participating. At the first meeting, the participant was asked to sign a consent form and was informed about the nature and purpose of the study. The participants had the option of dropping out of the study at any time; however, none of the participants chose to do so.

Access to Participants

As a Regional AVID Coordinator at the San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE), the researcher had access to the AVID graduates' senior exit reports. These records included information on ethnicity, high school, home addresses, college they planned to attend and cumulative high school grade point average (GPA). The San Diego County Office of Education AVID Director gave approval for the study and permission to access all 2002 AVID graduates' records. In addition, the researcher was not involved in a supervisory capacity with the participants, and had no prior personal relationship with them.

Data Collection

The data collection consisted of three distinct phases. Two types of interview data were collected. First, a series of two hour-long in-depth interviews with each student participant occurred over a four month time period. The individual interviews served as the raw data for the development of each individual case study. The second type of data collected was through the two focus group interviews held at the respective universities toward the end of the study. These focus group sessions provided additional data for the cross-case analyses of each university's participants. The rationale for collecting data through interviews has been well established in the research literature (Fontana & Frey, 2000). Seidman (1998) argued that interviewing may be the best form of inquiry if the goal is to "understand the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (p. 3).

All interviews were digitally audiotaped, with the participants' consent, and transcribed verbatim by a professional transcriber. These interview transcripts were

checked against the original tapes and proofread, correcting any transcript errors.

Following each interview, field notes were taken on general observations and impressions about the non-verbal behaviors of the participants during the interview itself (Merriam, 2001). These field notes were both descriptive and analytic. Data collection and analysis occurred concurrently in order to refocus and shape the study during the data collection phase (Wolcott, 2001). The second individual interview and focus group sessions allowed for multiple opportunities to do member-checking.

Interview Procedures

The first round of data collection was based on a series of hour-long, individual phenomenological interviews of the eight participants. As an AVID regional coordinator and staff developer, the researcher had been in many middle and high school AVID classrooms during the past three years as a participant observer. This background information was used to guide the interview process. The individual experiences of the participants varied, so having the flexibility to probe topics introduced during the first semi-structured interview was critical to the research needs of the study. "Encouraging student voices may be facilitated by the old-fashioned Socratic method: a form of questioning that develops, on the part of the respondents, increasingly sophisticated, reflective, evaluative, and critical answers as the dialogue proceeds" (Lincoln, 1995, p. 89).

In order to be certain that all participants covered the same initial interview topics, the questions for the first interview were predetermined through an interview guide (Patton, 2002). The interview guide approach allowed structuring participants' responses to the same topics, but did not define exactly how each question was stated, or the order

in which each was explored. The interview questions were sequenced starting with more neutral questions to first establish rapport before asking the participants about more personal experiences, thoughts, and feelings (see Appendix B). Since the interview guide was structured by general topics relevant to the research questions, it provided temporary coding categories that matched the larger topic areas. An electronic codebook (database) was set up prior to the first interview with these preliminary categories which initially consisted of the topic headings from the interview guide (Glesne, 1999).

In the second individual interview, the results from the initial interview provided the basis to probe more deeply into topic areas needing further exploration (Merriam, 2001). The second phase of individual follow-up interviews clarified and further probed the data collected in the first interview. Prior to the second interview, each participant was sent the transcript data from the first interview to review. During the second in-depth individual interview session, participants were asked to interact with and make appropriate additions or modifications to the first interview transcripts (Stake, 2000). As part of the second interview session, each participant was briefed on the emerging themes from their particular case and asked for feedback. The discussions resulting from this data sharing was reflected in the second transcript and provided further clarity for the next round of data analysis. The participants were also shown the draft code maps derived from the first interview and asked to respond to it by adding additional information, editing or deleting categories. Data collected during the second interview were used to clarify emerging themes and led to further refinement of the data analysis process. Member checking occurred during this process and the participants' comments were audiotaped.

Each participant was sent both the first and second transcribed interviews via email as well as a preliminary listing about the emerging themes in the form of a code map. The participants were asked to read the transcripts, to make any corrections, annotations or additions, and to return any comments they had about the interpretation of the themes. Their responses were coded for key words and phrases, then compared to the existing data for both confirming and disconfirming evidence. "It is important (but never sufficient) for targeted persons to receive drafts revealing how they are presented, quoted, and interpreted and for the researcher to listen well for signs of concern" (Stake, 2000, p. 447).

Focus Groups

The third data collection phase consisted of an hour-long focus group session in order to verify emerging themes with multiple participant input. Once the first and second individual interviews were completed, two participant focus groups, one per campus, were utilized to allow the participants to discuss their college experiences as former AVID students and to reflect on the accuracy of the data analysis. Four of the five participants were able to attend the SDUS focus group, and two of the three UCSD participants attended. Another purpose of the focus group sessions was to serve as a member checking activity providing an opportunity for interactive participant feedback on the research findings (Morgan, 1997).

The researcher acted as a moderator using an interview guide to ensure both focus groups addressed the same topics (see Appendix C). The participants were initially requested to draw a cluster map about the influence of AVID before the discussion began. This individual work acted as a conversation starter, since none of the participants

knew each other. At the end of the focus group interview the participants again were asked to draw a similar map about the influence of their families. These documents were collected for further investigation and used during the cross-case analyses. In the respective focus groups, the attending participants reflected on the emerging themes and discussed the authenticity of the study by giving feedback on the accuracy of the themes emerging from the data analysis process. "In these combined uses of qualitative methods, the goal is to use each method so that it contributes something unique to the researcher's understanding of the phenomenon under study" (Morgan, 1997, p. 3). The dynamic and naturalistic nature of the focus group process did not result in the same type of participant interaction due to the diversity in both the university settings and the participants' experiences. It provided another type of data set for triangulation of sources.

Data Analysis

Individual Case Analysis

In order to answer each of the research questions, data analysis began early in the study. Each participant was treated as a separate case using the data from the two individual interviews as primary sources. The constant comparative method was used (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) as the underlying data analysis technique for this study. This method can be described as:

The researcher begins with a particular incident from an interview, field notes, or document and compares it with another incident in the same set of data or in another set. Comparisons are constantly made within and between levels of conceptualization until a theory can be formulated.

(Merriam, 2001, p. 159)

This type of analysis is circular rather than linear. As the new data were collected, they were compared to existing categories, which were eventually expanded, modified or collapsed into 40 codes and four categories (see Appendix F for code list). This process continued until all the new data fit into the existing codes and categories. Each case was then organized and described using four common themes that emerged from the literature review and the cases themselves, namely: family influences, preparing for college, transitioning to college, and persisting in college.

Using inductive analysis, Miles and Huberman's (1994) Contact Summary and Coded Summary Forms were used to begin data analysis closely following each interview (see Appendices D and E). Field notes were taken immediately following each interview to capture the non-verbal body language and first impressions. In addition, a qualitative research software program, HyperRESEARCH (2003), was employed to re-code all 16 sets of interview data and to assist with categorization, code map construction and deeper data analysis.

Through the Contact Summary Form (see Appendix D), I summarized the information gathered (or failed to gather) for each of the target question areas during the individual interviews. This process allowed further synthesis of the data from each interview and began to compare data across cases. Through this synthesis, the connections between the data that emerged from one interview to the next elicited confirming and disconfirming initial codes and thus the researcher began identifying likely coding categories.

In the second level of analysis, in order to further refine the pertinent codes, the Coded Summary Form (see Appendix E) also recommended by Miles and Huberman

(1994) was used. During this second data analysis phase, each interview transcript was reread and the salient points pulled out using the participants' words. The initial coding categories were again modified as the data emerged during these early stages of data analysis which followed each interview. The data from the interview transcripts, field notes and the original taped sessions were repeatedly reviewed in order to develop dependable content analysis, codes and matrices using the participants' own words, metaphors and phrases. Using open coding, new codes were added as needed, incorporating the content of the interviews, focus groups, participant feedback and field note data (Patton, 2002).

A third level of data analysis, using the qualitative program software, HyperRESEARCH (2003), resulted in finalizing the coding categories used in this study (see Appendix G for codes). This process resulted in the formulation of a code list that was then used for computer-aided transcript recoding of the all interview data and for developing individual code matrices (see Appendix H for sample). The qualitative research software assisted with coding, categorization, organization, code map construction and the data analysis processes.

Then the codes generated were used to formulate single case summary diagrams through the use of concept maps generated from the interview transcripts. The use of concept maps as data analysis tools helped clarify the inter-relationships between the themes and categories in the individual cases in this study. Patterns and paradoxes that emerged from the individual cases during the interview phase was then woven into a conceptual framework (Miles & Huberman, 1994) with the dominant themes represented in a chronological map, which will be discussed during the final cross-case analysis in

Chapter 4. As Jackson and Trochim (2002) have stated in their work on using concept mapping as a data analysis tool,

These methods typically employ computer-assisted coding, which has the advantage of time-saving automation, improved reliability of coding, and expanded possibilities of units of analysis- for example, the ability to map the relational patterns among symbols along a series of dimensions. (p. 309)

A fourth level of analysis was used in order to graphically represent the individual cases and to build the cross-case chronological map (see Ch 5, Figure 9). Inspiration (2002) software allowed for conceptual clustering and mapping patterns of codes resulting from the interviews and member checking cycles during the data reduction process. The Inspiration software assisted in further refinement and reduction of the data. The conceptual processes required to build the individual concept maps allowed the researcher to further develop the relationships between the codes and themes while looking for evidence of conflict, and contradictions (Ryan & Bernard, 2000).

Cross-Case Analyses

Two cross-case analyses were used to find data intersections between the individual cases at each university. These cross-case analyses discuss the individual cases from each university respectively and are presented in Chapter 4 following each university section. Interview transcript data and participants' individual cluster maps collected during the focus group interviews were used as an additional data sources and formed the core of the analysis across the SDSU and UCSD cross-cases.

Following the UCSD cross-case analysis, participants from the two institutions were compared as a set of eight in a final cross-case analysis, highlighting common themes and detailing differences. A model was constructed to reflect the participants' college transition experiences. This chronological map, displayed in Chapter 5 (Figure 9) represented the distillation of the key themes into four phases, all of which influenced these participants as they made their way through high school and into college. This chronological map served to frame the findings summarizing the experiences of the participants at both universities.

Credibility and Transferability of Findings

One of the ways to establish the credibility of a study, a parallel term for validity in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), is to collect data from a variety of sources, and to use multiple data analysis techniques to interpret the raw data. This study used eight individual cases, two focus groups and four levels of data analysis to triangulate the findings. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested qualitative research can be considered credible if the following conditions exist:

By looking at a range of similar and contrasting cases, we can understand a single-case finding, grounding it by specifying how and where and, if possible, why it carries on as it does. We can strengthen the precision, the validity, and the stability of the findings (p. 29).

In order to further increase the credibility of this study, a doctoral colleague who also took observational notes during the SDSU focus group session coded a transcript interview. She was familiar with the study and had reviewed and critiqued the coding categories and transcript data over time. Through a series of "peer debriefings" (Lincoln

& Guba, 1986, p. 77) we compared our independent coding of the same participant interview and compared the findings. Where there were discrepancies, we discussed the likely sources and came to consensus about the coding criteria.

Student voices have been reflected in the narrative through use of interview quotes, which allowed the participants to tell their own stories in their own words. This use of rich description “enables readers to transfer information to other settings” (Creswell, 1998, p.203). By highlighting common themes as well as contradictions, this qualitative narrative reflected the participants’ high school AVID experiences, the transitional first year, and persistence in college.

CHAPTER 4

Introduction

This chapter reports the case study findings about the college transition experiences of eight former AVID program graduates who were in their second year of college in the fall of 2003 at two competitive four-year public universities, San Diego State University and the University of California, San Diego. The participants all graduated from San Diego County high schools in June 2002 and were first time freshmen. Each had been in an AVID program in a different school, which represented the four geographical areas of the county: north, south, central, and east. All of the study participants belonged to ethnicities underrepresented in higher education and all had been in AVID high school programs for at least three years. This study, bounded by time, November 2003 to March 2004, and the two university locations, sought answers to two research questions: (1) How did AVID program graduates adapt academically and culturally to a four-year public university during their first year? (2) In what ways did they attribute their persistence in college to their high school AVID experience?

This chapter includes descriptions of (1) the university settings, (2) individual case descriptions of the eight participants, (3) individual case code maps (4) cross-case analyses of each case set by university and (5) a final cross-case analysis including participants from both universities. The case study methodology allowed the participants to share their experiences directly and enabled the researcher to gain an in-depth perspective about their high school experiences in AVID and their subsequent college transition, as well as their current experiences as university sophomores. All participant names used in this study are pseudonyms, selected by the participants themselves.

In this chapter, each case was organized and described using four chronological themes that emerged from the literature review and from the cases themselves. These organizing themes are: (1) family influences, (2) preparing for college, (3) transitioning to college, and (4) persisting in college.

Included in each individual's case summary section is a graphically represented concept map. The concept map illustrates the most pertinent categories, the connections between the categories, and the code frequencies. Subsequent to the individual interviews a focus group with each university's participants allowed for verification of the identified themes and findings as well as interaction between the participants (see Appendix C). The two focus group sessions were also used as a data source for the cross-case analyses and added depth to the information from the individual interviews.

The first five cases were situated at San Diego State University (SDSU). The university context will be introduced along with some general information about the criteria for student admittance, including a typical freshman profile. This profile was compared to the AVID participants' entry data, displayed in Table 2. Next, the five individual SDSU cases were compared using cross-case analysis.

The other three cases were situated at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD). After a discussion of the university context and a description of the typical freshman entry profile in 2002, the AVID participants were compared to the UCSD average student profile (see Table 5). These three cases are first presented as individual cases, then are analyzed using a second cross-case analysis.

Following the UCSD cross-case analysis, participants from the two institutions were compared in a final cross-case analysis, highlighting common themes and detailing

differences. A model, in the form of a chronological map (see Chapter 5, Figure 9), represents the distillation of the key themes into four factors that influenced these participants as they made their way through high school and into the second year of college.

The findings from this study highlight how these eight students described their college experiences with regard to their academic literacy challenges and cultural adjustments to college life. Through their stories, we can begin to understand the challenges they faced as beginning university students and their perceptions about which pre-college experiences have contributed to their college persistence. Their stories illuminate how underrepresented AVID program graduates negotiated the often complex and risky transition to college and how they have persisted there.

San Diego State University as Context

San Diego State University (SDSU) was founded in 1897 as a teacher training college, the San Diego Normal School. In 2003, undergraduate enrollment hovered around 26,800. The university is part of the California State University (CSU) system and is mandated to enroll approximately the top 30% of graduating high school seniors in the state. However, since San Diego State University is one of the oldest and most popular universities in the CSU system, it is flooded with many more student applicants than it has room to enroll. Consequently, the university has been raising the entrance criteria for freshman applicants over the last several years. SDSU is considered a “competitive” university based several criteria including: student selectivity, Master’s degree granting, and a median applicant SAT score between 1,000 and 1,100.

In addition to the entry criteria, two mandatory proficiency tests are administered to freshman who have not previously passed an English or mathematics Advanced Placement (AP) Test with a score of 3 or higher, or who have less than 550 on their SAT English and mathematics scores. For the freshman class of 2002, if students did not pass the English Placement Test (EPT) or the Entry Level Mathematics Test (ELM), they were required to take remedial courses during their first semester at SDSU for credit/no credit (see Table 2). Failure to pass these courses would result in dismissal from the university.

In the fall of 2002, 6,365 freshmen enrolled at SDSU. Sixty percent (3,840) were women and forty percent (2,525) men. By fall 2003, only 62% (3,964) of these students had sophomore status. SDSU has averaged a drop of 35% in enrollment between the freshman and sophomore classes during the last four years (*San Diego State University at a glance*, 2003). The average 2002 First-Time Freshman Academic Indicators at SDSU were a high school GPA of 3.43, and an average SAT score of 1053, with 67% of the freshmen proficient in English (passed the EPT) and 77% proficient in mathematics (passed the ELM).

The ethnic diversity in the fall SDSU freshman class of 2002 was made up of African American, 4.2%; American Indian, 0.7%; Asian, 7.2%; Filipino, 7.2%; Hispanic 19.1%, white 45.3% and not stated, 12.6%. Four of the participants at this study site were of Latino heritage and one was African American, reflective of the underrepresented population at SDSU.

Students currently have tuition costs of approximately \$1,250 per semester for full time undergraduate residents, although these fees are going up an anticipated 15% to 20%

in 2004 due to state budget cuts. All of the study participants came from low SES families and all but one worked to help support their college education costs.

SDSU has been under constant remodeling and construction for the last eight years, and a new trolley line is being installed that will conveniently link the campus to other San Diego locations. The school bustles with activity during the school day, but is almost deserted in the evenings, except for scattered night classes. On campus, students seem to be constantly in motion, quickly moving on their way to class or back to the parking lot. Typically SDSU students commute to school, as did all five participants in this study. The study participants also lived at home, and universally stated it was “in order to save money.”

SDSU Case Studies

By way of introduction to the study participants, Table 2 summarizes some of the background information about the five students attending SDSU as first-time freshmen in the fall of 2002. Archival records collected annually by the AVID regional office on the exiting seniors from each AVID high school program in San Diego County provided a portion of this information. This database is managed and maintained by the AVID Unit at the San Diego County Office of Education. The rest of the data came from the participants themselves during the interview and focus group sessions.

The charted information includes the participants' gender, unweighted high school GPA, numbers of AP classes taken, and combined SAT scores. Above average high school GPA's and SAT scores have been correlated with college persistence (Tinto, 1993). The second part of the chart indicates the participants living arrangements, their college major and their most recent cumulative college GPA.

The chart illustrates that all but one of the participants had not met the average academic entrance criteria for SDSU, with two significantly below. As the individual cases are explored, the skills and strategies these students brought into play from their pre-college experiences in AVID offer evidence for the program's impact on the students' ability to adjust culturally and to persist in college.

Table 2. Comparative Background Data for SDSU Participants

Name	Gender	HS GPA	# AP Classes Taken	Total SAT I Scores	Met Placement Exam Criteria (ELM, EPT)	Living at Home	Academic Major	College GPA: 1/ 2004
Serena	F	3.44	3	1250	Met both	Yes	Accounting	3.64
Sandra	F	2.75	0	770	*No	Yes	Psychology	2.14
José	M	2.91	1	980	*No	Yes	Criminal Justice	2.81
Angelica	F	3.10	2	790	*No	Yes	Social Work	2.43
Kendra	F	3.03	0	990	*Met math	Yes	Psychology (Art minor)	2.97

Note: ELM is the Entry Level Mathematics test. EPT is the English Placement Test. *Remedial coursework was required during the first semester of attendance in English, Mathematics or both.

Case Study 1: Serena - College Gives me Freedom

Family Influences. Serena, a very articulate and perceptive young woman, comes from a strong two-parent Latino family and was encouraged to pursue a college education to access those "good things" that her family didn't have, but wanted for her. Serena was unusual in that she got married at age 19, after one year of college. Her husband, a high school graduate, has been a strong positive influence and has supported her college

studies both financially and emotionally. Serena reflected on her family's experience with schooling and summarized her early childhood influences about learning.

Ever since I was very little my Dad's always been supportive. He didn't go to school. I think he dropped out when he was in the sixth grade. My mom didn't graduate from high school. He says, 'don't kill yourself doing hard labor if you don't have to, you know be smart, get an education, get us a house.' So it's like, I've always been motivated by that.

Although Serena's family wanted her to get to college they lacked the social and cultural capital to help her negotiate the educational system. She explained:

I guess they weren't really involved, as to know the difference between AP and other classes, but they were always really interested in me to make the decisions when they made sure I was in the top classes, according to them.

Serena's family provided a strong home literacy experience in their native Spanish language. Serena remembers how this early experience with reading, first in Spanish and then later in English, helped her become a voracious reader. Consequently, when she transitioned into more challenging high school courses, she continued to excel in English literature and writing.

My mom's always been a big reader. She likes to read, and they have the *Readers Digest* in Spanish, and my mom and my dad always read those. So I would see them lying around the house and I'd pick them up and look through them. And my mom saw me, and she said, 'do you want to learn how to read?' And I said, 'Oh yeah, let's start.' So she started teaching me. Spanish is actually very easy to

learn. Just because they don't have all those tricky silent e's and all that stuff, so how it looks is how it sounds.

Additional probing during our next interview about Serena's early literacy experiences gave an indication of how she saw herself as a learner and how excited she had been to master reading.

Ever since I learned to read, probably in first grade, I don't know, I learned first in Spanish and then I learned in English, but I loved it. And I've read; I used to consume books like they were gold. I remember my eighth grade year, I had a notebook where I'd write down every title and how many pages and a rating and I'd fill up pages and I was so happy and I loved to read. And what I noticed is it really helps in academics, in every area, in how you write, the vocabulary you use, your understanding of things, your knowledge.

Serena's intuitive grasp of the connection between reading and academic success has enabled her to leverage her literacy skills in the service of her educational and economic goals. For Serena, and her family, higher education has primarily a functional purpose. She was also stimulated by the intellectual richness in her classes, but decided that what she loves, literature, was not particularly practical now.

Preparing for College. Serena knew in middle school that she wanted to get to college. She was recommended for the AVID program in eighth grade. The focus of the program was on building skills, such as organization, time management, Cornell Note-taking, reading and writing instruction, fieldtrips and teacher advocacy. This program curriculum was designed to actively prepare underrepresented students to succeed in high school with the ultimate goal of attending a four-year college. Serena became gradually

aware in high school that she didn't have the enough of the necessary information to help her prepare for college and took the steps needed to fill that gap.

During my freshman year in AVID, I really didn't think it was helping me. It just felt kind of like it was busy work that I didn't need. And I think partly because they were placing the most emphasis on writing and they were doing all sorts of essays and you know, I just didn't feel that I needed help in that area because I was in Honors English Class and I was already getting so much help from my teacher who was wonderful and it just felt like it was added homework for nothing. So I dropped out. I went back my junior year because I started realizing that I didn't really know how to transition into college. I didn't know how to apply or where to apply and how to take the SAT test.

A common thread running through Serena's pre-college education is her feeling of being scared to challenge herself and having self-doubts about her abilities. During her AVID experience in high school she began to overcome this fear and began to take on more academic challenges. She surprised herself with her achievement, but credits Ms. H, her AVID teacher, with the constant encouragement to take more challenging coursework.

I don't think I've ever really stood out, so none of my other teachers really pushed me or anything, other than Ms. H. She did, because I remember junior year, I transferred into AVID again. So, I remember we were filling out our schedules for next year and I had my little humble list and she was like, 'Serena, I really think you should be taking some more advanced classes,' and I was like, Well, I'm taking two already so I don't really think I should do anymore. And she said, 'Go

through the list again and show it to me later.' So I did, I went back. I was looking and I said I suppose I could do it, yeah, okay. So then I made out my list and I had all AP classes and Honors and she said, 'okay, maybe not so much,' but then I was like, hey, I can do this. I just decided to.

During interviews, Serena repeatedly mentioned how she felt fearful about wanting to be in the most challenging classes, but not being sure she'd be welcome or adequately prepared. Her experience has been the opposite, and she seemed a little puzzled by her success. On some level she seemed to feel tacit barriers that were in the way of her accessing the academic capital she wanted to gain. Although she had excelled in English all during high school, when it came time to be in AP English, she had this to say:

I was really happy to get into AP English Lit Class because there was only two classes, so only sixty students who could in, out of all the ones that applied. I really didn't think I would in the end, because looking at the competition I was up against, I was kind of scared, but I did [get in], so I was really happy about that.

Serena remembered preparation for college during her senior year as being intense, exhausting and a little overwhelming. She made choices that limited and impacted her social life, but she was determined to get into college and felt that high school was a necessary, if somewhat trying experience.

My senior year was pretty hectic. I was taking a lot of AP classes. Every single class was either Honors or AP. So I didn't have time to be with my friends. You know, first of all, I was tired of high school. I was ready to get out of there by sophomore year.

When it came time for Serena to apply for colleges, she decided to apply for less competitive schools. Ms. H again intervened and demanded she take a risk.

So, she's encouraging me, 'Serena, you can make it; apply, apply,' so I applied [to UCSD] and then got in, it's like whoa. So then I wanted to go, but I think I wanted to go more to UCSD just for the prestige, for the name. Then I decided, what's more important the school or your major? So I decided to go to SDSU.

Transitioning to College. Serena felt that she belonged in college. She organized her schedule to be on campus three days a week, and at home the other two days. Since she lived in the north county area of San Diego, the commute was lengthy and congested. She received a renewable scholarship of \$1,000 per year for four years of study. The scholarship requirements included being a full-time student, maintaining a minimum of a 2.0 GPA and completing 25 hours of community service. Serena has not had to work since starting college and is financially supported by her husband. She has direct family support too from an older sister who is also attending SDSU.

As we spoke about her transition experiences, she said, "it was a really smooth transition. In fact, it was to me a better place than in high school." This statement resonated during our subsequent discussions about what it was like for her as a college freshman. She was most enthusiastic about the freedom that came with the college territory.

I felt really happy. I remember that the first day of school, I was going to meet my sister somewhere, I forget where. She was living on campus at the time and she was going to walk me to my first class and I was waiting for her on the bench and I was just thinking, wow, nobody knows me here. This is pretty cool. You could

just be yourself and not really care. I just felt kind of free. I did whatever I wanted to; I didn't worry about my appearance. I felt good.

As she remembered her first large lecture class, she found it to be different from high school, but not in any way frightening. In fact, she was energized by the differences and didn't feel overwhelmed by the size of the classes or the academic demands.

Interestingly, she mentions in passing that she didn't have many friends in high school. One of the choices she seemed to have made was to not put energy into the social high school scene, but rather to concentrate on academics as being an avenue of economic opportunity for her.

It was kind of strange to me because although I really didn't have friends in high school, it's like you knew people and you'd go to class and you'd talk to whoever's around you and it's small classrooms and I went here [SDSU] and my first class was actually a psychology course and it was a big hall and I was like, whoa, this is weird. There's all these people; I don't know anybody and plus I had to sit on the floor because it was so overcrowded.

Serena reflected on what she would want to let the AVID high school students know about college back at her school. She had this advice to give them:

Well, all my teachers always scared me that at college it's going to be so difficult and maybe that's a good scare tactic to keep you pushing, and I don't doubt that there's classes that are pretty difficult, but you know, so far, it's been kind of a smooth ride. I'd tell the [high school] students, you guys have a great schedule to look forward to. You know, you can go two days a week and that's it and have the

rest of the week to work on your homework. You have freedom. That's one of the best things to me, the schedule. Two days a week. Perfect.

One of her other realizations has been that along with the college freedom comes the opportunity to make choices about academic behavior. She made a careful cost-benefit analysis starting in her freshman year about where she should expend her academic energy. Serena's comment below reflects this philosophy, which she still follows.

So, here in college there's probably been quite a number of times I've decided to miss classes, like right now, you know but I like the idea that I don't have to, that if I don't show up I'm going to deal with consequences, you know. I still keep up with my work, I make sure I do all my homework. I go to the important classes. I just feel if I can do that, then I'm okay. So I like the ability to not show up if I can't or really don't feel like it. And I like the resources that are available here.

Serena did not express any negative transition experiences. She attributed her positive transition to tips from her college going sister, support from her husband, and having acquired the pre-college academic skills to perform well in her classes. One aspect of the transition experience that Serena didn't find necessary was the integration to campus life. She realized that her life away from school constituted her social base and that school for her represented a degree – academics for a purpose. However, Serena had struggled with what she might have missed, as evidenced by our discussion about this topic. She admitted,

You know that used to be a worry of mine. Because, I always wanted to live on campus. I just used to think well, if I don't it will just feel like I'm kinda just

passing by. I kinda feel like that. I'm just here for the academic experience. Get my degree and get out of here. But at the same time, I'm not closed off to making friendships or that kind of stuff, but I'm not really looking for it either.

Tinto (1975; 1987; 1993) would argue that lack of a significant social integration is correlated to a greater incidence of dropping out. However, Serena had found that as long as she had a strong social support group in the form of family and community activities, she did not require a social connection to campus life.

Persisting in College. In order to persist and thrive in college, students must develop an academic identity in which they seek out and develop behaviors that result in academic success. If this identity fails to develop, the result can be academic probation and possible dismissal or voluntary withdrawal from the university.

Serena demonstrated strong academic identity development beginning with her deliberate choice to nurture her academic development during the senior year of high school and to participate in AVID. She attributed the AVID program, and Ms. H, with giving her the push and encouragement to stay on track and challenge herself. This academic identity development continued to strengthen during her transition to college. By examining the types of academic behaviors Serena had chosen to practice, we can identify how these behaviors resulted in increasing her academic development and consequently, her persistence in college.

One cornerstone practice taught in the AVID program is Cornell style note-taking. This note style is used to help students record important text or lecture information on the right hand side of the paper, and to write questions on the left side for later review and study. Serena articulated her note-taking habits this way:

Yeah, I still use the Cornell Notes. I changed it up a bit just because some of the teachers kind of expect you to do it their way or because that's how they take their notes on the board. It's kind of easier that way. But for the most part, I've kept the format. I don't know how other students really take their notes. I just know that I feel organized so that even if you looked inside my backpack it would be pretty messy but at the same time, okay, here, here are my notes. And it helps me to study for my tests.

Another way for students to connect academically is to make contact with their professors. Serena had more problems with this, although she knew that it was important to make an effort. She rationalized that if she wasn't having academic difficulty in the class, she did not need to spend time getting to know the professor or meeting professors during office hours. In our interviews she talked about making a connection with teachers in smaller sections and reflecting that the professors' behavior had a direct impact on whether she was willing to engage with them or not.

I felt like each and every time I did it, they still didn't know who I was, so it was kind of strange to me, though often teachers made it a point to [relate] just because of the size of the class or their demeanor towards other students. You could kind of tell who was going to be receptive to you. So I remember my World Religion professor; I made it a point to kind of keep up a relationship with her. She was just eccentric. And I can't really think of any others, so unless they were really small classes, I really didn't [make contact with the professor].

One way to connect academically is with the instructor, another is to form and participate in study groups. In AVID, Serena was in study groups twice a week with a

college tutor. During this tutorial time, she brought questions to the group and they shared questions and took turns working with each other's material. When Serena arrived on campus, she was slow to either initiate or join study groups. One reason for this was her schedule. She was on campus two days for classes only. Another reason was that she didn't feel like she needed extra help and was making As or Bs in her all classes freshman year. As we explored this topic, Serena talked about how she likes to work on projects.

You know, I'm really not one of the students who works really well on a group project, although I will get it done and I do cooperate and everything. I remember Communications. That was my first small class after all of these Halls and that teacher was great. She was like one of us. She was a graduate student. She was fun. So we had to do a lot of group projects in that class. So while I do work better independently, I'll do okay if I have to work with groups.

However, once Serena began taking some more challenging courses as an accounting major, she found that study groups, initially formed by the professor in class, persisted outside of class and became a bi-weekly routine.

I do [study groups] for accounting. So I don't really ever do that [be in study groups] unless I need it. I've tried study groups before and what it ends up being is talking or talking bad about the teacher or the professor, I always call them 'teachers', and talking bad about the course so it just wasn't helpful to me. But in Accounting it's good. It's great. We've met probably every other week. One of the girls in my class said, you know we should get together, the midterm's right around the corner, and I'm going, all right, I guess we could. But I did it more to

help her because she was having a lot of trouble in class. I find that when I explain to her the work, I kind of double learn it myself.

Serena expressed very clear academic goals for herself. Due to her AP coursework in high school, she entered SDSU with credits equivalent to a second semester freshman. She has continued to take a full load, and plans on picking up some additional courses during the summer. She's sure she'll have her degree at least a semester, if not a year, early. As we discussed her future plans, she indicated strong determination, along with some confusion about her options. Serena said,

My friend was talking about getting her masters. But I didn't realize if accounting has that or not. I'm pretty sure they do. I don't know. So, if there is such a thing I'll be going through that. Right. Maybe, or maybe I'll just be done period and start building my clientele. Hopefully we'll have a home by then or be working towards it.

For Serena and her husband, economic stability is of great importance. She has decided meeting her financial goals has priority over doing what she might love. She is intent on increasing her social and cultural capital to pass on to her children. She expressed it succinctly in this way:

From him [her husband] I learned the whole idea that for now, do something that will pay your bills, do something that will [get you] ahead in life and then do what you love. So I've been thinking about that. I agree with it. I just decided that was true and I wasn't going to go into that field [counseling] so from there I started looking into high paying jobs.

At the end of our second interview, I asked Serena to imagine what her graduation from college would be like and who would be there. She laughed and told me:

My aunt and uncle would say, 'Oh we always knew you'd do it.' My cousin would say, 'I love you so much.' She feels I'm living out her dreams. And my immediate family's always been very closed and not so open with their emotions. But I can just tell when my Dad's proud of me. And my husband, he's just always there supporting me, so I know he'd be very happy. Our family would probably go crazy and buy me all sorts of silly stuff. Try to embarrass me.

Summary. In Figure 1 a code map visually highlights the critical categories identified in Serena's case from the interview and focus group transcript data. The number of times a category was coded represents its relative frequency of occurrence and is indicated in parentheses below the dominant coding categories that emerged from her interviews.

The concept map highlights the importance of Serena's family relationships, including those with her new husband. His support, both financial and emotional, Serena reported as being critical to her ability to attend to college without having to work, unlike many of her peers.

Serena made very deliberate decisions about her education and life direction. She was animated about her goals and future plans. She chose AVID as a vehicle to help her get into college and valued certain aspects of the program, especially the timely information and sequential steps necessary for getting into college. Some of the AVID academic elements she found redundant and unnecessary, although she acknowledged its value for others. Serena's strong personal relationship with her AVID teacher, Ms. H.,

helped her take academic risks and excel. She was admitted to UCSD out of high school, but did career research in her AVID class senior year and decided to go to SDSU for their Business major.

Serena showed evidence of being a strong student, an independent learner, and a strategic reader and writer. She adapted study strategies learned in AVID to meet the difficulty of her college classes. She loved the freedom of the college schedule and had no significant transition issues. Her experience in AP classes her senior year helped Serena develop more sophisticated literacy skills. She happily announced during the second interview that she had earned “All As, a 4.0” fall semester of her sophomore year.

However, she had chosen to not be part of the SDSU community. Serena wanted a useful and economically viable college education and took care of her social needs off-campus with her husband, family, church and community friends.

Figure 1. Serena's Case Study Code Map

Case Study 2: Sandra- I'd Do Anything for AVID

Sandra and I first met over a cup of Starbucks' coffee near her home in the northeastern part of San Diego. Sandra's serious nature was immediately apparent from her penetrating black eyes and her direct manner. Her willingness to engage allowed us to have an intense first interview and she was not hesitant about sharing both her personal and academic concerns. She was enthusiastic about being in the study and let me know that AVID had been a very important part of her life. Sandra announced immediately, "I'd do anything for AVID." She had brought along a binder of her writing and wanted to share it with me so we could discuss it during the second interview. In Sandra's AVID Exhibition Portfolio, she had highlighted in several short essays and poems about her high school experiences and her academic goals for the future. I was impressed by her openness and willingness to discuss recent episodes of depression and the feelings of persistent loneliness she had experienced as the first in her family to attend college.

Family Influences. Sandra introduced me to her family situation by talking about her house, mother and two sisters. Her parents are divorced, but she has stayed in close contact with her father and her extended family.

Well, we live in a house with three other females. We all are at different levels in our lives. If there was four levels [of behavior] we'd have all four. We'd all have our own level. My little sister's thirteen -- she's the miss know-it-all, my older sister's got a boyfriend here, boyfriend there. And my mom's just starting to go out and date and I'm like schoolwork, schoolwork.

Sandra felt she had been left to figure out navigating college on her own. As the first in her family to go to a university, she's been trying to deal with issues such as

selecting classes, academic concerns and lack of a social support network at SDSU.

Sandra wanted to feel connected and supported, since this had been the most nurturing part of her experience in the AVID program at her suburban upper middle class high school. She told me:

I would like to have a lot more college connections just because I want somebody close to me that knows what boat I'm in. A lot of people that I'm a close to don't relate - they can't relate with me about things like that because no one in my family has gone to college. And all of them just think that it's fun. But it's very lonely. It's very lonely. And I'm the first one in my family to go to college. So it was a big thing for the family and I'm not gonna fail.

Sandra's mother has had a strong influence on her choices, beliefs and values.

Sandra is anxious to please and to demonstrate academic success so that her mother, and her family, will be proud of her. However, her family could not give her the knowledge base about how to get into college. Sandra turned to her AVID teacher to help supply the missing information or social capital.

My mom was very, very, very strong. Not very strict- but a strong person. Like if I did something disappointing, the first consequence for me would be getting lectured or her being disappointed. It would really get to me, just as much as a slap across the face, so I think that AVID played probably the only role in you know turning me around and getting me into the academic scene.

Sandra has been very dependent on her mother's guidance and support, but has found that she is moving into territory that her mother can't help her with. This has been a source of anxiety and stress for Sandra. However, Sandra's mom began dating a high

school counselor and he has recently been a resource for Sandra about some of her college decisions, schedules and coping strategies. She related this about his advice during our second interview.

He's like, you need to realize that nobody you know is in your pool. Nobody you know has been where you are. And so when you talk to your mom and she wants to give you advice, she's doing the best she can.

Much of our conversation during the first interview, which took place toward the end of Fall semester 2003, centered on how she felt overwhelmed by having to address college issues on her own. This excerpt of our interview captures her anxiety and struggle that began during her freshman year and has continued.

The big thing for me was having be something out of the ordinary, or something like that, because the college thing doesn't really fit into my family either.

Nobody in my family has gone to college, and none of my friends really have had much interest in college except for my AVID friends. And even those people aren't my closest friends. Towards senior year they started to become better friends because I started to get more into the academic scene.

In spite of the fact that her college academic journey has not been a smooth transition, she has maintained a consistent determination to persist, this is reflected in the passage below.

I didn't think about dropping out because I have so many people cheering in my corner that it's like there's no way that I could do that. And as long as I have the financial support and I have the support of my family going to school. I mean why not take a few more years? You know what I mean? If I get to pick my pace, I'm

going to and it may be slower this semester, and it may be really fast next semester. But as of right now this is what I need. And yeah, Mom may be disappointed that I'm not taking a full load of units.

Preparing for College. An influential counselor, who recommended her for the program, introduced Sandra to AVID in middle school. Sandra related how getting into AVID began to change her perceptions of herself and her future goals.

In middle school I wanted to be the outcast, I wanted to be the little Mexican girl that wore dark pink makeup and sad baggy clothes; wore my hair really high and big hoop earrings and acted like this little home girl. I did really bad in middle school. I remember them telling me that I may not graduate middle school.

Middle school! You don't really hear about not graduating middle school. Ms. M, she was my counselor in middle school, she introduced me to the AVID program and I heard about it through some of my friends as well. I think that if I wasn't in AVID things probably wouldn't [have] got turned around as dramatically.

Sandra stayed in AVID all through high school and found a dynamic advocate and friend in her Latina AVID teacher, Ms. Z. At first, during Sandra's freshman and sophomore high school years, she didn't understand how the program would help her. Sandra felt that her AVID teacher was conspiring with other teachers to keep track of the AVID students.

Well I think when I was still not very mature, I was feeling AVID is teaming up, you know? But now in hindsight, I see that it was definitely to my advantage. I mean they were pretty much holding us in, so none of us would get out, you know? And it wasn't unless somebody did something really, really bad, or really,

really showed that they didn't want to be in [AVID] with [low] grades that they would get kicked out.

As Sandra continued in the program she formed a more personal relationship with Ms. Z. Sandra also expressed how she had felt marginalized at the large, predominantly white, upper middle class high school. In the AVID classroom Sandra felt she belonged and had found a safe space to nurture her social and academic side.

That [AVID class] pretty much became my spot, I mean I wasn't outside the classroom anymore. You know in the classroom, in the AVID classroom, this is a comfort area, but my home here at school was over here with my other friends.

But to me you know, as the years went by AVID became my home.

Due to the expectations of the AVID program, and her intense relationship with Ms. Z., Sandra was pushed to take more academic risks by taking AP classes. Her senior year she enrolled in AP History. Through her reflections on this stressful and painful experience, we can get a glimpse of how Sandra has negotiated her subsequent academic challenges.

AVID kids are supposed to challenge themselves, you know. But you know I figured out later on that that wasn't my path. But I figured out before it was too late that this AP history course - I'm not a history person. I was in there for a week and really tried to listen to everything that teacher said, I really tried to do the Cornell notes. I wasn't goofing off and I was really trying. Because I knew this was an AP course and it was my first AP course and I really wanted to do good. And you know, he [the teacher] was just throwing out all these words that I didn't know the meaning of. I looked around and I was like these people know the

meaning of these words, and I don't. But it was scary for me. And I remember him talking about things that he automatically assumed all of us knew. So here I am jumping into the middle when I don't know the beginning. How are you going to understand the ending of the movie if you didn't see the beginning?

Sandra continued relating her negative feelings and memories about this experience during both interviews. In the second interview she added more depth to the incident.

And she [Ms. Z] was kind of mad at me that I had dropped that class. She wanted colleges to see AP on my transcript. So did I, but I wanted them to see an AP with an A or a B, not an AP with an F or a D. I did feel disappointed in myself and I did feel a little down and I did feel discouraged like I was comparing myself to these other kids and I wasn't comparing very well. And you know with the AP class I did try and stick it out for a few weeks. I did try to do the AP summer project and turned it in and I was so proud myself because I finished it. Then, I didn't get a good grade on it. Ms. Z pushed a lot of us [in AVID] to take AP courses and honors courses and things like that. And I think everybody in AVID, except for two people didn't end up [in AP] and one of those people is me. For a long time I felt pretty like embarrassed about it, like I wouldn't talk about it. And I just wouldn't say anything so people wouldn't know that I wasn't in an AP class. Because I didn't want to stick out.

Sandra told me how she has come to terms with this experience and has attempted to nurture her own academic identity by discovering how she needs to learn and under

what conditions. Due to this high school experience, she has been able to find more inner resilience with the academic challenges she's faced at SDSU.

Well, at the time I was just beating myself up about it, because I was one of the two you know? I was being compared to everybody else, and I wasn't everybody else. But in hindsight, I figured out it was the right thing for me to do. I talked to Ms Z. about it. I'm really glad that I made that choice, I felt like it was the best thing for me.

One of the many ways Ms. Z advocated for her AVID students was in arranging their course schedules. Sandra felt comforted by knowing that someone who 'knew' how to get her into the right classes and meet the college entrance requirements was intently working for her benefit. Sandra talked about how the AVID students were placed in classes, providing evidence of how AVID forged social and cultural capital for students who did not possess the white middle-class insider know-how.

When it came down to scheduling classes she met with a hundred of us, individually and did our classes with us. She had very good ties with the counselors and they were all very fond of her and of the program. They all supported it a hundred percent, so it worked out. She had her little chart right there, and our appointments would last about five-ten minutes. She'd sit down and check each thing off. Like okay you have this, but you don't have this, okay you need two years of this, so what do you want to take? Hurry. And we got all of our requirements. So it worked out, and if there wasn't enough room, that's when she'd call the counselor and say I have an AVID student, you know stress that, and it worked.

One of the other ways that AVID impacted Sandra's academic identity development was from the types of assignments she was given. These assignments helped develop her academic vocabulary and reading skills, but one of the most memorable for Sandra was very personal since she learned more about who she was and how she acted in the world. Sandra said,

We did have an assignment called 'Who am I?' And we had to read it to the class who you are, and which roles you play in your life. I'm a sister, I'm a student, I'm a this I'm a that. Really when you get to sit down and like think about yourself, and I remember everybody in the class was just so happy with that assignment, we were all excited to present our own. You get to figure out all the titles of your individuality. And it does help. I'm a failure when it comes to mathematics. And then it helps you schedule the mathematics class. So it did help and I didn't even remember about that until now, but I definitely think that going through the route of finding out who you are, will definitely help you on your path.

Sandra returned to how she has come to understand the role that Ms. Z has played in her life. It has been one of immense importance, and one that Sandra missed now that she had assumed a somewhat shaky responsibility for her own self-advocacy. Sandra reflected on the role Ms. Z had played in her life by saying,

I kind of feel like she was the reason we crossed paths in life – it was for her to get me to college. I don't think that she was put in my life to get me through college.

Transitioning to College. Sandra gradually realized through information gained in AVID that she had options for college. Her original plan was to save money and attend a

local community college. Under the constant barrage of “going to a four-year college,” information about scholarships, former AVID students coming back from college as guest speakers, and class requirements set by Ms. Z., Sandra applied to SDSU through the Educational Opportunities Program (EOP). She also applied for and was awarded an AVID scholarship, renewable yearly for four years. Although her SAT scores were low, 770, and her transfer high school GPA, 2.75, was below the SDSU average, she was still admitted. This was an incredible boost to her developing academic identity and she was elated when her acceptance letter arrived. Sandra quickly found out that in spite of the euphoria of getting in, there were hidden barriers she had to navigate alone. One area that troubled her from the beginning was feeling that others knew more than she did and that she was at a disadvantage in multiple ways. In other words, she lacked social and cultural capital about actually going to college. When asked about trying to make connections with other students she said, “You know I’m sure that there is an easy way. I just don’t know about it.” Sandra did approach her isolation problem with some positive thinking though. She shared,

So, I think it was the fact that I knew it was gonna get better as long as I started getting more familiar with the college and starting meeting new people and building a foundation like I hadn’t in [high school]. I just haven’t been informed. And you know I tried my freshman year, my first semester, doing the freshman success class. And I kind of felt like that was a little bit of connection in there but again that was over the first semester and it was like good-bye everybody. Yeah, so as far as meeting people it’s kind of like if it happens it happens. I mean I don’t

find it that easy to make friends in a class when you're sitting there and you're trying to learn. So what are you gonna do?

As an EOP student, Sandra used some of their services, but in comparison to her AVID experience, she found the tutors and program distant and minimally helpful.

Yeah, I don't really take too much advantage of EOP, so I really haven't met that many people in EOP yet. My EOP counselor, I've seen her, I think, three times and every time I've left feeling more confused than when I went in there.

Although hesitant to criticize at first, Sandra compared EOP to her high school AVID program and pinpointed changes in AVID that could help others like her make a better college transition.

If I could only say one slightly negative thing about [AVID] and that is once you graduate you're just pushed off and it's like where is everybody? You know where's that foundation, that base that I go back to. I'm not used to being at school and not having that foundation. And it was kind of scary, and I'm still trying to build a foundation. I'm still trying to build a friendship with a variety of friends.

Another area of transition anxiety and insecurity involved taking the required remedial classes to clear her failure to pass the required ELM and EPT placement tests. She again felt marginalized by the academic experience and expressed how it made her feel.

I guess I kind of felt some fear and you know uncertainty, some discomfort from feeling like I'm different from these people and I'm not at the same level as them. And I didn't pass this test and things like that. So I was put into these remedial classes and the classes ended up being credit no credit classes. So that put me

behind in credits. Now that I look back at my first full year that was actually a lot of credits that I missed out on- pretty much like a full semester.

One of Sandra's goals has been to become part of the college campus by living nearby. She failed to become socially integrated (Tinto, 1993) during her first year. She explored some alternative living arrangements, but didn't have a way to mediate finding a place or the means to assume the financial burden. She has continued to explore ways to move away from home and become more connected to college life, but her lack of confidence is evident from the following interview excerpt.

It is hard. And I looked into the dorms and I just kind of feel like that's not me. And you know I've been trying to get out on my own and live by campus and things like that but I just I kind of feel like I'm just kind of floating around right now just trying to feel out exactly what I want to do before I make a specific decision.

Academically, Sandra did bring to the university a set of study skills she'd learned in AVID. Frequent admonitions for AVID students' classroom behavior include sitting in the front of a class, making contact with the professors, asking questions, forming study groups and taking Cornell style notes. Sandra mused over how she'd used these skills to her advantage during her first year at SDSU.

I can't believe I'm saying this, but you know she [Ms. Z] was right. You do get more acknowledgment when you're in the front and you do retain more information, and you do find it harder to daydream or sleep, when you're right there, yeah, when you're right there in the front. I walked in that classroom and I saw how big it was, the little phrase in the back of my head you're just a number

you know in here. So I wanted it to be like you're a number and a face if you sit in the front. So, it was huge stadium seating and I sat probably like the third or fourth row in the middle.

Sandra also developed a strategy to make contact with her professors and at the same time hide her feelings of insecurity and maintain personal distance. During this interview she revealed an intense desire to learn more deeply and to develop her own academic capital.

I am very fond of email. Emailing the teachers is a big thing for me. I'm the person in class that's always trying to find something to say just to email them so they know who I am. And I usually keep up with them through email even if I understand the lecture that day. I'll still write them a question just so that they know I'm involved. And also I kind of find it more, a little bit more helpful if I research and find the answer myself, you know? Because I'm interested in what's the answer gonna be. So it's not like it's a question on a homework assignment it's like this is my own question and I want to find out what the answer is.

Another characteristic of AVID classrooms is the bi-weekly study groups.

Because she had difficulty making personal connections with others on campus, Sandra became frustrated by her lack of involvement with other students.

You know, I haven't experienced [study groups] yet. In high school I was big on study groups. And in college I know that there are study groups that form in my classes. I guess I'm a little intimidated and timid to put myself out there and be like, 'Hey, can I come?' I'm actually a little bit more reserved and I just kind of

stick to myself when I'm not too familiar with what's going on. And I still kind of feel like I'm not too familiar with what's going on at San Diego State.

However, Sandra utilized her note-taking skills learned back in her middle school AVID class.

I still take Cornell notes, and I'm in my second year of college. I don't have to but I do and it helps me. It's color-coding, and it's all Cornell notes. And even if I go back later and I'm writing in questions that go to the answer I already wrote, I still find it helpful because I can sit there and think during a test this is similar to the question that I made up. And relate it and it corresponds with the notes that I took so I can remember and kind of link back to those things. So I was always a huge fan of the Cornell notes.

Some of Sandra's academic behaviors have not been so well developed and have not brought her the high grades she'd like to be getting. She has resisted doing the required reading and felt that going to lectures and skimming the material was enough. Her discrepant statements show some internal debate about doing what she knows she should be doing rather than taking an easier path.

I'm a big fan of the speed-reading. It's all right you know. I don't need to read it. But it is a lot of reading, like people say and you know going into college I really don't like to read things that people force me to read. I like to read things that interest me, that I picked out. And you know in high school- I'll tell you the truth - I mean I read probably three out of five books that we were assigned. You know, I did the Cliff Notes.

During our second interview session, Sandra began explaining the origin of her feeling marginalized as a Latina and a SDSU student. She revealed some disturbing self-doubts about her right to be at SDSU. It may be that this feeling of displacement has indirectly contributed to her lack of social integration on the campus.

Well, as bad as this sounds, for a long time I wanted to find a reason why I got into San Diego State. It wasn't because of my academic success, I didn't want to believe that, I wanted to think that I'm just fulfilling the quota. You know, you have to have so many Mexican-Americans here and I'm filling that spot. You know, I just really wasn't trying to give myself all the credit for it when really I mean San Diego State's a great school - they've been picky here. I think I talked about this a little bit, like I didn't really feel like I was supposed to be here. I didn't feel like this was my place. Felt like this was everybody else's place, but not mine. Because I didn't think that I was able to make it here. I know it has a lot to do with confidence. And I think my confidence level goes up and down according to what we're talking about.

The initial college transition and adjustment experience has been bumpy for Sandra. She has been struggling with finding her academic identity and locating her rightful place at SDSU. Self-doubt, while maintaining high goals, have clashed to create a situation that Sandra finds stressful and anxiety filled. In the next section, I explore what strategies she has used to persist into her sophomore year and what barriers still lie ahead.

Persisting in College. Sandra had taken remedial classes her first semester, which she found to be basically a review of high school coursework and a few other classes recommended by the EOP program. Her GPA for the first semester was a 3.0. The next

semester she took two general education courses and continued with psychology, which she has identified as her major, earning a 2.35 GPA. After some major academic setbacks during her third semester, including an F and three incompletes, her cumulative GPA is now a 2.14. If her GPA dips below a 2.0 or she does not enroll as a full time student, her scholarship will be cancelled. Further complicating her schedule, she's found it necessary to work as a financial clerk at a local hospital five days a week from six in the morning until one in the afternoon. As her coursework has gotten more challenging, and her grades have dropped, Sandra has had to re-examine her study behaviors and routine. She stated her deepening concern over not keeping up with the academic demands in this way,

And so I feel like I'm getting this "C" but I'm not really understanding it [the subject] very well. And I feel like I want to understand it more than that because I think about being in the employment world and being employed by somebody.

What if I don't know? And that scares me.

Sandra recognized her own contribution to the academic consequences she experienced by sharing what strategies she was using to keep on top of the workload.

I still don't sit down and read the whole chapter like I'm supposed to. I do take billions of notes in class, Cornell and everything but...I'm not really going over them until I need to. It's not making me fail but I know for a fact that if I did go over those things and read more or whatever I'd see better results. I think I'm just overloaded right now. I'm trying to do it all. Yeah, I can't mess around. Three hours I was just right here [in the library] and normally I would be like bored you know like I'm ready to be done with this now.

She also learned from another student this semester about going on line to find out about teachers before selecting her classes. "So I went onto Rate the Professor.com website and got a different teacher. It's actually been a lot better." By assuming more responsibility for her academic choices, Sandra evidenced the ways she had begun to adapt to the college system's tacit cultural practices.

Sandra had internalized some, but not all, of the AVID study strategies she learned in middle and high school. She reflected on her reasons for only using a few strategies, and indicated her growing sense of frustration with the gap between what had worked for her academically in high school no longer was adequate for college.

As far as AVID strategies, I guess I pick and choose when it comes to that, because you know some of the things don't really fit with me. But I guess I really struggle and stress about trying to find the best thing for me. Then once I do make the decision of what it is, I'm fine with it after that and I stick with it. What was good in high school because I needed that to get me here, it's not necessarily good for me now, because I'm already here.

Sandra's feelings of loneliness have continued. She mentioned how she goes to the library, her favorite study place but, "I am here [at SDSU] quite a bit, just in my own little cubicle." From her perspective as a sophomore, Sandra was disappointed by the limited lack of social connections with other SDSU students. This sentiment surfaced many times during our interviews and had not been resolved. However, in spite of her obvious distress and loneliness, Sandra maintained she was determined to "get my degree."

You know my first year went better than my second year is going. Just because I did meet more people but I kind of lost track of them after the semester was over, we all went to our own classes and that was it. I'm struggling with depression and anxiety, and a lot of it does come from school, like driving to school by myself and getting out and going a whole day without talking to somebody.

Her other encounters with the college system have also been less than optimal. When Sandra was getting ready to sign up for the second semester of her sophomore year, she was faced with seemingly traumatic choices about the schedule she wanted to have and the one that was available to her. Again, Sandra indicated that she felt unprepared and lacked the confidence to make the course selections on her own. She solved her dilemma by finding a family friend to guide her actions.

I was stuck, it was during class time and I was missing the first two days. Finally it came down to February second, and I didn't know what to do. These people still haven't gotten back to me and I don't know if I should drop this class or not. I was still trying to figure it out. And I got very, very overwhelmed. I was here at school, I knew I had until 6:00 p.m., I waited until the last minute. I was just stressed out. I didn't know what to do. And my automatic instinct was, call my mom. I call her, tell her the situation, see what she tells me to do, and I go no, I can't do that! And I don't want to listen her advice, I want her to give me the answer and when she gives me the answer I don't think that it's the right one. There's a line all the way outside the registrar's office. All the way outside the advising office, what am I gonna do? So I started freaking out like it was gonna be the end of the world. Really it's not- maybe I'll have a bad schedule this

semester. It's not the end of the world, I won't have a bad semester next semester.

I'll figure it out. So I called [her mother's boyfriend] up, and I said to him, I feel like if someone can classify the hardest way to go through college then I'm doing it that way.

Her mother's boyfriend, Mr. M., is a high school counselor and he helped Sandra resolve her scheduling issues over the telephone. She decided to pick up a night class she couldn't get at SDSU at the local community college and to retake the statistics class next semester. Her negative experience negotiating the college course registration system set her back, but she struggled to navigate it and realized that she was causing some of her own distress by emotionally reacting to the situation.

Shared coursework is the one common thread Sandra has linking her to a like-minded student group at SDSU. Sandra has found an academic home in the psychology department, which has given her an cautious sense of intellectual belonging.

I feel like I'm all good in the psychology department. And it's pretty much the only class that I'm really excited to go to everyday and not feel like I'm just sitting here listening to somebody.

She has focused on becoming increasingly participatory in class and has begun to ask professors questions from her front row seat. She has found her confidence as a learner emerging and is coming to terms with her "right" to be at SDSU.

I'm usually the type to be to get intimidated a little bit more quickly than other people. But I've noticed that if I'm in class and I don't understand something I probably am not gonna have a chance to ask again. If I'm not getting it when she's teaching it to me I'm probably not gonna get it reading the book you know? I

mean we're all different. And I don't think that I realized that until I got to college.

And my place is just as valid as anybody else's.

In our second interview, Sandra shared how she saw her next few semesters unfolding. She admitted to being overwhelmed and frequently exhausted, but focused on her end goal. Sandra said,

I have a lot of goals right now that I'm looking at. And to stop working that's not gonna get me to my goal of moving out, or to lower my class load isn't going to get me to my goal of graduation. So I'm trying to spread it out and do it all, but...by the end of the day, I'm coming home, and I'm home by like 10:00 at night sometimes. And I'm ready to take a shower and go to bed. But if I get to pick my pace I'm going to and it may be slower this semester, and it may be really fast next semester. But as of right now, this is what I need. I would rather take less classes and do well than stress myself out and take these classes and have to redo them, or not get my education by not concentrating, or focusing. I'm paying a lot of money to come here and I want to learn this stuff.

Summary. Sandra's case is summarized in Figure 2 through a concept map that visually displays the key categories from the interview data. The number in parentheses below the dominant codes, indicated the relative frequency of occurrence. Sandra had a number of conflicting elements that are apparent on her code map. For instance, although she reported evidence of academic identity development, she also spent limited time doing the required reading and study for her courses. The AVID program contributed to her attending college, but she had not successfully replaced her comfortable AVID social

network with new ones, which were necessary to make a good adjustment to the college environment.

Sandra's extended family strongly supported her efforts to get ready for and to stay in college with financial resources and emotional encouragement. Additionally, the AVID program had a big impact on Sandra's life. She attributed AVID with "ninety plus percent" of the reason she was able to get into SDSU. AVID acted as a social and academic "safe home" during her four years of high school. Her AVID teacher was both a demanding coach and a friend who encouraged Sandra to take on academic challenges and to stretch herself. Through the program she learned study strategies and skills that she continued to utilize, although selectively.

Sandra repeatedly emphasized that she was motivated and determined to succeed in college, but did not feel truly a part of the SDSU community. Sandra's concern and reported depression over her lack of connection to the social environment at SDSU may also have a negative effect on her academic standing. She reported being unable to make connections with other students. Sandra, perplexed by trying to find out "what other people knew," and felt excluded from the SDSU community. She wanted to feel she belonged – as she belonged in the AVID program. One solution she wanted to explore was to move away from home and live close to campus. She was engaged in negotiations with family members to help her financially and had agreed to contribute more to her own independent living arrangements. For this reason, she found a clerical job and doubled her work hours to 30 per week, further minimizing the time available for study.

Sandra's first three semesters in college have been academically and socially difficult. Sandra claimed that learning content was important to her. She said she wanted

to understand the coursework deeply, and realized she required more time to learn material. Nevertheless, she consistently had skipped the required reading, had not used study groups, and minimally attempted to receive academic help from the EOP program. Her failure to use the suite of AVID strategies she had practiced for five years was troubling. The combination of inconsistent study habits, course failure and incompletes put her continuation at SDUS in jeopardy. The 2004 spring semester will be a significant one for Sandra. Two adjectives describe Sandra's predominant traits: anxious and cautious. Her ability to persist at SDSU will be influenced to the degree that her caution and anxiety keep her from committing her full attention to academic success.

Figure 2. Sandra's Case Study Code Map

Case Study 3: José- The Straight Arrow for College

At our first meeting José impressed me his big smile and with his ability to succinctly express how his life had been shaped by his family experiences and his Latino heritage. His physical stature was also impressive. He towered over me at six and a half feet, and weighing approximately 280 pounds, and had a face accented by long spiky black hair and a ragged four-inch beard. José articulated all his statements with a characteristic Latino cadence while using dramatic chopping hand motions to emphasize his definite opinions. Throughout our interviews, José willingly answered questions about his life and emphasized repeatedly how important having a work ethic and being part of his Latino community was to him. He was working as an AVID tutor at the same high school he attended and had been a role model for students who share his background. After growing up in a town only a few miles from the Mexican border, and examining all his options, José made calculated choices to create a reality with a different economic and intellectual future than his immigrant Mexican grandparents.

Family Influences. José introduced me to his family by saying, “I have one brother and a sister. He's 23 and she's around 25. He goes to San Diego State and my sister, she doesn't go to school at all.” José related in our first interview the importance of hard work to his family and how he was involved at an early age in helping the family make it financially.

Since I was around four years old, I had been working. My father, when he came over here to the United States, he was a peasant working here in the fields in San Diego County, along with his family, so since I was youngest I was always thinking about how to work hard, how to be that confident, how to work for

something that you deserve. My whole family was taught how to be ethical, how to work hard for what you get.

José, after a long pause and a few pulls on his scraggly beard, began thoughtfully to describe more of his family history. He said,

And so my grandfather has a ranch with vegetables that I worked in. And basically seeing that working hard and aching and being with sores and being sunburned, you know, that made me think, would I rather be working in the fields or working in a nice office? And that's the difference. That had that much impact on my life.

José lucidly identified his driving ambition to “get my degree.” thereby gaining social and cultural capital as a way of accessing financial security and a “better” life than his extended family. Part of José’s family value system included a strong inter-generational support network, tempered with respect for individual choices. José described how he deliberately planned his courses in high school; a strategy he also applied to his college choices.

See what happens they [parents] said, do what you can but do it for yourself.

Don't do it for us. Don't do it for your brother or your sister. You have to do it for yourself because they can't do it. When we pass on, you don't want to get left off and be a burden. So basically they just...left everything up to myself. If you ever need help, if you need help we're here, but please try to get it for yourself. And since we were little I thought do this, do that, do that. But basically do it for yourself. Don't do it for anyone else.

Preparing for College. José enrolled in the AVID program his freshman year in high school, continuing the program from middle school. He attended a big high school in the southern part of San Diego County with a large Latino population and the highest transient rates and the lowest achievement rates in the district. José, who had been enrolled in some advanced classes in middle school, expected to be challenged in high school. However, José's academic life took a downward turn when he entered high school.

Well, when I went to the middle school and was in transition from middle school to high school, I wanted Honor classes to start at a certain curriculum so I can get to the university and basically when I got there [the HS] the counselor didn't give it to me. Just gave me stupid reading classes, English classes, PE...those classes didn't challenge me. I felt discouraged. So basically I took it as it came. I got B's, I got A's, I got in trouble, got referrals and I didn't care. [I blame] the system because when I first came in you know what, where's my honors classes? Where's my Honors History? Where's my Algebra I? Where's this? Where's that? And I went up to the counselor and they just didn't give me [the classes]. So basically, it's a useless fight so I just stayed in classes and didn't even care about it. I went late to classes. [I'd] throw stuff at my teachers. I was basically like that angry person, it reflected upon me.

A new principal, given the job of turning the school around, became instrumental in demanding that the counselors change the routine policy of low expectations, and in conjunction with the AVID teacher, got José into the challenging courses he had been excluded from. José's sense of anger and frustration over his "wasted time" was intensely

evident and came up during both interview sessions. He recounted the event sequence in this way:

He [the principal] came into my English class and me and my friends – we came from a low socioeconomic community and like we're tough or we're in gangs or just scary. The teacher was giving us the curricula and we read a book for four or three months but me and my friends finished the book in about three weeks. So we did the work and so we get another book and we did extra work and she still gave us a bad grade. So he came in and he saw me being discouraged and said 'Are you being challenged?' I said, 'No.' So he put me into Honor classes and I passed out of it with the highest grade ever...A+ and all of a sudden [I was in] the history class. You know what, I need a challenge. So afterwards from 10th grade on, I went through Honors classes into AP.

José felt he had been derailed from his own personal goal of achievement, and this characterizes how intently he has continued to seek higher education as a means of self-improvement. He reiterated his frustration and resentment toward the systemic marginalization and negative stereotyping he experienced as, "Not being challenged basically. That's what disrupted my academic standing at the beginning." José continued to have contact with the principal and accepted the academic challenges as a point of responsibility and respect. He said:

After we started to getting to know him [the principal]. So it's like a mutual respect started going on. Do this and prove to him that you can make something of yourself. That's going to be my challenge. I'm going to show you. I'm going to show myself. And I'm going to show my family, you know?

José's AVID program also reinforced building his academic skills through social networks that built more social capital. He described the way he and other students in AVID set expectations for themselves and kept each other accountable.

Like be model students. We don't want to be like these students who are dumb asses. Who just go wandering in, not bringing their books, not even a pencil.

They just sit down and waste my taxes. So you know what, let's make something out of ourselves. So we consequently challenged each other, I challenged myself, and we got a position where we felt comfortable. They kept me on track.

José credited AVID with primarily giving him the place to get informational resources, structure and incentive to keep him headed toward college by giving him a clear "blueprint." He was determined to be like "that single, straight arrow for college." José had decided he wanted to attend SDSU for a criminal justice major during his junior year, but he met the AVID criteria of applying to "three universities -one private, one UC and one CSU."

It was beneficial, the advice. They remind [you] of the deadlines and where to get the resources and Ms. M [AVID teacher], you know, she's a fighter. She's beneficial not just to me, but to many people. She's always on your back telling you what do to and that's good. If you have any problems, she'll fight for you. She'll make the recommendations, she'll even come to the universities and she's connected also so she can make a difference. And that's where the relationship with your teachers [helps]. Some teachers may be your friends or can seem like a mother figure because some students don't have moms or dads. So they [AVID students] see that connection with Ms. M.

When asked about what percentage AVID played in helping him get to college, José told me “around 35, 40 percent.” He continued, “it wasn't a matter of going or not going but it was a matter of where I'm going.” José believed that his own personal goals accounted for the other sixty percent. When probed to give more specifics he had this to say:

That constant information that I needed to go to college to be successful. For some reason, it just stuck in my mind. And that information of, you have these deadlines, deal with them. You have to go through this to get there. Basically, those college prep classes, always in my mind, okay, you're supposed to take this, and this, because AVID says so. And then subconsciously I did them, for some reason, and it helped, it helped me get here.

As we talked about what factors José attributed to his ability to get to college, unlike many of his high school friends, José analyzed his thoughts and at the same time clarified his personal philosophy on the critical importance of independent responsibility for action, regardless of one's current circumstances. He crossed his arms, pushed back in his chair and emphatically said,

It's up to the individual. Some are more ahead than others. The ones that are behind, it's basically because they want to lag behind, I mean, we all come from the same area. We have the same opportunities. And no one is considered dumber or stupider than the other, and basically you can see the determination and the hard work that some do and others they just sit there. So what we offer is basically equal opportunity and it's up to you. If you want to take advantage of it, go ahead and take advantage of it but if not, that's going to be your own fault.

Another area that José credits with his ability to take on college academics was the preparation from his AP classes, especially AP English taken during his senior year.

In AP Literature you read up around 22 books in a year. And they were challenging so, you know, you've got to read; you better take notes. You'd break the book in parts and study and analyze it, like I'm reading for college. I have it [the book] my mind, think it through, get my results. We read a lot of books. We analyzed it. We wrote a lot of papers. So I was busy preparing for the test, the writing beyond the book, and the overall commitment [to do it].

José also spoke about how he felt other AP students saw him during his first AP class, and how he became more comfortable finding his own academic identity and a rightful place in that elite group.

Those academic students are always on top of it all with little sense of being challenged, you know? And there's the masses which I'm more comfortable in. So as soon as I came in, they probably thought I was overstepping my boundaries. You know, here comes this *vato* [Mexican gangster] trying to be all cool, trying to outdo us while we're here trying to study and getting As. But, I'm here like yourself. I'm your same level. I'll probably do better than you, So don't judge people. That's how our boundaries, they overlapped.

Transitioning to College. José's determination and confidence solidified in high school and resulted in a positive cultural adjustment during his transitional first year at SDSU. He took advantage of the EOP services, and used this college support program to ease the first semester transition. José had an established network of friends from high

school who also came to SDSU, which allowed him to feel comfortable and “at home.”

When describing what it was like his first semester at SDSU, José expressed it this way,

Exhilaration, I was just like, okay, let's do this, let's try this, let's go over here, let's go there. That sense of being here, of coming every day, and I would actually look forward to coming every day to school. That's basically it, the exhilaration, anticipation of what's out there, that I'm willing to learn. I don't know what else to say.

On the academic side, José was in the two mandatory remedial classes for students who had not passed the ELM and EPT placement tests. This academic setback had a negative effect since José resented having to take non-credit bearing courses for subjects he felt he already knew. Frowning, he said,

It was just a matter of points. I took them [ELM and EPT] and I didn't pass them for at least a point each. So I took new courses and that's set me back a semester, half a semester. Basically I got them out of the way as soon as I could.

We went on to discuss what study strategies, first learned in AVID, José used during his freshman transitional year. He has continued to explore his own independent learning style and has modified these study strategies to fit his personal needs and the class situation. The fact that he was able to articulate why and how he's made these decisions further provided evidence of his positive transition to college academics and culture. AVID students are instructed to sit in the front of the classroom, but José has found that did not work well for him.

Yeah, they say that the one in the back will probably get the worst grades. I don't know. I love sitting in the back and observing people's reactions, observing the

whole classroom because when I sit in the front, I feel all the pressure from the people in back of me, you know?

Another cornerstone AVID practice is Cornell note-taking. José has also modified his use of this study skill.

Note-taking. Yeah. Basically, 'cause I'm in college right now, I just make my own notes, I don't make questions like Cornell. Sometimes I use Cornell notes, just to make them look the same. I have to copy what the teacher says and it sometimes is difficult because he talks too fast and he has a different mind than what I have. I try to put some stuff [down] that I probably need to remember or just go through and fill it out when the time comes for studying or for taking that test. That way I can remember.

When asked if he interacts with the professors by going to office hours or with personal contact in class, José knew that this could be important, but has rarely found the time to do it. He revealed some rationalization, and perhaps discomfort, about why it's a problem.

If I have the time and they also have the time, then I try to talk to them a little. I ask the question, "What is the significance of this?" or "What is the significance of that in my paper? Why am I getting this grade and I'll go spend my time. But there's a lot of people and they have a lot of classes also to teach and it's kind of restricting for both of us.

There has been one exception. José felt powerfully connected both culturally and academically with his Chicano Studies professor during his first semester at SDSU. This instructor helped José feel connected with his own heritage. José used the information to

get closer to his own family history by questioning his grandfathers, who had lived much of what he was learning in class, but had never been shared with José. About his Chicano Studies teacher, José said:

He didn't feel like a teacher. He felt like a buddy, like an older buddy, like a person you look up to. And what he chose, his anecdotes, we felt more comfortable [in that class].

A positive college transition also requires social integration and on-going interaction with other students. José, who expressed many times the importance of relationships with friends and with his community, early on established a network of study groups. These groups varied depending on the shared classes, but were always available to José. He also made connections as an AVID tutor with other tutors and with his former high school teachers as resources.

I had some friends from high school. They come over here also and we made a network of all the people that came from our high school and we call each other for study groups. We connect, what was the work from last week, keeping up with the notes. So we made up a little network among ourselves and besides the actual getting acquainted with people from out of state or from different places, that also helped me out.

Persisting in College. José has made a strong commitment to stay in college and to take any necessary steps to finish his degree. He has both lived and observed social inequality and has concluded that without an education, he will not be able to help himself or his family. He attributes his determined motivation to these factors. I asked

José about how he saw his progress through college to this point, at the end of his third semester.

I made the decision, if I can handle the first year, it's basically good for four years but since I already passed my first semester and I'm already middle way through my second year. I guess I can probably finish the rest of my degree as long as I work hard and have a certain ethic within myself to accomplish what I plan.

José, like a few other study participants, didn't really get into more challenging college coursework until his sophomore year due to the remedial courses and general education classes he had taken freshman year. The fall semester of his sophomore year, and the resulting grades, gave José his first major academic setback. At our second interview we talked about his Fall 2003 grades.

History. I mean, I thought I was getting like a B, B+. And for some reason, I got a D+. And when it came time for the test, I just wrote what came to mind, instead of the specifics. Instead [of] actually reading the book, I had basically like the history channel terms. I blew the test. So if I get a lower grade, that's my fault and I didn't study enough. I didn't have that ethic to work hard or whatever.

José continued to analyze and to take responsibility for what had gone wrong and what steps he planned to take. "I probably got too confident. So I'll just forget about it, take it again, get an A this time. Get the course forgiveness." His other grades were two Bs and a C giving him a 2.32 for the semester. This semester he is taking one course at his local community college since it wasn't available on campus, and nine units at SDSU. José is also dedicated to continuing his AVID tutoring job in order to "be of community service."

When asked about how determined he was to finish his college education on a scale of one to ten, José answered, “About a 9. I just know that there are obstacles out there.” He continued to refer to his economic goals as one of his driving motivational factors to complete college. “The rising prices of the houses in San Diego. More education, motivation, more opportunities, more chances and more credit. That's what motivates me the most. Go for that Ph.D. somehow, you know?”

Summary. Figure 3 presents a concept map that is a representation of the critical categories that emerged from José's in-depth interviews and focus group transcript. His personal commitment to developing his academic self was contradicted by his lack of diligence in studying “enough.”

José demonstrated personal resilience and individual determination to be successful in college. José in many ways epitomized the AVID acronym: Advancement Via Individual Determination. He was engaged in developing his own academic identity since his freshman year of high school. The leverage gained from the AVID program and the personal interest and intervention from his high school principal both contributed to his ability to access a different future through higher education.

José became part of the SDSU community and felt socially and academically integrated. He did not live on campus or participate in campus events, but he developed a strong community based network of friends who acted as study resources and gave him a sense of social connection. He realized that there were academic barriers to be addressed and identified the major source of his Achilles' heel – time management.

José juggled commitments to keep on the college path. He worked, had family obligations and responsibilities, was simultaneously attending both SDSU and a

community college, and had begun taking more challenging academic classes as he moved into upper division coursework.

Figure 3. Jose's Case Study Code Map

Case Study 4: Angelica – A Passion for Social Justice

I first met Angelica on a warm November afternoon in front of the SDSU library. I was wearing my AVID pin so that she would know who I was. As I scanned the crowd, I saw a large Latina girl with long curly black hair, bright smile and large dark eyes coming toward me. We both said, “AVID?” at the same time. As we began our first interview, Angelica repeatedly stated that AVID had changed her life, and how fond she was of her high school AVID teacher, Ms. E., whom she credited with motivating her to get into SDSU and with helping her apply for the San Diego Scholarship Foundation (SDSF) scholarship. Angelina had attended an ethnically diverse, large urban high school in central San Diego and labeled herself an “O.K. student.” Angelina had only one other high school friend come to SDSU with her. All of her other close friends either went to community college, or directly to work. One of the topics we explored during our interview sessions was how she accounted for the differences between what she has been able to do compared to her friends from high school.

Family Influences. Angelica was extremely close to her family. She identified the type of support she received from them in this way,

My parents support me 100 percent. I want to buy a car right now so they're like, 'Well why don't you wait a little and we'll pay cash and that way you don't have to work, and we'll just pay your insurance.' My mom says, 'But don't go to work, you know, if you're in school, well then just go to school, you live here and we're gonna support you.'

Angelica has an older brother who goes to community college. The two of them regularly discuss what they have been learning, especially in the area of politics. Both are

passionate about issues of social justice. Angelica said, “he’s been a big motivator in my life.” He actively encouraged her to study for her classes and frequently questioned her about what she had learned in her classes. Brother and sister engaged in ongoing vigorous discussions about issues, events and authors, often involving their parents in these discussions.

So, at the beginning of this semester, like, it’s weird, but we go out and sit down in a coffee shop and read. And, we’ll be there until eleven o’clock at night reading. And, sometimes I hate it, but that’s the only thing that’s worked for me. And, now I have a cousin that’s living with me, and she’s interested in reading, so, I read to her or I explain it to her, and that helps me out.

During our second interview I asked Angelica if she wanted to live on campus or move away from home. She intuitively knew that her close family attachment acted as an anchor for the development of her academic identity. She seemed to understand that she needed the supportive home environment in order to allow her academic self to flourish in college.

I think I was more scared of turning eighteen than they were. For me, when I turned eighteen, it was just, like, a scary thought. I’m eighteen, my parents don’t have responsibility over me. They could kick me out, it’s not their problem no more. My mom once told me everything you’re doing is for yourself. We’re gonna raise you, and we’re gonna give you what you need, but, if you go to school that’s because you want to be successful.

Angelica internalized this strong foundation and found daily reinforcement at home for being the first in her family to attend a four-year university. She reflected on

what it would be like to live on campus and said, "I think that if I lived here it would just be a different [experience]. I, actually, think it's better how it is right now."

Angelica knows that her parents are extremely proud of her by the fact that they tell everyone about what she's doing. "I know for my mom like we're her like pride and joy. 'Oh my kids go to school and they work and they're saving up for their cars'." It's a point of family pride and Angelica feels responsible to her family to return their support with her dedication to finishing college and by acting as a role model for her ten year old sister who thinks "it's required to go to college."

One of the reasons Angelica chose to pursue the college path was her assessment of how hard her parents have worked at low paying jobs just to provide the basics. She's determined to gain more social and cultural capital by gaining a college education and then using it to serve her intense personal desire for high visibility expensive material objects, such as cars. She analyzed her thinking for me in this way:

I mean I think a big reason I wanted to come to school was 'cause I didn't want to go out there and work at Sea World. In high school I was working at Sea World and I'm like, well I can't do food service for the rest of my life. I was promoted and I was making more money, but I mean it was, it was food service, you know.

Preparing for College. Angelica entered the AVID program in seventh grade school and "then all through high school." She went to an ethnically diverse high school in north central San Diego that is part of the largest school district in the county. Angelina described herself as being a middle level academic student. She said, "I don't think I was very academic like I didn't get good grades but I was an average student." Her high school transfer GPA was 3.10, but she attributed her AVID experience to getting her

into San Diego State University. She animatedly described what high school had been like with Ms. E.

I loved AVID. She [AVID teacher] really helped me, she motivated me to come to school, she was always pressuring me, which really helped me a lot. Yeah. Looking out for us. If it wasn't for her I wouldn't have gotten this scholarship. If it wasn't for her, I wouldn't have like applied for financial aid. She was like okay, let's help you apply and she was always telling me about it, so that was really cool. And she was always helpful and she was always there. If you guys need anything, come talk to me. And if we had problems in the class she would talk to your teacher and see what we could do, so she was really helpful.

Angelina mentioned learning about Cornell notes, being organized and doing SAT preparation work in her AVID class. She also learned how to study in groups, ask questions and write to academic prompts. However, when asked what it was about AVID that she remembered had made a difference, she had this to say in reference to the college tutors who came twice a week to AVID, "It motivates you about going to college. You can see people there and, you know, oh, I'm gonna be like them someday, that really does motivate you." She continued to clarify why AVID worked by saying,

It was just everything in AVID. It was the encouragement from the teacher. It was just having speakers in there, and actually going to campuses and visiting. And, there was learning how to take Cornell notes, and it was just all of it.

During Angelina's senior year in high school, Ms. E. encouraged her to take AP classes. Angelina enrolled in AP Spanish and AP Statistics. Ms. E. was the AP Statistics teacher and helped Angelina to take on a challenge about which she felt nervous. The fact

that she had the emotional and academic support from her AVID teacher in this “subject that is hard for me” made the risk doable. Although Angelina did not get a 3 on the AP Statistics test, she passed the class with a C+, and she did walk away with more confidence about her ability to stick to a difficult academic task. Evidence of Angelina’s developing academic identity can be found in how she decided to act like a student as far as managing her own record of learning. Angelina started saving important pieces of work, notes, and binders. She wanted to make sure, if she took the same subject in college, that she would have her high school notes for reference. “Well I don’t have all of them [binders]. I think I just have like the important classes, which would be my mathematics classes and my government class and my chemistry class. I kept those ‘cause maybe someday I’ll need them.”

It was also during her senior year that Angelina remembered developing an intense interest in divergent intellectual topics, and becoming more aware of the depth of information available from sources outside of school, especially about political prisoners and social issues.

Well I started reading a lot more in my senior high school year. I was really into reading about Mumia Abu-Jamal and that’s something that he [my brother] introduced me to. Even in my AVID class I’d give this lecture, “You guys gotta read this book.”

During our second interview, we returned to her experience as an AVID student. We explored how the social network of peers with a common goal of going to college interacted with each other. She said,

I think in AVID everyone's like not really close but, in AVID we all get to know each other and how things are doing. And the first semester I was here [SDSU] I saw another older girl [from AVID] and she said, "Oh my God, I'm so glad to see you here, you need anything, just let me know." She gave me her number and everything, so she was really cool. You know, I guess, we're all just happy to see each other here.

As Angelina graduated from high school, scholarship in hand, excited and ready to go to San Diego State University, she felt she would be able to succeed there, even if it was more difficult than high school. However, her actual first semester experience turned to be very different from what she anticipated.

Transitioning to College. Angelina believed in being prepared. She wanted to have a positive academic transition but was not as interested in socially integrating with the SDSU campus life. Angelina enrolled in the Educational Opportunities Program (EOP) at SDSU, used the academic counseling services, and took the course recommendations suggested to her. She, like others in this study, did not pass the required ELM and EPT proficiency tests. She was required to take the remedial coursework for these during her first semester for credit/no-credit. She felt distinctly disappointed with the lack of academic rigor her first semester. She only took one class for credit that first semester – Chicano Studies. Angelina confessed,

I thought it was going to be much harder. I'm home, I read, it's 12:00 o'clock; I have nothing to do. Yeah, my senior year in high school was harder than my first semester here. I felt, I don't know, I guess I also felt a little scared because I knew

that I was in a different program and that's why these classes were so easy. So, that I was just wondering, oh my God, how's it gonna be next semester?

Angelina described what her first few weeks in college were like and how she saw the difference in her individual responsibility had shifted between her high school classes and her college classes.

It is just like going to high school, it was just that, I still don't know how to describe it. It's just that I, actually, found out that I was on my own, and that I had to do the readings, and that I had to come to class prepared. Sometimes it's easier when you have a test every week, because you know that you have to get it done, and you read it. If there's a class where you don't have tests, you have to do it on your own, because in a couple weeks you have essays due, and you have to explain and relate things to the chapters.

Angelina's negative experience in the EOP program came up repeatedly during both of our interviews. From her perspective as a first semester sophomore she reported:

Well actually because I got into the EOP program it was easy. Now that I think back, it was dumb because I took classes for credit and they're all credits that are not gonna help me out. Two classes were remedial but there was a third that it was just credit or no credit and they advised us not to take any more classes. So I only got three units that really counted that first semester.

Angelina reviewed the study strategies and literacy practices she habitually used during her first two semesters at SDSU that she had first learned in AVID. One behavior she is still utilizing is to sit up close to the professor to engage herself, even if she's not terribly interested in the lecture of the day.

Just always sit close to the front--that really does help, you know, like sitting towards the front of the class and actually trying to pay attention although you're bored. I remember in seventh grade our AVID teacher told us even if you're bored just sit up and nod and that'll help you concentrate, and it does help.

Angelina showed me one of her college notebooks to demonstrate how she takes notes at the university. She explained that she always uses Cornell notes, but then uses the notes to make additional study cards emphasizing vocabulary.

Taking Cornell is not a burden. It's being organized, using a binder, having dividers. Just being prepared for class, with your notebooks and stuff. Here in school the first semester, two of my professors said, 'I really like AVID students they take good notes.' And my English teacher said, 'Oh you do Cornell notes, that's cool.'

Angelina continued, "I go back, highlight and then refresh parts." She has made a habit of using the same study pattern to master the college reading material. Through the use of Cornell notes, and the subsequent note review, she feels more confident about "knowing" the subject matter. She reported feeling "ready" when she can anticipate the next bit of information from her study cycle.

I walk around with stacks of flashcards, which really helps me. And then once in a while I'll go back and read again but then that kind of frustrates me 'cause I'm like okay I already read this, I already know what's gonna happen.

Angelina acknowledged, "I don't test well, so I would understand material and it still happens to me. I understand it, but when it comes down to doing it, I guess I get too stressed out." Her study strategies show evidence of academic identity development and

how she has assessed her own needs as a learner. She was prepared to put in the effort to learn the material, especially during her easier coursework during the first two semesters. She also recognized that she had some internal resistance to overcome in order to get better grades. She became more aware of her own procrastination issues that have created barriers to her stated academic goals. This has resulted in an apparent contradictory dichotomy that emerged during our second interview session.

I don't focus. I get everything done because I have to, so like the night before I will read what I have to and be all stressed out, of course, but sometimes it works better 'cause I mean at that point you have to do it. But going home and actually like sitting down and reading -- I don't think I can do it today either. I think that's why I have the grades I have, 'cause I really can't focus on studying and although I know how to study, I just can't focus. I think that was my biggest challenge, just getting myself to sit in a quiet room and read.

Angelina has had more difficulty connecting with her college professors. She knew from her AVID training that she should be talking with her professors. However, her own personal shyness and insecurity has blocked her from taking the risk. She said,

From what I hear it's a big help and you get to know your teacher and then maybe that helps you with instead of getting a B plus you get an A minus. I really don't know 'cause I mean I haven't really gone, but I'm sure it does help. And then sometimes I really don't know what to ask. I don't understand some things but I don't know like how to ask them, yeah.

When it came to big exams though, Angelina was ready to make a few exceptions to the professor rule.

Well I've gone to review tests. That's like a big thing, and I go. That's pretty much the only reason I've gone [to a professor] to review tests, or to ask for help on homework that I don't completely understand.

A second important part of being a college student is participation in college life and social integration into the university community (Tinto, 1993). Angelina compartmentalized her university experience during her transitional year into academics only. Her social needs were being met back in her home community by her network of high school friends and her extended family. We discussed, during both interviews, how she felt from a social perspective about being part of the SDSU community.

Well, pretty much I was lonely, it was just that, well, they [other students] all knew each other from high school, and in my case it was just me and my one friend who were in a couple of classes together. So that was kind of sad.

Angelina compared the disconnected feeling she had at SDSU to what her high school experience had been. She also indicated that she began to find academic avenues to spend time with other students by participating in study groups, another AVID cornerstone practice.

Well it's different because in high school you see the same people like pretty much in all your classes. Over here it's like every class there's new people. Towards the end of the semester, I started knowing more people than in the beginning, but I mean yeah you meet a lot of people and I have formed study groups, so that's cool.

When asked about how she felt about joining a social group on campus, Angelina revealed had she had decided that her own social needs were being met in her home

community, and that she had made a conscious decision not to transition into the social culture of the school.

A lot of people are doing the whole sorority thing and fraternity thing. And I know last semester I had a friend who was trying to get me into it, but I mean it's different between me and him because he wasn't from here so he didn't know people here, but here I have my friends that I grew up with so I really just come to school and go home. I don't really want to do the whole social thing.

When asked about her weekend time, Angelina said she'd been realizing how parties no longer interested her as much and she had changed her habits during her freshman year at SDSU.

I stay home on a Friday and study on Saturday. I'll think, I'm tired, you know.

And before it was just, okay it's Friday, let's go out. So it's different now and I actually will stop myself from going out because I know I have to study.

Angelina questioned her decision to come to SDSU during her transitional first year. She was trying to balance the academic requirements of college graduation against her desire to accelerate her purchasing power symbolized by buying "my own car." This symbol of independence, material means and status came up numerous times during our interview sessions. She expressed her ambivalence about her non-college friends in this way:

We're just doing different things. For a while last semester I was stressed out 'cause my friends have jobs that are paying \$12.00 an hour and they're about to get their new cars and look at me, I'm working minimum wage going to school.

And I had a friend who said, 'Well just realize that in a while you're gonna be making much more than they are.' I was like okay, and so I'm here.

Persisting in College. Angelina reiterated many times her desire to stay in college had only gotten stronger since coming to SDSU. In fact, Angelina has found that the academic environment has stimulated her desire to keep learning. When asked about what she saw herself doing in three years, she said, "I think I want to be here around six years. I really don't see myself after college. I just don't want to get out." As we continued to discuss how she had come to discover this academic passion she told me,

I think it was the whole time when I started reading about Mumia Abu-Jamal, it was just like wow, there's so many things that they don't teach you in high school, and there's just so many things to know. And you just start reading. Then another thing is I'm taking this class here at SDSU and my brother's taking it at community college and they teach him one thing and they're teaching me another and I want to learn that too.

As Angelina talked about her experiences during the first semester of her sophomore year, she reflected on both her failing grade in a course she didn't want to take, and her analysis of both her personal responsibility and that of the university system. She learned from this major setback how to better navigate the system and how to fine-tune her study practices. About the university system she said, "Well the first year you get to register before everyone else, which I don't think is very helpful. They should help you when you're a sophomore and that's how I got stuck with weather class."

Angelina continued to talk about how she had approached the subject and teacher, neither of which she liked.

Yeah, I felt like I was stuck. The only thing is, [I need to] actually keep up with the readings. Because the teacher said, you don't have to read as long as you pay attention and you're listening to what I'm saying, and he wrote the book. So, I thought that, oh, wow, you know, it's not gonna be bad 'cause he said it, so I don't have to read. But, I guess that wasn't the case. I think it was more that once you read the book you would understand it more thoroughly than just from hearing him, and that's what I didn't do, and I think that was the problem.

Angelina was able to identify her responsibility for failing to adequately prepare for this class, again providing evidence for her increasing capacity to deal with academic challenges. She went on to share her emotional reaction to the news that she had failed the weather class. Angelina remarked,

I really felt bad, I felt so bad, my whole day was ruined. After I called [to get my grades] and I heard that, it's weird, but I was, obviously, thinking of quitting school. I really got depressed after heard I had that F. So, I'm pretty much just going back to make up the F, so I won't have an F on there.

During our second interview, Angelina elaborated on how she had noticed her own reaction to more engaging subject matter and how she had decided to be a more active participant in her coursework. "But when it comes to History or Chicano Studies or Sociology, I thought it was super interesting and I find myself being very bright in those classes." She continued,

I'm thinking about it because the classes don't seem that hard, but it's just now, I was noticing today that I make myself stand out. I, like, participate more. And, it's just that this semester is more interesting, and I actually have something more to

say, and something to backup something, and last semester I was just in statistics, which you have to learn out of a book.

Angelina reviewed the challenges she anticipated from the courses she was taking during the Spring of 2004. Some interesting literacy issues emerged, especially around academic writing. Angelina had developed several strategies involving peer editing and early preparation in order to do well in these courses for her major, Social Work.

Now, this semester I have a couple essays to write. I'm, actually, just scheduling one class, that's my 110, because the teacher's so strict about grammar. I'm used to MLA, and now it's gonna be APA. That's the only thing that I'm scared of, and I just wanna get that right because there's people in that class that took it last semester and didn't pass, so that just automatically scares me. Because I'm not the best student ever, and so, I'm trying to do the essay earlier, so I can have people proofread it.

As Angelina continued to reflect on how her writing skills had become more solid during her first year at SDSU, she also showed indications of beginning to find her own voice and to be more confident in her ability to produce written papers. She told me,

I'm actually not afraid to write now. I believe that I'm a better writer, and it's weird, now I can help my cousin write. But, before that I was very scared of writing. But, now it's not so bad. Right now I have an essay due next week that's four pages, and I'm, like, okay, four pages is not that bad. So, I think that [writing other papers] gave me enough confidence.

One area I continued to probe with Angelina concerned her connection to college life. She explained consistently that she was comfortable commuting and living at home,

although she has been spending more time on campus this year, but she did not participate in any social or extracurricular activities at SDSU. “Since I work on campus, I’m here every single day. I’ll walk around ‘cause I know more people, so, I guess, I feel more of a community.” Angelina mentioned that she does not intend to develop SDSU based social connections. However, her weak connection to college life did not seem to have negatively influenced her attachment to SDSU as a place of learning. “I just want my degree.” As Angelina progresses with her major, she may yet become more involved with study groups that may also create stronger social connections to the SDSU university culture.

Summary. A visual representation of the influential categories and code frequencies that emerged from Angelina’s in-depth interviews and focus group transcript are displayed in Figure 4. One striking feature of Angelina’s case was her difficulty in mastering appropriate study patterns. She related that she loved to learn, however, she was much less enthusiastic about taking required general education courses, such as science. Her failure of a required class seemed to motivate her to refocus her study habits, but it is also apparent that the critical reading and writing demands of the university continue to be problematic for Angelina. She was aware of this problem, especially in the area of writing, and had explored ways to get more academic help and through the tutoring services in the EOP program, but did not find their tutoring service particularly useful, and had stopped going by the end of her freshman year. She resented the poor advice given to her by EOP her first semester and felt behind in her coursework because of the remedial classes she had taken. Her negative experience with the EOP program kept her from using their services, perhaps to her disadvantage.

Angelina made a series of personal choices around developing her academic identity. She attributed going to a four-year university directly to her participation in the AVID program. Angelina's personal choices included staying enrolled in the AVID program since middle school, taking academically challenging coursework in high school such as Advanced Placement Statistics and Spanish Language, and applying for the AVID scholarship. When asked specifically about what AVID did to make a difference for her, Angelina said that it was "everything." Angelina saw AVID as a gestalt program. For her, every aspect of the program worked together to create a synergy of strategies; from mentoring, to study skills to college applications to scholarships. The pre-college preparation had resulted in Angelina having the basic entry-level skills and cultural capital to get into SDSU.

In the process, Angelina found that she loved to learn, especially when the topic had interest for her. "I like learning. Well actually I want to stay here a little longer just 'cause there's other things that I'm interested in [studying]." When queried about the specific factors that had contributed to her being in college, she said, "I would say thirty-three percent is AVID, thirty-three percent me, and thirty-six percent family."

She reiterated the important role her family played in helping her not only get to college, but to stay in college. As she imagined what her family would say at her SDSU graduation, she told me, "Everyone's gonna have smiles on their faces. I mean, I think that means more than anything to know that they're proud." Angelina regularly transmitted her college experiences to her own family. She took her younger cousin to some classes at SDSU and said, "I brought my little cousin along, and she was in there taking notes and everything." Angelina was also adamant that her younger sister and

cousins be in the AVID program to gain the social and cultural leverage from which Angelina stated she greatly benefited.

Angelina was also explicit about the opportunities a college degree afforded her. She saw going to college as a way to acquire both social and financial capital. "I'm always gonna be thankful to Sea World 'cause that really made me realize, you have to go to school, that's why I'm in school." She continued to elaborate on her goals saying,

There's just so many things that I want. As it is I wish I had money to do this and that, and sooner or later I will, you know. There's just so many things that I want to get done. And, that, you know, I think is my whole goal.

We explored the importance of having a car and what it represented to Angelina. When asked, "So, the car is kind of a symbol of getting there and making it?" She said:

You know, that's the point. Once I go to school, and I finish school, I actually have money to do what I want - the rest of everything I want. But, then it's not worth it 'cause the day I actually have a real job, I'm gonna buy the car. So, right now, whatever car I get is fine.

Angelina struggled with choosing a major. She found that meeting the specific academic requirements for the social work major resulted in her having to take additional courses at the local community college. In spite of academic setbacks, she remained clear about her goal of completing her college degree and making her family proud. Although her connection to college life was weak or non-existent, she did not feel it made her any less a part of the SDSU community. Angelina lives at home, goes to classes and works on campus. She was a campus visitor, just passing through, but felt her needs were being met for an academic space that nurtured her intellectual identity.

Figure 4. Angelina's Case Study Code Map

Case Study 5: Kendra- Average People Can Go to College Too

Kendra was easy to talk to. She sauntered over to me at our first meeting wearing a huge toothy smile, a crooked baseball cap and ragged jeans. We met in front of the SDSU library and found a quiet corner downstairs. We immediately began getting to know each other. Although she claimed to be shy, it was not in evidence during our lengthy interview sessions. Her personality radiated warmth and self-deprecating humor, and our shared connection to AVID provided common ground. Kendra was particularly articulate about the positive influence of the AVID program as she reflected on her recent transition experiences to college.

Family Influences. Kendra, like the other participants, felt a great deal of emotional support from her family. She lives at home with her mother and younger sister and commutes to SDSU. As we explored the ways in which she felt supported, Kendra said,

My mom always was ‘you gotta do this,’ and then she was always offering, ‘do you want me to call your AVID teacher?’ But she was real helpful though. But that was because she knew the [due] date, because AVID knew the date so she knew what to do.

Kendra saw the connection between her mother and her AVID teacher as somewhat annoying at the time, but now feels that this reinforcement at both home and school helped her get into SDSU and kept her on track to get the necessary paperwork completed. This infusion of cultural capital from her AVID teacher to her mother filled in the college information gap. Kendra continued, “My mom is really supportive, she helped

me a lot. Especially with the application. I'd be at home filling it out and she would help me a lot with it. She also made sure I was doing it on time."

Kendra also felt responsible to create a positive role model for her younger sister. As a college student, she frequently interacted with her sister about the importance of school. At the same time, she knew her sister was watching her and learning from Kendra's behavior. As Kendra talked about her hopes for her little sister, now in seventh grade, she said, "we're gonna get her in AVID too."

Preparing for College. Kendra entered the AVID Program her sophomore year of high school. She knew she wanted to go to college, but felt herself to be merely an average student without any special intellectual gifts. Once in AVID, she learned that it was expected she prepare for a four-year college. As Kendra reflected on her high school experiences, she remarked on how she felt isolated from the information she needed.

I remember in high school I always thought I was gonna go to college, but I never knew exactly how to go about it. The counselors were there, but they just didn't help you. And then that was the end of your ten-minute conversation with them. When I would talk to my counselors sometimes I wouldn't feel they really cared if I went to college. So AVID really did make it a goal for me, because I didn't know what I wanted to do yet. College, where I was gonna go? We got started early in looking at schools and all that stuff because, of course, that's the first thing you start doing in AVID, looking at schools, talking about schools. I remember one time we [researched colleges] ourselves and presented it to the class. That helped a lot. And that's where I got encouraged. If I hadn't been in AVID, I don't think I would have come here [to SDSU].

Kendra felt support from home, but admitted that it wasn't enough to fill in all the missing informational pieces or motivation that her AVID teacher supplied. Since Kendra was an AVID student, other teachers recognized her goal to go to college and supported her with recognition and encouragement. As Kendra put it, "My mom, she'd encourage me but it was just the fact that the teachers at the school were saying you can do it too." During the second interview, Kendra elaborated on this topic and shared, "Other people, teachers who knew your AVID teachers, they really did push me. Okay you need to do this, you need to do that." As Kendra gained social and cultural capital from her interactions with the AVID teachers, she began to grow into her own academic identity by learning organizational and time management skills, Cornell Notes, essay writing and SAT test preparation. Kendra told me, "Yeah, before AVID my folder was just a mess. What is this child doing? Here are papers from three years ago. So that did help me a lot."

Part of the AVID Program's preparation for college is to bring in diverse guest speakers on a regular basis. Kendra remembers vividly when graduates from her high school would come back into her AVID class and share their perceptions and experiences.

We had lot of people come in from different colleges, which I liked because you never had a chance to see it, like Yale or schools on the East Coast. Of course, everybody's not going to be able to go back to see those schools. But having somebody come was very helpful.

As Kendra continued to reflect on her high school AVID experiences, she focused on how AVID gave her a safe, welcoming space to flex her developing academic identity

and to feel part of a group that shared similar goals, even if they all came from different social groups on campus.

AVID...it was my fun class. Just kind of relaxed. We'd go in there and sit there and take our shoes off. We'd be sitting in class and talking to our teachers about their lives and our lives and that helped a lot. Like you know - joke around and then get serious. And everyone kind of knew each other. We'd have little AVID events and field trips. So that we kind of got to know each other.

Kendra was aware that her close friends who were not in AVID were having difficulty finding out what was necessary to enter college. Her friends asked, "How did you know when these [due] dates were, how did you find them out?" Kendra reflected, "That was something I probably would have had problems with, because in AVID we were finding out when everything was due, what everything meant. I saw them stressing."

Kendra and I spoke about some of the choices she had made in high school. In particular, I was interested in finding out why she didn't enroll in any AP classes. AVID students are expected to take the most rigorous classes offered at their high schools, and I was fairly sure she'd been encouraged to take them. Kendra, switching between the third and first person, answered,

I think it was because people don't want to put themselves out there. 'Do you want to be in honors?' It's like people are modest and kind of shy. But if you're pushed into it, you would perform. Well since they [teachers] believe, and they're kind of forcing me to. But underneath, you know it seemed like there was a kind

of frustration that I could've done more if I had been more challenged, and so I don't know.

This exchange surfaced some of Kendra's ambivalent feelings about her capacity to do difficult academic work, and at the same time a wish that she had been pushed more. External motivation from AVID, her mother and other teachers, exerted a strong directional push that helped her move toward her ambiguous internal goals. As Kendra told me when her AVID teacher made a request or demand, "I'd do it because she's asking me and she'll be disappointed if I don't." Kendra expressed how she had learned to assume more responsibility for her future, but recognized without the constant support along the way, she would not have persisted in an academic path. "I mean you kind of do stuff for your Mom, and AVID kind of did it for you, so you might want to do it for yourself, too." During her senior year in high school, Kendra began to feel more confident about her ability to get into and stay in college.

AVID helped a lot, it helped so much of my planning, and like I said I knew nothing. How do you apply? I mean I knew that you're supposed to go to college, but how do you go to college? I'm not really smart. And I'm not saying like dumb or anything, but I wasn't a Harvard Student, or Yale -- I wasn't ready for any of that. I always saw it that you go to college, you're on that level of like Harvard and Yale. And you have to be like the complete genius and everything all through your life. So, I'm not ready for college. And AVID told you, average people go to college too and get regular people jobs. So, it brought me to that realistic level that college is not for everybody, but it's for average people. It's for everyone in general. You don't have to be rich, you don't have to be completely brilliant, but

you have to be driven, you have to know how to get there, how you're gonna pay for it, and when you get there you're gonna know how to stay there.

Transitioning to College. Kendra graduated from high school with a 3.03 grade point average and a reservation for the SDSU summer bridge program. She had always taken summer school, and the summer between high school and college gave her an opportunity to get to know the campus and become more familiar with her new surroundings and classmates. She described the program by saying,

All month, couldn't go home. Just trapped here. At the time we were thinking this is so dumb [not going home.] Of course, when you're done you realize, ahh, okay I get it now. As far as coming here for the first time in summer, it was kind of weird because I didn't know anybody. This is a whole new environment, the classes are way different, so it was weird. I got here and I was kind of like okay, I'm going to class and I'm wondering, is this the right class?

Kendra had to take the ELM and the EPT placement tests. She took both before the Summer Bridge program began and said, "I took the ELM and passed that the first time, the EPT I missed by one like everybody does. One point. But you have to retake it." She retook the EPT and passed during Summer Bridge, so during her first semester at SDSU she was not required to take any remedial courses. Because of her summer coursework in the Rhetoric and Writing (RWS) class, she continued with the next course during the fall semester.

Kendra commuted to SDSU from home and was on campus almost every day. As we talked about Kendra's transition experiences, she remembered how uncomfortable her first semester was and how she felt intimidated and awkward.

I didn't know anybody. Some of the classes I was younger in because I had taken those classes in summer. I was in writing and rhetoric 200 my first semester here. They [other students] would talk and I had no idea what they're talking about. None. And then like they'd say something, like, 'Freshman, what are you doing in this class?'

Although she felt marginalized by this experience, Kendra reacted with humor. One of the transition strategies Kendra commonly used was to turn her anxiety into positive action. Since she only knew the students she'd met during Summer Bridge, and only saw them infrequently, she decided she would use the extra time to study.

I didn't see them as much [Summer Bridge students] and so I saw a lot of strangers. I'd be sitting there reading and I thought I'd read books more. I always liked reading books, so I try to read books. I'll be sitting outside reading and they'd come by and say 'hi' or whatever. So it was weird because I wasn't constantly surrounded by people [like in high school]. And in one way it's good because it gave me extra time to go over stuff. But then again there were times when I'd just think, where is everybody at?

The initial loneliness Kendra experienced was tempered by her contacts with the other Summer Bridge students she had connected with. "I had those people, if I didn't have them it probably would have felt a little lonely." Kendra also realized how high school had not really prepared her for the independence or isolation she first experienced on campus. "I think it just because you don't realize how easy things are for you in high school." During our second interview, we continued to explore this topic. Kendra, after

being prompted to give three words that described her transition experience, explained how she felt during her first few weeks at SDSU. After a long pause, she replied:

One would be scary. For one when you first come in everything's different and it's still scary because now I'm realizing this is real. In high school it's kind of like I've got college to play around, and I'm still playing around, you know, in college. But this is real, and I have to use the information [from my classes] in my field, in my career, so I have to know it. If I don't know it, then I'm no help to anybody. That's scary. I've learned how to be by myself more. If you think you were stressed in high school, that was crazy. And it's even crazier now here, but you figure out what you can and can't handle. And I guess learning experience-- you learn so much. All at once. And you [can't] remember every little thing, but you should know the basics you have to know and really beyond that. It's been really fun, really fun.

Kendra's excitement about learning was evident throughout both interviews. She surprised herself by not only enjoying the learning, but by her ability to "get Bs." We discussed the study strategies she had learned in AVID that she used as a freshman, and has continued to use as a sophomore. Kendra told me she has always had a problem with organization. In high school she began using a planner, and she still uses one habitually to keep herself on-track and organized. "I have my own little organization in my binder." Kendra had her classes all organized with the current work. She said, "I feel like AVID taught me how to do that and demanded that you do that."

Another interesting awakening for Kendra was her tentative participation in classes and with her professors. She mentioned that she used to be a curious kid, but had

stopped asking questions in middle school and high school. “So then I got here [SDSU] and got back into being confident, [I began] asking questions, like so you're saying this...” Her emerging academic curiosity and anxiety about not understanding the material fully led her to seek contact with her professors during office hours or after class.

I really don't understand it and I really need to know. A lot of times what I'll do is I'll go and ask. Yeah, it's a lot easier for me to meet with somebody. I can talk to you instead of in front of the whole class. I walk in and they [professors] say, ‘Hi Kendra’. And I still feel, like [they think] here she comes again. ‘Kendra what do you need?’ I don't understand what you said in class at all. So I'm sitting there while they're talking to me, still taking notes.

As an AVID student, Kendra knew about the importance of sitting in the front of the classroom. We talked about how she had adapted that information in her classes at SDSU.

They [AVID] did say that you should always sit in the front. But me, I'm so shy anyways. Especially in new situations. I didn't want to sit directly in front of the teacher, like ‘hi, here I am look at me’. So I always sit in the front, but you know to the side. Where I felt comfortable too.

Another habitual AVID strategy is Cornell notes. Kendra still uses Cornell notes, although she has relaxed some of the formality required in high school.

I took regular notes for some classes, and Cornell for my psychology class. Some classes like just English you just take basic notes. When I was reading I try to take

Cornell kind of style where I wrote questions on the side. But then the answer was right there next to it.

We discussed the academic reading load and how Kendra had adapted last year to the demands of classes with unknown vocabulary and triple the weekly reading requirements. Kendra had developed strategies to help her address the increased demands. She told me she has an internal dialogue about the material while reading and keeps asking herself questions about the meaning.

I concentrate a lot more and ask 'okay what is it saying?' And if I saw a hard word, I'd have a dictionary with me. A lot of words I knew what it meant, but it was kind of big to me. 'Why didn't you say that?' So to make sure, I also did take notes on the words so that I was writing it to help me memorize. But when I was reading, it made it a lot easier to just mark in the book, write the question and go back and read it.

Actually owning the books allowed Kendra to make use of highlighting and taking notes in the book, neither of which she could do in high school. "That makes it a lot easier. Instead of having to flip through and rewrite it, I can just underline it right there, circle what I need to know. And go back and read it right there in the book." Kendra realized during her transitional freshman year, that if she knew the vocabulary, then she could master the ideas. It was her way of gaining comprehension of difficult texts. She explained, "I'll get them [concepts] as long as I got the vocab I'm fine."

We also explored college writing and how prepared she had been in high school to be successful in the writing demands for her psychology major and other required coursework. She said,

No, in high school it was a writing format. And I never really paid attention to what they were talking about. I was just writing a paper. I got here and of course the format is [different] but you know how to write a thesis and I didn't know any of that until I came here. In RWS 200 we had to write a ten-page paper. That was my first major paper. And I was like...ten pages!

Kendra survived the experience and her confidence continued to build during her first year. She reflected that during her first semester,

I think what happened was I realized in college things were going to be a lot different. What [studying] I did in high school, I didn't really need it. I felt like it might be necessary this time.

Kendra has also struggled internally with motivation that potentially could cause academic problems for her. She admitted,

You know there's days where I'm just gonna sit here and just listen. I need to take notes, but I'm just gonna listen. I read everything he [the professor] talked about because I have no idea what he said. I don't remember anything, I have to go home and read. I should've just taken notes when I was there. But I mean, it's a choice and I have no will power. I have none. It's so horrible. I actually have forced myself to study. I have to sit there for an hour.

During her first transitional year Kendra realized she was responsible for her own learning. She put into play most of the AVID strategies she had learned and adapted others to fit her own learning style. She began to feel that she fit into the SDSU academic community, although her social integration was limited. Kendra had an academically successful freshman year and did not fail any classes, as she had feared. However, she did

not experience a strong social connection at the university. In Kendra's sophomore year, she made an important decision to connect with campus life and began the social transition lacking her first year.

Persisting in College. Kendra, at our first interview in November 2003, told me she had just decided to join a sorority. She had been put off by the sorority scene the year before, but was approached by the girls and invited to join during the fall semester of her sophomore year. She said,

When I first met them I admired them so much, I felt I won't be able to join them. And the fact that they said, 'Come join us.' It made me feel like I could really be a part of their group. It's amazing these people I think are just so successful and are on their way, they have faith in me. They were real personal. The girls were really nice to me. They're not too much like snobs. But they make me feel like I'm important.

Joining the small sorority anchored Kendra to the SDSU community. She found a group of other African American girls that reinforced her academic and community service goals and with whom she felt comfortable. Since joining the sorority, Kendra said,

I'm always up here. Since school started I've only stayed at home probably twice on a Monday, Wednesday, Friday when I don't even have class. I have meeting planning for programs, talking to people, trying to get everybody to get together. And I came up here today, I need to study and I had the meeting with you which actually helped because I have to come up here, study first then do the program after.

She has become a more visible person on campus. The sorority changed her attitude and habits profoundly. Kendra reflected on her experience before and after the sorority by saying:

I'd just sit over there by the trees on the bench, and just read my book. And you know people used to come by and say 'hi' and that was about it. Now I walk by people and they stop me and talk to me.

Kendra stated she had not realized how much she had missed doing some type of community service. She felt very strongly that it was necessary to help her African American community and the sorority organization gave her an opportunity to get involved both on and off campus.

I have ideas for what I want to do in the community and through the sorority.

Now I can do it and just push it through so I'm really excited about that. We do a lot of programs. We have a scholarship program. We have a whole week of stuff planned with events. We have a program with community service. We're constantly doing stuff. Constantly busy.

The sorority also provided set study times and academic support. Kendra became more motivated to show the other girls that she belonged through increasing her leadership of sorority-sponsored activities and by achieving academically.

Kendra reflected on her realizations about the college experience and her increasing responsibility to persist and be successful.

The main thing that they told me about staying was basically you've got to do this for yourself. No one calls your parents. You can go to two classes and nobody cares. So, staying here is realizing that you have to do it for yourself. I've gotten a

lot more persistent in college. In high school I was like, whatever, if I don't know it, I don't know it. I don't know what happened, but I'm glad it happened. This is interesting. I actually see myself sit down and do it and nobody's telling me. I could fail the test if I want to. No one's gonna say, okay you can't go out this weekend, you can't do this, you can't do that. Today I was in the library all day. What am I doing here? I mean you don't realize that you really do study by yourself in the library. You really read books for four or five hours at a time, and I'm really studying. It's weird but it's happening.

As Kendra assumed more responsibility for her own learning, she also started to make decisions about the pace and intensity of her coursework. Kendra has always gone to summer school. Last summer, between her freshman and sophomore year, she signed up for 12 units. She decided not to take courses this summer, "I'll try to slow down a little, I don't want to go too fast because I still want to get comfortable with what I'm learning."

Kendra learned how to navigate the professor pool from other students by checking out her professors on-line before signing up for a class. This information about tacit college culture paid off for her and she continued to check on professors' ratings before signing up for classes.

That's one thing I did do this semester, last two semesters I didn't check on what teachers were good. I'd always hear, especially in AVID, check out your teachers, but I didn't know how to go about asking. And so I always went to the department. But I'm thinking, if you're going to the department they're not gonna tell you that the professors here suck. I realized I could check. Grade my professor

on-line. I looked on there and looked at the professor and everybody said the same thing that I was thinking.

During our second interview in February 2004, Kendra described how well she had fared in her classes during the fall semester. She related her extreme anxiety about finals week and how she had gloomily predicted certain failure for herself, which motivated her to study even harder.

Well they [finals] weren't that bad, but I figured the final and your grades rely so much on that final. It's gonna bring my grade down so much, this is horrible. The final grade is 40% of your final test. Well, I could never calculate that but I always try. I can never work it out and I get F's when I calculate it.

When Kendra got her semester grades back she was amazed to find she had ended up with four B's and an A. "In art I got an A. I know! I got B's, I don't know how! I don't know if I was zoned out and the information just melted in my head - but whatever works." This most recent success allowed Kendra to begin to see herself as a real college student. She was determined to finish school while at the same time giving back to her community. She remained anxious about the challenges she knew were ahead, but when asked if she ever considered leaving school, she said, "What I'm more scared of is not being able to do anything after quitting." She acknowledged that being in the sorority allowed her to experiment with the more assertive parts of herself. "I've been stepping out of my boundaries a lot." Her radiant smile and low laughter clearly communicated how she felt about these new roles.

Summary. Figure 5 gives a visual representation of the critical categories that emerged from Kendra's in-depth interviews and the relative code frequencies in

parentheses below the codes. Some of Kendra's initial adjustment to college was negative. She was troubled by the unknown academic and cultural expectations when she assumed the role of a university freshman. She wondered, "What am I supposed to do? Do I have the skills?" However, she participated in Summer Bridge and began establishing a social support network during the summer program. Her sense of family support was strong, and by living at home she had a comfortable and familiar place to return to. Kendra made an important choice to form stronger social connections linked to her SDSU life by joining a community service-oriented sorority. Through the connections with this organization, Kendra's cultural adjustment became much more positive over time.

Over time, Kendra became a more active learner at SDSU as her academic identity strengthened and grew. She surprised herself by becoming more academically "smart" than she had imagined herself capable of being. She decided to work on a minor in art, since those courses gave her so much pleasure. She has found that her art classes, which she initially took purely for an academic break, became more important to her than her declared major, psychology.

Kendra attributed much of her success at SDSU to the influence of her three years of high school AVID. She said the contribution of AVID to her becoming a college student at SDSU was, "I'd say about sixty percent," with the other parts contributed from her family's expectations, "my mom would kill me if I didn't go to college" and the rest her own internal desire to achieve.

Figure 5. Kendra's Case Study Code Map

Cross-case Analysis: Five SDSU Students

This cross-case comparison considered the five cases collectively and examined the cases for intersections of themes as well as divergences (Yin, 2003). The analysis is intended to deepen understanding of the college experiences shared by the five AVID program graduates and what factors were most influential in regard to their transition and persistence at SDSU. The focus group transcript data and representative quotes were used extensively in this cross-case analysis in order to capture the reactions of the participants to the emerging themes from the individual interviews. Three common themes emerged from the data reduction process and represent the data collected from the participant interviews and focus group session: (1) family influences, (2) AVID program influences and (3) getting a college degree.

Family Influences

All five students expressed the centrality of their families in support of their personal goals about going to college. None of the parents of these students had been to college, and several had not graduated from high school. Their parents had all struggled with financial problems, but had provided a strong foundation of family values and support. Serena shared, “my dad didn’t finish sixth grade, but he’s really smart.” Such foundations may have contributed toward each participant’s drive and a responsibility to improve their status in the community, especially financially, by getting a college degree. The students and their families strongly believed that the path to economic success led through college. Three of the five, José, Serena and Angelina, talked about helping their parents economically when they finished college and had secured a high paying job.

Since all the students lived at home, their parents, to some degree, were monetarily supporting them. In Angelina's case, she shared her mother's car to get to and from school. Only Serena did not work to contribute to her education, since her husband supported her, although she had worked in high school and was "saving for college." José emotionally expressed how he needed to pay back his family for their sacrifices. He mentioned his grandfather's experience as the source of his motivation,

I try to understand that, that motivation he needed, that struggle, when he went through it, so that for some reason I could be attending San Diego State. He went through a lot of that suffering, through all those hardships, during his time in Mexico, then here in California. And for some reason I'm here, I need to take advantage of that.

This comment from José during the focus group sparked more conversation around the sacrifices that their parents had made so that their children could succeed. Each participant shared statements of commitment and responsibility to their families.

José, Serena and Angelica talked about their social support network centered primarily on their families and home communities. Each also had older siblings in college. Two participants, José and Serena, had older siblings attending SDSU, while Angelica's older brother attended a local community college. All three participants reported the availability of these sibling-mentors as a positive influence. In addition, José, Serena and Angelica's circle of social activities and significant interactions were deeply embedded in their home communities. Kendra, although close to her immediate family, formed close ties through recent membership in her SDSU sorority and localized her social activities with this group away from her home community. Sandra, although

expressing closeness to her family, was the only participant to indicate her unhappiness with her inability to develop social connections at the university.

For Angelina, Serena and José, the existence of a strong two-parent family network, and an older sibling in college, may have reduced the need for social integration at the university and account for the expressed lack of desire for that integration on the part of three of the five participants.

Table 3 summarizes some of the family influences reported by the participants, which influenced their college transition experience.

Table 3. Summary of Family Influences

	2 Parent Household	Focus of social networks	Reported SES	Sibling in college
Serena	Yes	Family and church community	Low	Yes (1 older sister)
Sandra	No	Extended family	Low	No
José	Yes	Family, SDSU friends and community	Low	Yes (1 older brother)
Angelica	Yes	Family and high school friends	Low	Yes (1 older brother)
Kendra	No	Family and college sorority	Low	No

AVID Program Influences

Although all the participants knew their parents supported them, they also knew that their parents lacked the information and experience to help them gain admittance to a

university. In his study of urban Mexican-American adolescents, Stanton-Salazar (2001) found, “Youngsters in many Mexican-origin communities have immigrant parents who provide moral support, but who are not equipped to assist in the career decision-making process. Adolescents are really on their own” (p. 294). The AVID program filled this informational gap for the participants by providing an accessible four-year elective college preparation program. The program specifically recruited students “in the middle” who were underrepresented at four-year universities and among the first in their families to go to college.

From the voices of these five SDSU students’, it is possible to identify some key elements that they attributed to making a difference in getting into college. AVID, all five recounted, offered a place where they were able to develop their academic selves, and they felt reinforced by others who shared the AVID experience with them. Serena sentiment, “Well, I think I’m naturally like this, but I think AVID brought it out more in me,” was shared by several participants who believed that their AVID experiences strengthened their own individual drive to succeed.

A vital part of the AVID experience for these students consisted of being part of a safe school space where caring teacher-advocates and supportive families interacted, shared information and created roadmaps to access higher education.

All of the participants credited AVID with helping them get into college. When asked what they, as former AVID students, had in common, the answer was that they all had the same goal – get into and finish college. Repeated behaviors tended to become habitual and therefore less visible to the individual. Cornell note-taking was such a practice for AVID students. When asked in the focus group what else they all had in

common, the response was “Cornell notes!” This was greeted with laughter and universal agreement.

AVID also offered a safe place at school for these students to access their personal goals supported by an influential teacher who nourished their potential. As Sandra expressed it:

Once I got into AVID, that’s when everything started falling into place. AVID preaching to you about why you need to do it, all the information. And they convinced me, you know? And I haven’t changed my mind. So, I think it’s probably from the beginning of high school, when I learned about the benefits, because I didn’t know very much about college before then.

Their AVID teachers offered advocacy in an atmosphere that promoted achievement, targeted tangible goals, and provided a curriculum that supported college requirements. Serena expressed her experience: “ There were so many resources that you get from AVID, advice and counseling information, and the discipline to set goals for yourself. How you learn, not just about academics but about everything.” Angelica then added, “AVID was like a second family and it was just a good learning experience.” Sandra agreed and shared her high school AVID experience saying,

We were all on the same page there and I think that played a role in why we were so close, because a lot of us did go through divorce, and families that struggled, and we were not the richest people. The whole fact of all of us having so many things in common, and especially this drive, made it much more important to help and listen to each other.

José expressed how he felt AVID actually connected students who didn't have the family support he did. He related, "I think that some people find [AVID] as a common ground so that they can be something to each other, that they can build together."

Table 4 displays the participants' AVID experiences and their current use of core study strategies gleaned from the interview data.

Table 4. AVID Experiences Summary Matrix

Name	Years in AVID	% AVID contributed to getting into college	Core AVID Strategies Used in College		
			Cornell Notes	Study Groups	Professor Contact
Serena	4	40%	often	some	no
Sandra	4	100%	often	none	some
José	4	35-40%	rarely	often	no
Angelica	5	33%	often	some	no
Kendra	3	60%	often	some	yes

Jackson (2003) suggested that a set of behaviors form an essential part of developing a strong academic identity. These behaviors include, "completing homework, reading independently, studying seriously for tests, striving for good grades, mastering and using proper English, paying attention to the teacher, asking questions and getting help, signing up for specific academic courses, and choosing to obey loosely enforced rules" (p. 581). Throughout the interviews and during the focus group session, it became evident that part of each student's AVID experience included the ongoing development of an academic identity. Some evidence can be found in the participants' own words, and in their maintenance of a persistent, if somewhat uneven, academic focus.

José proudly mentioned how he set the criteria for excellence in one of his high school classes, “He uses my work as an example of how that's the standard for getting an A in his class. So that's why I'm proud that I challenged myself and I could accomplish it.” José continues to want a challenge in college and to discover his academic potential. He said he’s looking forward to “the upper level courses where I know it’s basically more challenging.” Serena surprised herself by how much she loved being in college. She said, “I loved it [college] from the beginning. I just felt so comfortable.” She continued, “As I’m getting more into my major, I love it - accounting is so cool.” Kendra, although saying many times that she was scared of failing academic challenges, reflected that in college, “it's even crazier now but you figure out what you can and can't handle. And I guess my learning experience right now, is you learn so much all at once.” Sandra alone out of the five had serious academic challenges. Nevertheless, she persisted in finding ways to improve her academic performance. She said, “Yeah, I can't mess around. You know, three hours I was just right here [in the library] and normally I would be bored, like I'm ready to be done with this now. I'll be able to handle it you know?”

Getting A College Degree

The third and most compelling theme emerged in both the individual interviews and the focus group session was the repeated statement reflecting their drive to “get a college degree.” Sandra told the focus group,

Well, I just really want my degree! I want it bad enough that I'll stay in, even though, you know, school isn't my favorite thing, and that's all that's keeping me here, really. I just really want my degree.

José then added to the focus group conversation the deep source of his motivation to stay in college and get his degree.

Well basically I've had the drive since I was seven. I used to work in the fields for my grandfather and my dad, so I know how hard it is to work in the fields, and actually picking and planting and doing all the labor. I've had all the jobs that you can possibly think of, construction, landscaping, and working under the sun and I've actually worked my ass off just to get paid, and I don't want that. And coming from the low social economic community of South Bay, I see my friends getting into drugs, getting into gangs, getting beat up or whatever, and I don't want that life. I just want to have my degree and actually, you know, live comfortably, and instead of getting respect on the street I want my degree to get respect, that's the way I see it.

The group nodded in agreement. Serena emphasized her firm commitment to finish her education by saying, "I know I'm staying in, I'm staying in for the long run, and I'm gonna get this degree, and I'm gonna do good, it's the goal. It's the prize at the end that really keeps you going." Angelica added,

What motivates me is that I know that, pretty much like José said, that I'm not gonna want to be doing what my mom does for a living, and that's cleaning. I actually want to do something better, and I know that I can't get a good job without a degree, and now it's not even a bachelors, it has to be a master's in order to get a real job. So then, I think that's my biggest motivation knowing that I don't want to be working in the same situation that my mom is, and I want to do things in my life. I want to go places, I want to get things and have things. Yeah.

Kendra felt that “Staying here [in college] is realizing that you have to do it for yourself. And when I got here you really are on your own, your mom's not here, she's not holding your hand.” Sandra defiantly told the group, “They haven’t given me a spot for nothing.”

Through the voices of these five SDSU students we can identify some key elements that made a difference for them. Commonly highlighted were the influence of strong, consistent family support. Additionally, these students wanted to be able to fully participate in the benefits of the dominant culture, which was accessible through higher education. In order to attend the university, the participants needed a program like AVID to provide them with a blueprint for action. AVID offered a place where these underrepresented students were able to develop an academic self, reinforced daily by a teacher-advocate along with the peers who shared the class with them. These five AVID students echoed what Nieto (1994) said about the diverse group of non-AVID high school students she interviewed: “These students can be characterized by an indomitable resilience and a steely determination to succeed” (p. 423).

University Of California at San Diego as Context

Founded in 1960, The University of California at San Diego (UCSD) was designed as a research institution commissioned to spearhead United States scientific efforts during the Cold War. Early on, top research scientists in many disciplines were recruited to staff the new university. UCSD has grown over the last thirty years into a campus of approximately 19,000 undergraduate students in six distinct colleges: Revelle, Muir, Marshall, Warren, Roosevelt and Sixth. Each college has its own set of core course requirements and its own curricular emphasis. The school is part of the University of

California system and enrolls predominately high achieving students. In 2002, UCSD had 41,354 students applying as first-time freshman and of those, only 4,243 (10%) were admitted (*University of California, San Diego: Common data set 2002-2003*, 2003). As one of the top three public universities in California, there is stiff competition for admission. Students are advised they must exceed the minimum admission requirements in order to be considered. California residents are given preference over non-residents; however applicants must still meet a required GPA and entrance test score quota. The average student profile for entering freshmen in 2002 was a combined SAT I score of 1,234 and a high school GPA of 3.94.

The UCSD freshman class of fall 2002 consisted of 1,903 (45%) men and 2,338 (55%) women. The ethnic diversity for this class was distributed into: African American, 1%; American Indian, 0.05%; Asian, 39%; Hispanic, 11%, White, 35% and not stated, 12%. Additionally, two percent, or 71 students were classified as nonresident aliens (*University of California, San Diego: Common data set 2002-2003*, 2003). All three of the participants at this study site were of Latino heritage, and part of the underrepresented ethnic population at UCSD. Unfortunately, there were no African American or American Indian admits in the fall 2002 class who were also former AVID students. Therefore, other underrepresented groups were not included in this study.

Typically, UCSD freshmen and sophomores live on campus in a residence hall or apartment located in the vicinity of their respective colleges. All three of the UCSD study participants lived on campus, and had since their freshmen year. All three also owned cars and used them to commute to part-time jobs off campus.

UCSD Case Studies

Table 5 summarizes some of the background information about the three student participants attending UCSD as first-time freshmen in the fall of 2002. The chart includes the participants' gender, high school GPA, numbers of AP classes taken and the total SAT I scores. The second part of the chart gives the participants' living arrangements, their college at UCSD and declared major. Note that all three participants fell below the average criteria for UCSD entrance.'

Table 5. Comparative Background Data for UCSD Participants

Name	Gender	HS GPA	# AP classes taken	Total SAT I scores	Living on campus	UCSD College	Major	College GPA: 2/ 2004
Samuel	M	3.54	6	1100	Yes	Sixth	Physics	2.01
Carlita	F	3.69	1	1190	Yes	Revelle	Biology	2.33
Antonio	M	3.96	6	890	Yes	Warren	Engineering	2.45

In the following section the cases of these 3 participants are explored in depth. The participants' motivation to achieve academically and their use of core academic strategies learned in AVID will clarify factors that the participants indicated had contributed to their persistence at the university.

Case Study 6: Samuel- The Videogame Ace

I met Samuel in front of the UCSD library. He wore khaki colored baggy pants, a scruffy sweatshirt and a UCSD baseball cap on backwards. At first glance, his Latino heritage was not evident given his pale skin, light brown hair and eyes. Samuel's intensity, however, was immediately apparent as we introduced ourselves and began the first interview. During the first interview, I realized Samuel was a paradox; shy and self-

deprecating one moment and arrogantly bragging the next. These contradictions persisted during our subsequent interview and focus group session. I found myself fascinated by his intelligence and concerned about his self-defeating behaviors which could potentially derail his college education.

Family Influences. Samuel is the oldest of four siblings with one brother and two sisters. His parents, married for many years, have strongly supported Samuel's efforts to pursue higher education. They approved of his enrollment in AVID in eighth grade and knew that he was a gifted mathematics student. His mom is of Mexican heritage and his dad is French. Samuel went into detail about his father, who was adopted and brought to the United States as a young child, who still speaks French. Daniel, trying to appease both sides of his heritage decided to study Spanish in high school for mom and French in college for his dad. When describing how his parents interacted, Samuel said, "Yeah, he's more like my friend and he always jokes 'cause he had me really young and he's gonna be 40 when I'm 20. My mom's more like the enforcer and my dad [says] okay, you can slide on this."

Samuel is the first in his family to go to college and feels a great deal of responsibility to be a good example for his three siblings and extended family. "I'm not only the oldest out of my brothers and sisters, but all my cousins in California. So going to college is not only like a role model to them but to all my cousins." Samuel continued, "My family drives me because I know if I don't succeed I know they're gonna be disappointed. And so mainly if I let them down I get mad [at myself]."

Samuel has very close ties with his family and although he now lives on the UCSD campus, he comes home regularly. He has found himself in a helping role with his sisters, a role which developed only since he's been in college. He said,

My sisters, they always call me up and ask me to help them out with mathematics and so I can help teach mathematics, you know. For some reason we don't fight anymore. I'm always helping them out rather than pestering them, it's so crazy. And my sister Maria, she's still in middle school, she's gonna get in AVID next year.

Samuel found that moving away from home and becoming more responsible for himself, combined with significant academic challenges altered the way he interacted with his family in a positive, more mature way. Samuel has also developed closer ties with his father around their joint interest in computers. He explained,

My dad took a couple of courses at the JC for programming and he'd show me. I'd write the program and it's a cool video game, you know. That's what kind of started my interest 'cause I wanted to write the video games that I play. Last year [at UCSD] I kind of knew how to program 'cause my dad showed me a little bit but then he [the professor] went into so much detail it was like, 'Oh I have to teach my dad this,' so I went home and I taught my dad.

Samuel recognized his responsibility to be a role model for his extended family and realized the way he managed college would be watched by a critical but caring extended family.

Preparing for College. Samuel was identified in middle school as a student with academic potential. He told me,

Well, in sixth grade the first thing my mathematics teacher said was we'll take a test and if you do very well on the test you're going to start working out of an eighth grade mathematics book. My dad's been telling me, you know, math is so easy - you've gotta have fun with it. So, I had fun with it. And then I ended up acing that test and I was just so happy 'cause I got that eighth grade book and I was walking around campus and the eighth graders said, 'That's my book what are you doing with it?' So it just went up from there.

Samuel decided in middle school that he would get to calculus before he finished high school. He shared with me how he'd been contacted and recruited into AVID.

In seventh [grade] I got a letter and it said you've been nominated for AVID and so I went out of class and I was told [about AVID], I wasn't paying attention to the lecture but she passed around some paperwork and I signed it and I said okay put me in. And then I joined. This would help me, you know, and plus this will help me get into calculus my senior year.

Samuel knew he wanted to go to college. He also realized in middle school that his connection to college information, an interested teacher and a safe space to be with other peers who wanted college was AVID. Samuel stayed in AVID all four years of high school. He described the program at his high school as:

It's like I feel that it keeps you on track, it gets you organized and like it's like good for support, emotionally, they're there, they're your friends. When you come in there you're amongst your peers and everybody's there trying to do the same thing- get into college and so like they don't put you down, you know, and they just like basically encourage you to do better.

Samuel learned how to use collaborative study groups in his high school AVID classes. Students received instruction in the Socratic method of inquiry and worked on shared course areas such as mathematics, English or science. These tutorial sessions took place twice a week with college tutors working with smaller groups of students grouped in content areas. Samuel explained how these sessions worked.

During tutorial, we'd ask the question and then like the tutor would go over it and then everybody would write it down. But everybody would work on the problem, you know, and if they got stuck they'd ask a question.

Samuel felt that AVID was his connection to college both emotionally and through the information and preparation that his AVID teacher, Ms. T, provided. When pressed for more specifics, Samuel told me,

AVID kept me on track for my deadlines, and they helped me know what to put down. I'd go and I'd usually talk to Ms. T. like about either SAT stuff or application stuff. I came in one day and I had a question between two colleges. I wanted to put UCSD as my backup school and I also wanted to go to USC. There was an AVID scholarship, and I said I know USC is gonna say yes, so I didn't apply for the AVID scholarship which I should have 'cause UCS said no. And then she also was a teacher of my brother so I'd ask her how's my brother doing, to check up on him you know, and stuff like that.

Samuel, although supported by his AVID teacher, did not feel he challenged enough in his other coursework. In fact, he now attributes his lack of focus and counterproductive behavior to his feeling of being shortchanged in high school.

Like I guess all throughout my whole high school like I felt I wasn't being challenged enough. I'd be able to pull off maybe not doing my homework 'til the morning before, so I guess that happened my senior year and my grades started to suffer towards the end. [There were] a lot of books that I didn't get to read that I wanted to read like *Catch 22*, I never read that book. Because those honors students read [those books] and I only became AP my senior year. I guess it affected my personal life as well 'cause I was mad. So I started fighting with my friends and stuff.

Samuel's current perspective, as a college sophomore, made him realize that his high school coursework did not prepare him as well as he needed to be for the rigorous coursework at the university. He added:

I'm serious. In college prep we were given all the basics but these people in Honors are reading all these really good books and we did do some good books like *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet*, but all the other books were just missing.

Samuel's AVID teacher began pushing him to get into AP classes his junior year of high school. Mathematics was always his strong subject. "It was my goal in middle school to get into calculus before I graduated and I ended up doing that my junior year, so I was really pumped about that." English was more of a challenge. Samuel said,

Ms. T said it [AP] looks better on college applications so I was like okay. I asked her junior year, should I take this English class? And she said, 'do you feel that you're ready?' and I said, I want to be challenged 'cause, you know, I want to prove that I'm good. And I ended up taking seven classes my senior year.

When asked to explain what differences he had noticed between AP and College Prep coursework, Samuel reported,

In College Prep they don't really yell at you that much to do your homework and in AP she makes sure that you do your homework, you read and you're on track. Then as far as essays, she's more strict with the rules and stuff. But she didn't really care about the structure that they'd been teaching us in College Prep. She said, 'I want to hear your voice not the structure,' so I thought that was kind of cool and I actually did better on my essays in that class than I did in my College Prep classes. But you can't procrastinate in an AP class so my grades suffered, you know, so I had to change my whole routine.

Samuel took four AP classes his senior year, Advanced Calculus, English Literature, Spanish and Government. His tendency to postpone his assignments and to do work at the last minute was a habit Samuel found difficult to overcome. The class structure and weekly binder checks required in AVID his senior year kept him focused through some difficult months. Samuel said,

I think AVID burns it in your head that you need to take notes, you need to do time management. For a while it was redundant. Some people get mad and then they drop out because we've heard this story four years in a row. You know, I guess I always saw the purpose behind it, that's why I stayed, plus my friends wouldn't let me drop out. Yeah, they really thought it would help me and it ended up, 'cause like I probably wouldn't have taken notes unless they forced me to.

Cornell style note-taking had become an ingrained habit for Samuel. He also indicated the importance of his friends to push, encourage and prod him into doing what he knew benefited him in the long run.

Samuel finally heard from the colleges he had applied to. He said, “When I heard that I got accepted to UCSD I was so excited and my parents got all excited for me.” This was a significant event for the family. However, Samuel found that his acceptance was soon in jeopardy. As he explained the sequence of events to me, his anxiety resurfaced. His voice rose several notches and he began repeatedly twisting his hands. He said, “When I first got admitted they rescinded my application 'cause I...I got a bad grade in Government AP.” He continued,

The summer when they were rescinding my admission, I was like, oh, now what am I gonna do? I can't let everybody know that I've been dropped out. But then they [parents] found the paper on my desk and so it just unfolded. My parents were so mad. I went from one of the best colleges to having to go to the JC. And then I actually ended up receiving more help from my family because of that.

Samuel ended up passing the AP Government exam and his teacher changed his grade because, “she found the essay that I turned in, so she changed it up two letters, from a D to a B, and they're like okay well you can come in [to UCSD] now.” Samuel knew that he had created part of this crisis himself through a failure to meet deadlines and do the required classwork. Since the AVID curriculum emphasized organizational skills, I was curious about why Samuel didn't use the skills he had been taught. He answered my question indirectly when asked about his experience in AVID and what he might like to tell Ms. T. as a sophomore university student. He said,

I'd go back and I'd tell her that I'm more involved. I want to tell her thank you for teaching me all this stuff 'cause it's a lot easier now. I'd go back and I'd tell her thanks for your help and that really those people who don't make it - it's not your fault, it's their fault. The one night when I got rescinded, I knew it's not her fault, it's my fault, I didn't get in, I wasn't on track. She tried to help me and I just wanted to tell her thank you and she's an awesome teacher. You know, I wish the best for her. She's always extended herself and I wish I could do that and I'm trying to do that for others- kind of like the pay it forward type thing.

Transitioning to College. Samuel, once officially admitted to UCSD, had some difficult transitions to make to both the academic and cultural conditions he found there. The first hurdle had to do with financial issues. Part of his inner turmoil revolved around his family's financial sacrifices due to several loans they had taken out to pay for the first year of his education. Samuel alluded several times to his distress and concern about how his family was supporting him financially, including his realization that failure to achieve academically would cause significant family distress. He told me,

Like last year we took out a bunch of loans to pay for my school. My dad took out a parent loan, which was like \$13,000 and then I could only take out so much and I've taken it all out. Then that was fine last year, but then they raised tuition so I ended up having to take another loan out last year and this year my dad can't afford to take out another loan so I had to take out like three loans and I still haven't paid it all off. So it's just it's a bummer.

Samuel reflected on his first impressions as a UCSD student and how it felt to be part of the community there.

It's weird but, well I guess it's because I'm in college and they tell you you're the best of the best, so like you kind of get, like you're high up there. It's really cool people and like they all help you out. It's academically known you're smart and stuff like that. So just like the environment I would say is pretty good, it helps a lot more than at home.

I asked Samuel about the differences between living at home and living on campus. He had this to say about his transition between the two.

Well at first it was very difficult. I'm living on campus and at home I'd always have my mom, she'd do my laundry, she'd cook, you know. But now I have to go out to the cafeteria and get the food, I have to go the laundromat to do my laundry so I have all these new chores I have to do. You have to get comfortable with being away from home. At first it was, 'Yes! No parents, no rules,' but then you start to realize why those rules are there and it ends up all falling into place and you finally find your groove after maybe fifth week of first quarter. So, like at first, I would be goofing off, you know, not doing my homework. I'd miss a couple of classes. But then the midterms came and I was totally clueless, you know, I don't know what's going on. And so then I started going to class 'cause I had to and then someone else had told me like not going to class is like wasting 80 bucks a class or something. I was like okay, well my dad's gonna get mad. But it [transition] was pretty difficult just emotionally.

Samuel's chose to spend long hours playing video games, and not attending class regularly or doing homework consistently, caught up with him at the end of the first quarter of his freshman year.

First quarter they [grades] were like Cs and Bs, you know, I could have done better but it just I didn't - even in math. I don't need to go to math lecture, I'm the bomb, you know, so I didn't go to lecture and then I missed one or two quizzes 'cause they were surprise ones. So that was my fault, but I passed, you know, next one I'll go to every lecture.

When asked about specific study changes he'd made since last year, Samuel asserted,

After the first quarter, I went from waking up early to do my homework in the morning to staying up late at night, you know, working on it. I ended up asking friends for help 'cause study groups are a lot better. I ended up reading, like with the book I looked at the pictures, okay this is what happened, but then I'd read and then I'd start to understand more, you know, the process. I guess my reading comprehension went up 'cause I actually read this time.

Samuel also shared that he discovered he needed someone to help him stay on track. He told me, "Someone needs to get on my case, my mom's not here anymore. You know because your mom's there to kind of absorb it all for you." Samuel had struggled with self-discipline. He gave some further insight into his difficulty to stay on task when we explored his videogame addiction.

It's not my fault. My parents are trying to get me to do that [give up videogames]. My mom said I can't bring my games here. My roommates say you need to pull the 'you're eighteen card,' they're [parents] not the boss of you anymore. I said, 'No, my mom says she's the boss of me until I'm twenty-five.' She says men don't grow up until they're twenty-five.

This diffusion of responsibility has also been problematic in his social relationships. His success in finding friends and being in a leadership position at his college vastly expanded his social life and increased his social networking. However, the exciting social dimension of his college experience caused Samuel to further neglect his academics. As we discussed the social and cultural transition to college, Samuel filled me in on his high school persona and contrasted it with his UCSD experience.

In high school I was very passive. I'd go to clubs in high school and then I wouldn't be the person that spoke, I'd be the person in the back, you know, just tell me what to do and I'll do it. It's just it's like a giant switch, you know, I'm used to being like a computer nerd, you know, playing computer games all day and then talking with my friends at night. Hanging out. Then it just went from, okay, study in the morning, party, then homework. And because I have a car I drove people to the parties and stuff so it's just I went from antisocial to like really social.

Samuel realized his party behavior and his concern about impressing his new friends was in direct conflict with his own stated goals of academic success. He acknowledged,

I'm learning how to say it better, you know, 'cause before I was just a pushover, you know, everybody would say, 'Samuel you want to go to a party?' I can't say no to them 'cause I was afraid that I might hurt their feelings, but now it's like, okay, it won't hurt their feelings, so just say no.

As Samuel described his strong social connections, I began to ask for more details about his academics and specifically which AVID strategies, if any, he found to be useful

now. We discussed the reading and writing challenges he faced his freshman year and what tactics he currently employed to address his assignments.

Normally in high school we'd have an essay and I'd spend two days thinking, what am I gonna write, how am I gonna start, you know? I was totally scared I was gonna fail the essay. But then in AP English she told us just write the first thing that comes to your mind 'cause it's always the best. That's what I'd do and I'd end up getting good grades. So here [UCSD] I'm a little bit worried, I go do the essay 'cause I know how to do this essay. Everybody else is coming up with stuff in their head and I'm like, okay, wait, just wait for it and then it'll pop in your head. And then I start writing and I just go for it and then if I mess up I'll scratch it off and rewrite it and it's just so much easier now.

Samuel went into more particulars about how he had connected what he had learned in high school with the demands of college writing and how he had come to understand some of the tacit requirements for academic writing at the university. He said,

Yeah, here in college they told us don't listen to the formulas or whatever you learned in high school. You basically have to pick a side and then you have to provide so much evidence to prove it. We found out that if you pick the side of the professor it helps you too. Or you can pick the side against the professor, but you have to totally prove him wrong and that way you're getting better grades than the other side.

Samuel related how he had developed a learning style that works for him and includes the multiple modalities of seeing, writing and speaking. This is an indication of

the growth of his academic identity and his ability to describe metacognitively how he has learned how to learn.

Being in college I think I have to read it or see it and then write it and then say it. I'll look up the word and then I'll read maybe three pages and then I'll put a line underneath one of the sentences and I'll write, he's talking about blah, blah, blah here and then if I have an opinion I'll put that into my essay. And if I just read it, I'll forget it. That's what happened in French. I'd read it and then I'd forget it. If I read it and then I call my dad and speak it to him it like sticks in my head somehow and like I guess it's the way with mathematics too, you have to read it and then you have to write it. And if it's serious reading, like if I had to read like 400 pages by tomorrow, then I'd have to either come here [library] or I'd have to lock myself in my room and just turn everything off.

When asked about taking notes in class, Samuel said, "I think I had to teach to myself, well like I mean AVID teaches you, to take notes as you go." When asked for more information, Samuel filled me in on his current note-taking strategies.

In AVID they tell us Cornell notes but I couldn't get the whole questions down 'cause I thought I would take too much time. So I'd just write like key points and then if one of my points affects another one I'd throw in an arrow and I'd add little notes. My notes are like really messy because of all of this. But afterwards, right before the test when I'd read the note I'd totally understand. I put JW something and that'd be John W. Dawson and I'd know totally what that was.

Part of connecting with the academic community is making an effort to meet with professors outside of class. AVID students practice how to talk to their teachers in high

school, and are strongly encouraged to do it in college. I was curious about Samuel's efforts to connect with his professors, especially since he had indicated he skipped class fairly regularly.

At first, yeah, I was like whoa how do you talk to a professor? There's already 100 students, you know, he's not gonna remember my name. And that was first quarter, then second quarter I actually went up and introduced myself and I wanted to go visit them during office hours but I never did. I would e-mail them occasionally, look I have a problem with this, you know, can you help me out?

Samuel found after his first two quarters that he had to change his study pattern in order to learn the class material and be prepared for the lectures. A family problem also helped him find a way to get to know a professor last year.

I was having family problems and I had to talk to my professors about it. It was kind of nice that they knew my name when I walked in. It's like, well professor I'm having a problem. My parents are out of the country, I've had to baby sit my brothers and sisters, can you help me? They told me that they really want people to stop by 'cause they're lonely which is kind of scary, but they want you to stop by and say 'hi.' They want to know that you find the information interesting. It's on me that I do have to put like not only my TA's office hours but like my professors' office hours on my calendar so if I have a question I'll go visit them.

Yeah, I started to do the homework the night before or like a week in advance so that way if I had questions I could go to the professor's office hours and ask him.

Samuel made a deeper connection with the professor who shared a common passion for programming during the third quarter of his freshman year. Samuel told me,

So actually spring quarter, I was taking my first cognitive science programming class, and I had to talk to the professor 'cause I had to crash the class. I was forced to talk to him and then I would end up having to show up to his office hours 'cause I needed to get a whole bunch of things signed and what ended up happening was we started talking about programming. He really loves what he's into and so he learned my name and I would e-mail him and he called me back and stuff. I'd go in to do the homework and I'd say okay I did the program, can you check it for me really quick, and he'd be like, oh sure.

This positive connection with one professor encouraged Samuel to approach other faculty members and attempt to connect with them during his second year at UC.

Another important aspect of being connected academically and socially to college is the participation in study groups. This is also a cornerstone AVID practice, which Samuel had extensive experience with in high school. When asked about his participation in study groups, Samuel found these groups so important to his learning that he frequently organized them. He said,

Last year I lived in a [residence] Hall so there were 20 people to one common area and I would write an essay and then all those people in the same class, they'd read it and I'd read theirs then we'd write and say how you can change this part. And it ended up helping us out a lot. I got all my grammar corrected and stuff. I learned that having more than one person read your essay is way better than just having your mom read it.

This year Samuel took the three quarter physics sequence and met with a group every week. He described how the study group operated by saying,

We get a quiz in physics every Friday and so it's very easy 'cause he gives us a homework assignment on Monday and so we have all week and then on Thursdays he goes over the answers. So I mean I'll do the math. I'll do the homework on Tuesday and then I end up helping my friends with that 'cause I'm really good with the math and the physics, then that helps me study. So we had the four of us just studying and we'd be doing the physics problems together and whenever someone got stuck we'd all try, it was kind of crazy at first 'cause we were all trying to help him at the same time, but eventually one would help him and then if that one got stuck, help them too.

During our first interview, I asked Samuel if he used a planner as taught in AVID and to describe how he kept himself on track as far as assignments, tests and other events. Apparently, Sixth College, the newest college at UCSD with a focus on technology, gave Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) to all entering students. Samuel used his to keep organized after having some problems fall and winter quarters with scheduling important events. He explained,

The PDA is kind of like my planner. I keep all my classes in there as well as all my meetings and then I make a monthly calendar for my events, I'll put a monthly calendar on my wall and I'll say, okay, this time I need to go meet with finance to get money approved. This time I have to go home because my dad wants me to help him work and stuff. And I map out everything. I didn't do it so much last year, but then spring quarter I started doing it 'cause it helped me out.

In our next interview I asked Samuel about the top three strategies he had found most useful from his time in the AVID program. He replied,

I would say definitely [Cornell] notes is number one. And then time management would be like number two. And then number three would have to be study groups. Because you have to have study groups if you want to get the A+. I learned that the hard way.

Samuel's transition experiences included testing his academic limits by experimenting with skipping class, realizing the academic consequences and making efforts to change some self-defeating behaviors. He became much more socially active and formed friendships within his college at the dorm. His new social interactions brought peer pressure to participate in partying and videogames, both of which Samuel had a hard time refusing. Some of these ongoing struggles became more apparent as Samuel moved into his second year of college.

Persisting in College. As Samuel reflected on what he had learned his first year, he told me about some internal changes which had resulted in his realizing that choosing alternative behaviors were necessary if he wanted to stay in school.

I've changed a little bit. I'm learning a lot, which is the most important, especially about myself, through all these things. And if I really push myself to go to class more, I think I'll get an even better experience. I'm kind of comfortable where I am. I've done the leadership thing and now it's fun. I have the friends thing, that's fun. I'm learning a lot of stuff, and it's not boring stuff like you learn in high school, it's fun stuff, you know, hands on stuff.

During our second interview following the fall quarter of his sophomore year, I asked Samuel about his quarter grades. He told me, "I passed some of my classes, like one. I passed Physics with an A-. But the one that I didn't pass was Ethnic Studies. I

didn't really go to class and so that's probably why I didn't pass." Surprised, I asked him what had happened. He replied,

I guess I got kind of bored and then I stopped going and just doing the reading. I missed a couple pop quizzes. And that's what dropped my grade back. Because that happens a lot now, I'm just getting lazy. Last quarter I was really involved with the council. And so I'd get really tired and then I don't want to go [to class] you know. But now I'm off the council. I just had to step down.

Samuel had failed a class during his second year, and withdrawn from another. He earned a winter quarter GPA of less than 2.0, which caused other repercussions. He lost eligibility and had to step down from the leadership council of his college. During this portion of our interview, I felt distressed about his grades and concerned that his stated goals and plans could be compromised by his self-defeating behaviors. I was also curious to find out what Samuel had learned about himself during this most recent setback. He said,

To a certain extent I've been wanting to get off the council for a long time now.

Yeah, it was my responsibility to decorate the college and I had to drop it because of school. So, I mean I kind of feel bad that I had to leave all my work on them, at the same time I needed to do it, you know.

I then asked him, "Okay on a scale one low, to ten high, how committed are you to attaining your academic goals?" He replied, "I'd say I'm like an eight or a nine." When asked what was holding him back, he answered, "The video games. If I leave the videogames at home, I'll be more focused. But at the same time my friends get mad at

me. The videogames are important because it's also an entertainment factor; it's a popularity factor."

Samuel went on to explain the continuing tension he felt between the social pressure to party from his roommates and friends and the studying he knew he needed to do.

But I'm getting better. I mean lately my roommates say, hey Sam, we need to get this [videogame win], and I'm like no, I have to go to class. And I tell them that but like they keep pushing, 'Sam, I need you to beat this.' Because I'm supposed to be the best [video gamer]. And they're like 'Sam, I need you to do this, Sam, you need to do this.' No, I have to go to class. If I don't go to class then I'm gonna be kicked out. I guess that's my choice. I tell my roommates, no I can't go to a party, I have a study group. I guess it's been my excuse for a lot of things now because people say, 'Oh Sam, let's go hang out,' I'm like, no I have a study group. Can't go. And they totally won't get mad at me, they say, 'Okay, I understand.'

When asked how he was doing so far the second quarter, he said, "So far so good. I haven't missed class. I haven't missed a homework assignment and I've done all my reading. I want to get a 4.0." In spite of these statements, Samuel recognized his difficulty in refusing those socially important others and showed ambivalence about his own resolve in resisting the constant peer pressure, even though his future as a UCSD student was at stake.

In another equally problematic area, a serious financial issue also threatened Samuel's college persistence. In the second interview, Samuel shared his preoccupation about finding enough money to pay for rising school tuition and living expenses. He said,

Yeah, like I've been receiving e-mails from finance saying that I haven't paid. A lot of my friends had the same problems and they started dropping out. I'm afraid that I'm gonna have to drop, or start commuting, so that way I save the housing money. Because fees went up, my parents and I, we thought we can just take out the same amount of loans we did last quarter and be fine. But that ended up not happening. We ended up going to take out another loan and it didn't come in time so I had all these holds on my account. I couldn't register for classes. And then fees are going up again next year. I took out more loans and I don't really want my parents to take on any more loans because they're already giving me a hard time. I want to take on the loans, but I'm only allowed so many.

Samuel, obviously distressed by his financial shortfall, continued with a more detailed explanation of what he had lived through trying to get the money to register for classes a few weeks ago.

Yeah, last week, Friday, was the last day to pay and on Wednesday they just sent me a letter, okay your classes are going to be dropped if you don't pay. I kept running back and forth between financial aid and billing services, and back and forth. Finally, the money I needed to take the hold off came, and then financial aid is like okay, the money's coming in. Then the billing services says it's not enough. So then I've gotta go back, just go back and forth for like the past two days. I've missed so much class because of that and then I just didn't want to get dropped.

Perhaps because of this recent disruption, Samuel shared how he is coping with the academic and financial stress.

I'm much more on track. I guess I kind of pushed it [the financial problem] aside but it's gonna come back the beginning of February. I have a monthly installment because like we had to defer some of my fees. So it's gonna come back, but I don't think it'll be as stressful as it was before. Now I've experienced this part, I think I'll be able to do it much quicker the next quarter.

One way to save college costs is to live at home. I asked Samuel how this would change his college experience. He said, "I don't think it would change, I just think my life would become more busy." His schedule would change, and he realized he would spend less time on campus. "I'd have to get up early to drive and guarantee a parking spot then I'm gonna make sure all my classes are close together that way I don't stay here that long and then I go home and study." It was clear during our conversation from his sad facial expressions and voice tone that Samuel did not want to leave campus and move home.

Another conflicted area for Samuel is the choice of his major. In the three months between our first interview and final focus group, Samuel had changed his major three times. He told me,

I'm actually thinking of changing my major. I'm changing cognitive science to teaching mathematics. I guess I just got bored with computers now. For some reason last year I was so psyched I'm gonna build the terminator, you know? But now, I don't know if that interests me anymore. I've always liked math and I did tell a couple of teachers in high school that I was thinking about it. I'm still deciding on whether I should, but I might change it.

During the focus group session, Samuel announced he had changed his major to Physics. It seemed that since he was doing well in the subject, he had decided it should be

his major. His ambivalence about his academic path may be a result of his increasing stress over financial issues and disappointment about failed classes.

Samuel's lack of focus is evident in many areas of his college experience. He seemed ready to make others happy, even when doing so threatened his own success. Nevertheless, he affirmed his academic goals, as he told me at our last interview, "I definitely want to go to graduate school."

Summary. A concept map visually displays the primary categories identified in Samuel's case from the interview and focus group transcript data in Figure 6. The number of times a category was coded represents the relative frequency of occurrence and is indicated in parentheses below the dominant coding categories that emerged from the interviews.

Samuel experienced a difficult transition to college academics. Although he knew how to study, the decision to actually do so remained a challenge. He struggled with time management and procrastination, and as a result failed one class and withdrew from two others. His self-destructive behaviors have undermined his stated goal – a college degree, and resulted in a downward spiral of poor choices.

The influence of others was a strong consistent element that surfaced in Samuel's interview transcripts numerous times. He realized the social connections he made at UCSD could help him in the future. "The people you meet, they could be really good friends, they can help you study, they can help you get jobs 'cause they know people who know people." The social transition became overwhelming at times for Samuel since he assumed responsibility for other's problems. He alluded to this by saying, "I can deal with the classes. Friends that I make, they have problems. If they're having problems at

home, I worry about them and it affects my schoolwork.” Samuel was very sensitive to the emotions and feelings of others, and what they thought of him. His willingness to become emotionally involved in friends’ problems may have distracted him from focusing on his own troubling issues.

Academically Samuel felt ready for college, with his six AP classes contributing to his preparation, especially in English, mathematics and physics. Samuel’s self-confidence was based on his mathematics aptitude, which was first recognized in sixth grade when he received an invitation to be in AVID and take “eighth grade math.” Samuel consistently emphasized that the AVID program, along with strong advocacy from his high school teacher, Ms. T., had helped him get into UCSD, and without this intervention he would not be at the university.

At UCSD Samuel learned about formerly undeveloped aspects of himself, including council leadership and social acceptance. He was able to analyze what he needs to do to be academically successful in his classes, but has not maintained the required self-discipline to accomplish his stated goals. He craved recognition for his leadership, programming skills and videogame expertise. Although he clearly stated his future goals and knew what he needed to do to get there, he had experienced many barriers to achieving those goals. For Samuel, the stakes were now higher and the financial burden his family assumed gave him an added sense of responsibility to do well at this prestigious and “smart” university.

Figure 6. Samuel's Case Study Code Map

Case Study 7: Carlita- Alias 411

I contacted Carlita by telephone in October 2003 and asked her to participate in this study. After hearing only a few introductory words about it, she agreed enthusiastically, saying, "I love AVID." She suggested we meet in her on-campus apartment where it would be quieter and more comfortable than at the library. She opened her door with a big hello and invited me into the apartment. As we settled at the small kitchen table, Carlita immediately began telling me about herself, her AVID class and the amazing AVID teacher she had kept in almost daily contact with since coming to the university. Carlita was easy to talk to, because of her verbal agility and sense of humor, which also often led us off the topic. Our first interview scheduled to take sixty minutes went on for ninety. She clearly articulated both her current struggles and her college transition experiences with a great deal of detail and openness.

Family Influences. Carlita's family is central to her sense of identity, and motivates her to be successful in college. Her parents divorced before she was in elementary school, but she remains close to both sides of her extended family. When asked about her family, Carlita replied:

My family supports me pretty much a hundred percent. You know it was hard for some of my extended family to understand why I wanted to go to college because no one went to college, and no one goes to college. I have three older cousins, only one of whom went [to college] and graduated. I'm next in line. My immediate family supports me a lot in my decisions and they really want me to go here, and they really want me to stay. My more extended family sometimes is a little bit more like, why are you going to college? Why don't you just go and

work, because that's what people do. So it's not as common for people to go to college especially where my family is from.

Carlita is the first in her family to go to college, and is well aware that the school she's attending is a source of pride for her family. She, as the oldest, is also a role model for her younger siblings. She told me,

Well, I'm first generation college, so neither of my parents went to school. The only person in my family who's ever graduated is my oldest cousin and even she had gotten pregnant her second year at college and it took her six years to finish, but she finished. If I'm going to do this I better do this [well] and I have three younger siblings.

Carlita remembers being quizzed as a freshman in high school by Ms. Z, her English teacher, about her family situation. In retrospect, Carlita realized she was being screened to see if she fit the AVID profile, since Ms. Z also taught the AVID classes.

Ms. Z asked, 'What is your family situation?' And so I told her I came from a single parent family. My parents had been divorced since I was five years old. And you know, lower income, mostly because of the single parent family. I come from a Hispanic background. She said, 'Well, based on your GPA, you might want to consider trying AVID. I think you could do a lot.' Prior to Ms Z, I thought I was going to have to go to a junior college because there was no way I could afford to go to school.

Carlita shared that this interview with Ms. Z. changed her life. Carlita attended a large high school in an upper middle class area of San Diego's north county where students competed to access the 'best' classes and get into the 'best' colleges. Although

Carlita's parents supported her going to college, they did not have the social or cultural capital to help her make it happen.

Preparing for College. Carlita decided to enter the AVID program her sophomore year in high school. She explained to me why she wanted to continue to help the AVID program.

I really do want to give back to the program because there was no way I would have ended up here if it wasn't for AVID. I mean, just the help and support and the constant 'no-you-will-go-to-four-year-university-you-can-afford-it . . . '

Carlita, as a new member of the AVID class, was impressed by the stream of former AVID students, now in college, who came back to visit Ms. Z. Their message was not lost on her.

Kids who graduated would come back. They'd be in town because our breaks were so much different than theirs and they'd come by and see her and we'd always get the college speeches like, college is hard but it's worth it.

Once she joined the AVID class, Carlita immersed herself in AVID extracurricular activities and became a leader within the group. She found a safe space surrounded by peers who wanted college as badly as she did. When asked about high school activities she had taken part in, Carlita responded:

I didn't do many extracurricular activities other than AVID. I was AVID Treasurer my senior year, so fund raising was huge but AVID was my big thing. I ran for student council once, didn't happen. And I tried to go on the debate team, that didn't happen, either. I felt very comfortable in AVID.

Although Carlita attempted to break into other areas of school activities, she was unsuccessful. However, she felt her leadership in AVID was both valued and made a more significant contribution to those she cared about.

During the first interview she discussed her experience with taking high school courses that had prepared her for college. She regretted only being able to take one AP class, Biology. Due to Ms. Z's constant monitoring of the AVID students' schedules, Carlita was directed to take this course out of sequence.

The only AP class I took in high school, I took in my junior year because the teacher who was teaching it was leaving after that year to start at the new high school, so it was recommended that all of us take it then, even though I had not quite met the pre-requisite. [Ms. Z] had us take it then because he was a much better teacher.

However, her freshman experience with the high school counselors and limited access to mathematics courses had left her less well prepared for the required mathematics at UCSD. Carlita told me:

I got messed up in high school just because counselors in high school just have standard plans for students. They don't ask you what do you want to do in college. I could have told them I wanted the sciences. They could've told me, you could really start your mathematics sequence early, but they placed me in my science classes based on my mathematics classes and since I had a very poor mathematics teacher in middle school, I couldn't take Algebra in high school, which meant that the highest level I could get through was pre-Calculus. I wish I had gotten through Calculus because it

would have been a lot easier during high school than here [UCSD]. But by the time I could actually take it there was nothing I could do. It was already set.

She continued to fill in more information about her senior year in high school. She began that year to tutor other AVID students by acting as an aide to Ms. Z. She felt she could give back to the program and Ms. Z by helping other AVID students.

I was taking seven classes for half my senior year. This was in order to allow me to be an academic tutor for Ms. Z. First semester I was an academic tutor during her prep period so I could help with the AVID students' application essays. I read most of them just because she had trained me as a corrector, so most of the essays went through me because I would catch a lot of the major mistakes and then she would fine-tune it.

Carlita's nickname in the AVID class was 411, because she relentlessly researched information on all sorts of topics needed to get into college. Anyone could ask her a question and get a rapid and accurate answer. This information came out when she shared with me that she had become an expert in financial aid after realizing she needed more money to go to a four-year university.

I started in high school and I learned about all of it, private scholarships, grants, work-study, loans, all the things you need to learn and I just became an expert on it. Yeah, my senior AVID award was "Most likely to know everything before she dies" so yeah, I learned everything I could about the subject and then I just applied that while I'm here [at UCSD].

Another area in high school Carlita was proud of was her academic performance on the California state subject area exams. These tests were optional, but Carlita elected to take them.

I did very well on my Golden State Exams. Got high honors in Economics in my senior year. I got Honors in Spanish and some recognitions and stuff; I was very proud of that.

During our second interview, I was interested in finding out what Carlita thought was the most significant part of her AVID experience, from her current perspective. She answered:

A good chunk of it was the teacher. I was good friends with her in high school; I'm better friends with her now. I know her whole family. I go over to her house once or twice a week. I baby-sit her kids. Her daughter is three years old now. And so I helped her kids grow up and they know me. So she was a big part of it, especially since she's such a strong woman and very nice role model. This is what I want my life to be like. But you know, the structure was there too. The tutorials really helped, you know maybe I didn't need help all the time, but when I did need it I knew the help was there and just the forcing of the Cornell Notes and I tried to rebel on notes, but it didn't happen.

This connection with the teacher, Ms. Z., was central to Carlita's having the self-confidence and the procedural knowledge to apply to UCSD. Carlita further explained the elements of AVID that made a difference for her.

Support for going to college. So even though other people might be saying, 'oh well you know, just go to junior college for two years because you know it's

cheaper and it's easier.' In AVID that's not an option. So especially with Ms. Z-- you are going to a four-year university. And so that support and reinforcement was the most beneficial. I would probably say without all the help I got for even wanting to apply here [UCSD], and the help with my essay and things like that. I mean that is what got me in. Without that I would never, ever, ever have been able to get in. And I probably wouldn't even have applied.

Carlita described her excitement and pride when she found out she had been accepted to UCSD. She had been checking on the progress of her application on-line and by chance discovered her new status.

So I kind of went back up and read the part I had skipped. It said, "Congratulations. You've been admitted." I stared at the computer screen for about three minutes and picked up the phone and called my AVID teacher. She was screaming on the phone, 'Oh my God! I can't believe it!!' Yeah, so actually sending in my statement of intent to register and getting in was really cool. People would ask you, where are you going next year? 'Oh I'm going to UCSD' and they'd say, 'What are you talking about? You can't be going there.' Yep, I'm going there.

Carlita's obvious pride and sense of accomplishment carried her into the transition phase. She knew she needed more exposure to college life and during the summer signed up for an orientation session in order to make going to this prestigious college less stressful.

Transitioning to College. Part of transitioning to college is adapting to new expectations from both the academic and social arena. In order to negotiate this

transition, Carlita took advantage of the Summer Bridge program offered by UCSD to selected incoming freshmen. Carlita told me this program helped her make an easier adjustment to the university environment and significantly eased her transition.

You had to be invited, you had to apply and write an essay and I was accepted, so I could stay here for a month on campus, free of charge, before school started and could live in the Res Halls. I had an academic transition counselor who lived with us in our suite, and we took two classes. We took a math-science course and a literature course. I got eight units of credit. They're just elective units but it gave us the impression of what it was going to be like your first year with the homework and everyone was taking the same classes. There were about a hundred and fifty students involved and so you could go get help. The reason I was invited to Summer Bridge was because I was in AVID in high school. They [UCSD] run their report and see [AVID], so they offered it to me.

During Summer Bridge, Carlita, who calls herself “very social,” met many students from different colleges who became acquaintances and friends. These social integration experiences allowed her to move away from home more easily and to begin to form strong ties with other university students. She explained how the university program helped her connect with others.

Yeah, Bridge helped a lot because you were with those people for a month and then you knew their names and their personality, so it was really cool when you got here the first week you couldn't walk anywhere without running into someone you knew.

I probed for more information about how these new UCSD friendships had endured. Carlita filled me in on what her first quarter was like in the residence hall.

I made friends with the girls in my suite, and I still see them now every once in a while but they don't live in this building. So I'll see them and I'll say 'hi' and I'll see how they're doing and I'll talk to them on-line every once in a while. But gosh, if I hadn't had Bridge that would have been my only opportunity to make friends with more than just people I knew on my floor and my suite.

When questioned about how her relationship with her roommate developed, Carlita again showed evidence of her capacity to research information and take action. She said, "Actually, last year I didn't have a roommate. I was about one of about thirty people in my college who got a single room." Of course, I wanted to know how this had come about, remembering my own awkward freshman year with a difficult roommate. She said,

I turned my housing application in very early. I followed the recommendation because they sent us the form and said this in non-binding, but the earlier you turn it in, the better housing you're going to get. So I turned it in before I even sent in my statement of intent to register and that meant I was one of the first ones to be processed so they took my request. There are only about thirty singles and I got one.

When asked about the extra cost of having a single room, Carlita happily revealed how she managed her finances with the full scholarship she learned about and applied for while in AVID. She answered,

I had no idea about financial aid. Now I'm on full scholarship. I got the Gates Millennium Scholarship, and it's offered to low income Hispanic, Native American, African American and Asian American minority students who want to pursue higher education but don't necessarily have the money to do so. They cover all my loans, all my everything. So I'm on a full scholarship from the university and from them. Basically, this is how my scholarship works: they evaluate how much I get based on my financial need. They take the cost of attendance, which includes tuition, housing, books, transportation, and personal expenses. It comes out to about \$18,500 a year. Now it's calculated high, but then based on your financial need, which is my cost of attendance minus my family contribution, they say we're going to give you \$3,000 in grants and then \$5,000 in loans here and \$3,000 in loans there and then they put together a package for me. I then submit that to my private scholarship. They go all right, they're [UC] offering you seven thousand dollars a month in work-study, okay, we'll give you a check for that. So if I had a single, they added five hundred dollars.

Asked about how often she went home, Carlita told me, "I mean it's been nice to be only a half hour away, but it's just far enough away that my mom's not going to come to visit every weekend, but if I forget something at home, I can go."

We next explored how Carlita had handled the academic transition and how she felt high school had prepared her for this rigorous institution. She had chosen biology as her major saying, "it really does help to start out with at least a department. All the bio majors are the same for the first two years." Carlita shared her perceptions about the

differences between high school and college that she realized during her first quarter at UCSD.

You know, a lot of times in high school classes you can sleep through them and pass, so teachers are very forgiving. They'll let you do extra credit; extra credit's absolutely unheard of here. The classes are a lot harder here. The level is way above that of high school. In your universities in general it's higher but especially here and so that's probably the most difficult part. And you know not the adjustment because I'm kind of adjusted to it now, but it's still you know it's still hard everyday. Because in high school you always have a teacher there to help you. Here I'm a lot more reliant on my friends or myself and resources I can find to help my education. So it's up to me to find someone who can help me. As opposed to in high school where it's up to the teacher to find someone who can help you. Yeah, the amount of work that I had to do to maintain halfway decent grades, that's not even good grades, just halfway decent grades, was insane. It was so much more than I ever had to do in high school. They say on average you're going to drop one whole grade point from where you were in high school.

Carlita's grades did drop. She explained how the quarter system at UCSD worked and the impact that system had on increasing the intensity of learning, which resulted in causing her academic stress.

In most classes you finish a semester's worth of work and they say it's only a quarter, so I didn't really know about this. When I got to Summer Bridge they said we really recommend that for at least the first quarter you only take three classes. Let yourself get adjusted, you can always pick up an extra class later, you're not

going to end up behind, just take three classes at least your first quarter. Let yourself get settled, then take four. So, I followed their advice and dropped one of my classes. Then those three classes went well. I had enough time to work.

She reflected about what her academic results had been from her freshman year and how she had adjusted to the freedom to go or not to go to classes.

First quarter was actually my best quarter. I'm learning from my mistakes. I would try and go to class as much as possible, which is a challenge. It is a huge challenge when you get to college. You don't realize in high school because you go to class. You know maybe every once in a while you'll convince your mom that you're sick so you can stay home for day but when you get here, you're on your own and attendance was never required. And so it was up to you and that was really hard. It still is really hard.

Carlita maintained several key AVID strategies that she learned in high school. She also works as a high school tutor for her former AVID teacher and teaches these strategies to younger AVID students. As we went through her study habits and strategies, she explained how each helped her maintain focus and keep on task. Carlita told me that in the classroom:

I try to sit in the front. Last spring quarter, there were six of us friends who all took chemistry together at eight o'clock in the morning and we had staked out half the front row, so the six of us sat right down there. It makes it a lot easier to ask questions too, because you forget there's three hundred and ninety-nine people sitting behind you. So you're more apt to interact with the professor the closer you sit.

Another AVID strategy is note-taking in every class. Carlita had developed a dislike of taking so many required Cornell style notes in high school, and had made plans to stop doing them as soon as she could. However, she related that the Cornell note-taking practice had hidden benefits.

As soon as I got to college, I'm like, 'I'm never going to write Cornell Notes again.' I'd gone through three years of high school where every single note I took had to be in Cornell style. I refuse to ever write them again. I just couldn't do it because I had done it for so long. I didn't realize how much they really did help me and so I really, really, really tried not to. But finally I just gave in. I can't do them any other way. I have to do them this way. So I kept taking them.

Carlita had many stories about Cornell Notes, but the following one helped her cement the value of note-taking in college and appreciate the skills she had learned in high school.

A couple of my friends who went to this [Cornell Note] workshop learned it but you know if you only learn it for an hour you don't really know it. So they were watching me take notes in class one day and found out I took them in Cornell Notes. I actually ended up for the next lecture, one of them sitting on one side of me, the other one sitting on the other. They watched me take my notes, so I taught them how.

Carlita reflected on how her AVID note-taking experiences had prepared her so well for classroom lectures that she now did them habitually without consciously thinking about it. She explained,

Probably the constant note-taking and really building those skills [in AVID] helped me the most. So, I had the opportunity in high school to refine and perfect my note-taking ability and a lot of kids just didn't bother because most high school classes you don't have to take notes for. AVID students have four years to build and understand how to take notes so that when you get to classes where you really do need to take them, they're prepared. And that's what prepared me for when I got here. I can read my notes, I understand them, I can easily locate information so that has helped a ton.

Although Carlita knew about the importance of personal contact with professors, she did not make these connections during her first year at UCSD. However, she did have a support system in place that used the teaching assistants (TA's). When asked about this, she replied,

You know, actually I haven't talked to any of my professors. I just haven't needed to. It's been very odd. Most of the time, you'd feel more comfortable going to your TA, which I have done before. I think sometimes the TAs are more willing to answer your questions than professors. Sometimes, it depends on the professor. Professors will hold study sessions. I have one this afternoon for O-Chem. It's a two hour session where the professor is just going to come and answer any questions you have. But TAs are the ones who go over the homework with you and most professors won't touch the homework in class. They [professors] go over concepts, they go over example problems, but they aren't going to look at homework. That's the TAs responsibility. So if you've got a good TA, you go to them, not the professor. I mean there's never really been a class I really needed

that much contact with the professor. Most of the time my friends are better resources just because you don't have to compete for the attention of your professor.

Carlita felt that the professors were too remote to make contact with, but the TAs were approachable and more involved in the types of questions she needed for immediate help. Her social support network of friends in the same classes also provided a frequently used resource. Carlita used study groups to help her with the most difficult subject matter, such as chemistry. She did not use study groups for classes she felt confident in, or in those that required more independent reading and writing. She explained,

But chemistry I was having a real problem with, so I had a lot of friends in my class, because you have four hundred people in a class you're going to know people. So we'd all get together, we'd pull all-nighters for a test. We'd do whatever we had to do to get all of our studying in. Well, last year we'd meet like in central lounge because I had a lot of friends in Muir, we'd all usually just go over there. Then we had some lounges on each floor for their Res Halls. Now we have apartments so we just go to somebody's living room and we all gather around the dining room table and we sit on the couch and study. I have an organic chemistry midterm on Monday, so Sunday night is big-time study group.

One of the biggest challenges Carlita had to get used to was the amount of reading and writing required in a number of the general education classes she was required to take her first year. She explained,

Well, we read six books a quarter as opposed to three books a semester in high school. There were books I didn't read and there were some things I had to skip,

but you know when it came down to writing essays you have to have read the book to write it because you need the evidence from your book. We'd have on average, fifty pages of reading a night. I would usually sticky note everything because I would have an idea of what the essay was going to be about.

She had more issues with the type of academic writing required in college and with the subjective nature of the essay requirements emphasized by different TAs.

I'd been taught to write in high school, you know this Standard Inverted Triangles, Square, Square, Square, Triangle. You follow this format. So, I thought that everything was going to be fine when I got here, but it's kind of at your TAs discretion. I would have a topic sentence, my commentary and you know it's more developed, much more developed than it was in high school, but I still kind of follow the same patterns. He [my TA] just didn't like that pattern and wanted me to do something different and so I finally just gave up after two 'Cs' on a paper. I just went to him and said, 'how do you want me to write this?' I don't think he had a problem with my ideas, it was just the way I was writing them.

Carlita discovered that it was up to the TA to determine what writing format was required. She had internalized the high school pattern, or writing formula, and when it did not fit the required standard, solved the problem by seeking help. Although she seemed to resent the TAs criticism, she did adapt her writing to meet the standard. It is not certain from our interviews whether she felt she had become a more adept academic writer from this experience.

During the second interview, Carlita described how she had felt when leaving the safety of her AVID class, peers and teacher for the university.

In AVID, you're with the same kids for years and then you graduate. A lot went to CSU so they're all there, and they see each other a lot. None of my other friends from my AVID class came here. I don't remember if anyone else got accepted here. A few people applied and didn't get in. So I would imagine if I had a few more friends from AVID here that would help, but nobody else came here. I have friends that I'll see when they come home. But I have friends all over the state.

Carlita did stay connected with her high school AVID teacher by becoming a tutor for the AVID classes at her former high school. She worked twice a week in the classroom helping other AVID students make their way into college. It is her way of giving back to the program she attributed with getting her into UCSD. She remarked about her tutoring job,

Math is my specialty when I tutor. Yesterday I tutored Algebra through Calculus. I told the Calculus kids, stick with Calculus. You don't know how much easier it will be if you take it now as opposed to in college. Take the AP classes, get the AP credit. I wish I could have taken it [in high school].

Persisting in College. Carlita has transitioned into a comfortable living situation. This year she has been sharing an on campus apartment with another girl. She reflected on how living on campus contributed to having a real college experience as compared to her friends who did not live on campus.

Well, I mean it I think it helps a lot more than not living here. Because my friend who goes to CSU doesn't live there, she hasn't had the same college experience I have. I mean her college experience mostly is just getting up going there and taking the classes. Where mine is interaction with my friends and living with

other people. Meeting tons of new people. Mostly she doesn't have any friends from college. Her friends are from high school. You don't have really any interaction in your classes because you go to lecture and then you go home. So she really doesn't have any friends from college. Not like I have here. I have tons of friends from here, so I'm saying it helps a lot for developing a college experience. Not to say that hers is any less than mine, you know, mine's different.

Carlita continued that she, along with her new friends, now considered UCSD home.

You know you start with defining here as home. My friends and I will be out doing something and I'll be okay, let's go home now, and home is here. That's here, not where our families are. So especially this year, it's grown on us. We want to come back here more than we want to see our families.

Carlita's successful social integration contributed to her feeling that she belonged on campus. However, a strong social transition did not guarantee academic integration.

Carlita mentioned several times in both interviews and the focus group that she had problems with self-discipline, particularly in the area of consistent class attendance. She said, "It does catch up to you if you're consistently not going to class, as I have found."

Asked why it was so hard for her to get up and go to class, she replied,

I don't know. Maybe it's just the motivation thing. Today I only have three hours of class. So I have the rest of the day. And you know I want to go to the mall and I want to go do stuff, go to the movies and classes kind of get in the way of that, so it's hard when you don't have a block of say six hours of class like you did when you were in high school. You have same amount of work but you only go to class for three hours and they could be at different times during the day. I have

class from ten to eleven, two to three and four to five, so I have this large chunk of time where it's kind of like I could just go fall asleep, so it's just very hard to get motivated to go to class.

As we continued to explore this topic, Carlita shared one of the distracters she knew contributed to her lack of motivation to attend class.

Now, I probably could be doing better, but I like to socialize a lot. Like, whoo, whoo, board game parties and they're fun and not like places where everybody goes out drinking. We play board games and we have Trivial Pursuit and we stay up all hours of the night playing.

She also acknowledged that the academic pace she maintained to keep up with hard classes, long hours at work and scheduling study time have caused her to lose focus.

My time is just stretched really thin and I don't get to sleep in because I have 8:00 class Monday, Wednesday, Friday. Then I have work Tuesday, Thursday. So I get the weekend, that's it. So, I'm always tired. It's really hard and my friends are like, 'Oh why don't you come and do stuff with us,' and I have to be in bed by 11:00, otherwise I will not survive tomorrow.

I continued to probe her about what specifically she thought had happened during the last quarter which had resulted in putting her scholarship in jeopardy.

I didn't go to class, I was busy with other things and so it just kind of fell through the cracks and I thought I was gonna have to finish it [Calculus] out because when I dropped it I was below full-time enrollment for last quarter. There's only one person I know here who does not have W on their transcript. I already have a 2.2, so if I drop too low I'm just more messed up than if I had just withdrawn from the

class. So you know weighing, yeah, I have this glaring W on my transcript, but my financial aid is still there, I have all these other things. So then, I'm fixing it this quarter. I talked to my financial aid and they said, 'Oh well, as long as you finish thirty-six units by the end of the year.'

Although conscious of her own contribution to her academic problems, Carlita took steps last summer to make up units at the local community college in order to keep on track to graduate in four years. She mentioned,

So last this summer I took a math class and history class. History worked to cover my humanities requirement so, and that was no problem. My math class was four days a week, my history class was two nights a week, so I made up those units. I've chosen to do that just to free up my schedule so I only have to take three classes a quarter instead of four. I was taking eighteen units and working and it just went all downhill [last year]. So, I've actually figured out that I can take three classes every quarter with just taking a few classes in summer school.

One of Carlita's frustrations has been getting through the required general education coursework. As a declared biology major, she has yet to take any biology classes.

I'm trying. It's really hard being a biology major and not being able to take biology classes because my two lower division biology classes I could take, I can't take for credits because I got them covered with my AP score since I got a four on my AP test, so I'm stuck taking chemistry and calculus and sign language and nothing that I really want to take.

Carlita realized that this coming spring quarter would be an important one for her. She remarked, “Yeah this one will be hard, of course I’ve done worse. I had nineteen units last winter quarter but this winter quarter has not been too kind to me. But it’s only sixteen this quarter, so I have survived through worse.” When asked, what is it that motivates you, what drives you? Carlita responded,

Desire to succeed. Because as with most AVID students, I’m first generation college. And so for me to do it, especially if I can get a higher degree, it would be a huge accomplishment.

Summary. In Figure 7 a concept map visually displays the primary categories identified in Carlita’s case from the interview and focus group transcript data. The number of times a category was coded represents the relative frequency of occurrence and is indicated in parentheses below the dominant coding categories that emerged from the data. Carlita’s highest coded area was her adjustment to college academics, which remained problematic during her second year of college.

Carlita made a successful social and cultural transition to college. However, her academic transition had been somewhat shaky. Although, she maintained some of the AVID strategies learned in high school, the freedom from supervision and structure she found at the university resulted in self-destructive behaviors such neglecting assigned reading, and failing to attend tutoring sessions offered through the UCSD Oasis program. Carlita was also negligent in regular class attendance, which in turn resulted in her decision to withdraw from two classes.

Nevertheless, she had remained firmly grateful for the opportunities she gained through the AVID program. Carlita said, “You know, it’s a program I really believe in.

I'm gonna help it as much as I can." When asked what percent she attributes to AVID for getting into UCSD, Carlita answered without hesitation, "ninety-eight." Her allegiance to AVID may be causing a conflict with managing her current academic load. Carlita does not need to work, but feels obligated to help her former AVID teacher as a tutor for approximately twenty hours a week. Curiously, she did not mention leaving her tutoring job as a possible solution to her exhaustion and difficult coursework. Also unexplained was the lack of communication with her former AVID teacher about Carlita's current academic problems. The very teacher who could conceivably help Carlita prioritize university academics over the AVID tutoring job had not done so.

Carlita desired an economically secure future that would allow her to help the family. By attending UCSD, she had gained access to a powerful academic community rich in social and cultural capital. When asked, she reflected on a future that would not include graduating from UCSD.

I think I can get a job, but I'm not going to get a good job. I'm not going to have the car I want. I'm not going to be able to do I want to. I've been thinking a lot about grad school. Do I want to go through another four years of school? Because it's a pain and I'd rather just be making money, but if I stop going then I limit how much money I can make.

Carlita was still struggling with going to class, which jeopardized her scholarship and her academic standing. Although she articulated what she needed to do, her personal motivation to consistently follow through has endangered the very academic goals she claimed she wanted to accomplish.

Figure 7. Carlita's Case Study Code Map

Case Study 8: Antonio- Latino Networks and Community Service

Antonio and I arranged to have our first interview at the main UCSD library. As I entered the library foyer, I noticed a group of students talking animatedly in Spanish. A young man jumped up from the group and said, “AVID?” The group, his physics study partners, told Antonio they would wait for us to finish. As we began the interview, Antonio apologized for his English. He had come to the United States in the ninth grade speaking no English. Although self-conscious about his accent, saying, “my English is pretty bad,” Antonio radiated a personable self-confidence punctuated with humorous commentary about his experiences in high school and at UCSD. He also clearly communicated in both interviews his desire to give back to the AVID program and to his home community.

Family Influences. Antonio’s family immigrated when he was fourteen years old to a town just over the border from Tijuana, Mexico. Antonio has one older sister and three younger brothers. He reported that his sister is, “going to community college, because when we came here, she couldn’t apply for university, because it was too late, so she has to go to community college and then transfer.” Antonio comes from a supportive family environment.

When asked what his parents wanted for him, Antonio reported, “They pushed me to go to [the] university and everything.” He continued, “One of my brothers, he’s one year younger than me, he’s going to UC Riverside right now, and one of my other brothers, he’s in 11th grade, he wants to come here, so, he’s doing all this community service stuff.” Antonio firmly believes in giving back to his community and in doing community service himself. He comes home, “almost every weekend” from college to

spend time with his younger brothers and his extended family. Antonio said that being a role model to his brothers and showing them how to succeed in a challenging university kept him motivated and on track. When asked about what his family wanted for him after graduation in mechanical engineering, Antonio said,

Basically they want me to work at an engineering company- a company that is right here in La Jolla. They basically want me to work there because I have my uncle there, my sister is there and they just want me to be a role model for my brothers, because I have three younger brothers who look up to me. You know when things are kinda hard, they [family] keep me from getting sort of depressed or getting discouraged.

Antonio spoke with obvious pride about his important role as the big brother and continues to stay closely connected to his family network for emotional support.

Preparing for College. During the first interview, I wanted to know more about how Antonio had learned English so quickly and if he had studied it in Mexico. He replied, “No, not at all. Nothing. I started taking English classes and everything here.”

Antonio, when enrolling at the high school, was placed in AVID. Although he was not sure what the program was all about, he connected with his AVID teacher almost immediately. During his first semester in high school, his AVID teacher took him on a college field trip to UCSD. Antonio revealed,

So I think it was the first semester, the AVID program brought me here, like a tour or something. So they brought me here, and then when I check out the university site, I loved it, I said, ‘I want to come here.’ That's why I was interested, you know? I wanted to know everything about UCSD. When I knew

they accept me, I want to know everything: how many students, the majors, the colleges, and all that.

After a pause, Antonio continued,

When I was in ninth grade, that was my first year in the US, because I came when I was 14 years old. She [AVID teacher] told me if you want to go to UCSD, because I told her that I want to go to university, I don't want to go community college and all that, so she told me, 'You have to take all of these classes,' like English language development classes and all of that, so you have to take English during the summer, and I just like go all the way up [taking English classes].

Once given the blueprint by his freshman AVID teacher, Antonio kept focused on his goal to attend UCSD. He went to summer school every summer and took the accelerated sequence of English Language Development (ELD) classes offered at his high school. I wondered if he had felt discouraged by the difficulty in learning the language while taking extra courses. Antonio answered, "Not really, because I met some like really good teachers who gave help for me, like in everything."

If UCSD was a goal, he was told by his AVID teachers to take AP classes, and Antonio took his first AP class during his junior year.

I also take AP classes, while taking like ELD classes my junior year. But when I was in senior year, I was taking five AP classes. I took AP Calculus, AP Chemistry, AP Physics, AP Government, AP Economics, and I think that was it.

When asked about the differences he noticed between AP and regular classes, Antonio said, "The intensity, you go by fast in the AP classes. So during the regular

classes you just go and study for the exam and that's it." Antonio related that AP Economics was a particular challenge due to the difficulty of the vocabulary.

I didn't get what the teacher was saying, because they were using [hard] vocabulary the entire year in economics. I was like, what are they talking about, you know? I didn't know anything. That was kind of the hard part.

Antonio added that he continued a friendship with one of his AVID teachers who had influenced him to concentrate on the goal of going to UCSD. "He's still my friend; I talk to him, I don't know, once a week maybe."

Antonio felt that his involvement with AVID, which required community service, and his work as a tutor at the neighborhood elementary school, helped him get into UCSD. He said, "So yeah, I did community service in elementary school in fourth grade. I think that's why I got in here [UCSD]." Antonio also shared how he felt while waiting for the notification from the university about his application for admission.

I was nervous. Well, before I knew my results and all of that, I was nervous, I was like every time I woke up, I was checking the Internet to see if they accept me or not. After I applied, like between November and April, and March, I think, in those times, I was always checking my email, and always checking the status of my application.

When asked to imagine what his experience in high school might have been like without the influence and advocacy of his AVID teachers, Antonio replied,

I think it would be a little harder [to get into UCSD]. Because I wouldn't have anyone to tell me, 'Oh, this is the deadline for UC application,' or anything like that.

Transitioning to College. Once admitted, Antonio planned to take advantage of the six week Summer Bridge program before moving to campus in the fall. However, he also had to work, which interfered with his ability to attend. Antonio, with outreach from the university and his own desire to be successful, found a way to do some early transition to the university environment. He explained,

I sent [the Summer Bridge] application and then I just say that I can't go because I was working. But then triple SP [Student Support Services Program] sent me a letter and said if I want to come in the summer, I can be in their program and it's just only one week. So instead of going to Summer Bridge I just went to that one.

When questioned whether he felt prepared for his college experience, Antonio revealed, "I kind of knew about the university, just because AVID told me what it was gonna be like." Antonio felt comfortable at the university due to the fact that he already knew others from his high school attending, including one from his AVID class. He said,

So one of my friends was roommates with me. Well, since I have most of my friends here, I didn't have to like change the way I am. I know many people that are here. I have like ten friends that are in my same college.

With this existing network of friends, Antonio felt at home at the university. Still, he had to adjust to the absence of his family. Antonio expressed his transition experience during the first initial weeks by saying,

Well just right away, I just saw everything was different from high school. You have to do everything by yourself, like your parents are not cooking for you. They're not like out doing your bed. You have to do your laundry and all that.

The most difficult transition experience for Antonio came when he found out he was required to take remedial critical reading and writing coursework for failing the Subject A exam.

I didn't know I had to take the Subject A, and so I just got a letter and I had to take Subject A stuff, just to see like what levels I was gonna be in. So that was the time I knew about it. It was a [Subject A] class- it's like writing stuff. I'm not like a really good writer, so...

He continued to explain how he had addressed his writing issues by saying,

At first when I took it, like when I was in high school, I knew I wasn't gonna pass it. I just did it because I had to do it. But when I came here [UCSD], I was like all ready. I knew what to do in the writing, so it was easy.

When asked how he had learned to do the type of writing that was required, Antonio said,

Well, they told us that you had to write this way, not the way you used to, because the way we were writing in high school was not the way we had to write here. So we had to learn a different style of writing.

My curiosity about how Antonio had seemed to master academic writing so easily led to further inquiry and interview questions. When asked about what he found to be the major difference between high school and university writing, Antonio tried to explain by saying,

Like the way we write. You have to write like a thesis sentence, and then a little summary of the reading. It's almost like high school, but it has, I don't know, something different. But, once I knew what to do it was kind of easy. I had the

[Subject A] classes to pass by the end of the first year, or they were [going to] kick me out of here.

Antonio had not originally realized the serious consequence of failing to pass the Subject A exam by the end of his freshman year. "When I knew about that, I was nervous, but after I passed it, it's like, okay." With this hurdle passed, Antonio felt more comfortable in his coursework. His college, which enrolls many engineering majors, has fewer requirements for classes emphasizing extensive reading and writing. Fortunately, Antonio found his initial mathematics and science courses easy because of his high school preparation.

They just prepare you, like in my AP Calculus class, everything was easy the first two quarters. It was almost like the same thing as in high school, so I just kind of knew it. It was like a review. So, I didn't have to worry about math. Actually physics too. It was really helpful to take AP Physics in high school because it was kind like the same.

Antonio quickly discovered that his college classes demanded more attention and study than those in high school. Due to the many hours he was now studying, he found the long lectures difficult.

My class was at eight in the morning, but I went to sleep at one in the morning, so I was like, tired by the time I'd go to school, and I have a two-hour class, so it was tiring after two hours in the same classroom, you just want to go.

Antonio also found the pace of the quarter system stressful and a big adjustment as far as time needed to study, read and do homework.

The quarter system is hard, you know. When you're in high school you had semesters, and when you're here you have quarters that are only ten weeks, so everything goes by fast. You see a midterm coming up, and then you're finished. Two weeks later, you have another midterm. So I just study all the time. It was hard in high school, but not really, really hard. So here is really hard.

When questioned about where he liked to sit in the big lecture halls, Antonio smilingly replied,

In my math class, we used to sit in the front row, so we don't fall asleep. In physics, I sit in the second row, on the side, because I want people to be in front of me and just be like, I don't know, shielding for me. So I just sit where you can see the entire board. I start talking if I have to sit in the back. I just start talking to my friends.

As an AVID student, Antonio had been instructed not only to sit in the front, but also to make personal contact with his professors. He had not been as diligent about doing this. When asked about going to talk to his professors, Antonio told me this story.

The [engineering] professor, he'd say something and it's like, "What did you say?" And even American people, the people that know how to talk English really well, they didn't even know what he was saying. Me, I was like, "Huh?"

Antonio seemed to feel intimidated by going to talk to professors one on one, perhaps due to his own perceived difficulty with English, or with not being able to understand his professors. I pressed him with this question, "So do you ever try to talk to your professors?" He answered with a quirky smile,

Sometimes. Just sometimes you just don't get what you have to do in the homework, and, well you ask professors or the TA or something. Like yesterday I went to my TA, just asking questions about the lectures.”

Antonio did connect with one of his physics professors during his first transitional year. He told me, “Well, I knew one of my physics professors, but he went back to Germany. I went to go see him and talked to him, he was really cool.” This type of personal contact with a professor has not been repeated so far this year.

Antonio actively seeks out academic help in several other areas. He takes advantage of the Oasis program, an on-campus tutoring service. “I was accepted to it [Oasis] when I first came here, and every time I needed tutoring or anything like that, I just go to Oasis and they give me all the help I need.” He began using the service last year, and continues using it for his most difficult classes. He explained,

I have a workshop for math and physics. Two hours long, twice a week. She [the tutor] kind of reviews the lecture, and asks us if we have any questions, so she can go over everything and we can understand it.

As a former AVID student, I knew that Antonio had received extensive instruction in Cornell note-taking. When asked about how he takes notes now, Antonio replied, “Well actually I was doing something I saw my friend does. She reads her notes, and writes it down in the computer, just to memorize everything.” He went on to explain that for some classes, he could not keep up the Cornell note requirements, saying,

Well for math I use Cornell notes, and for physics, I just kind of write everything down because that professor is just going so fast. She’s talking at the same time

she's writing, so by the time she finished talking, she'd erased everything. It's like help, I didn't get that!

Antonio developed his strongest area of academic and social support through his close network of friends and study groups. He, along with a few friends, began a new club for male Latino students at UCSD during their freshman year. The young men felt they needed an organization, recognized by the university, to formally promote their academic and community service goals. They named the club LUCHA, an acronym for *Latinos Unidos con Hermandad y Ambición* (translation: Latinos United for Brotherhood and Success). There is a double entendre to the name *lucha*, which also means 'fight' in Spanish. This group organized to fight for academic success together. Antonio explained how the group had formed.

Actually, my friends and I, when we came from high school, we just wanted to start our club here, and we've have a club since last year... It's a Latino male club. Well, first it was only five of us, and then from there, once we started the club, we just sort of mentioned it to people and all of that. The club is for community service and good academics, and success of Latinos.

This group of young Latino males leveraged their efforts to influence and support one another in academic achievement and to proclaim their identity as successful Latino students. Interestingly, two of the founding five members were former AVID students. An integral part of their club by-laws requires group study and a commitment to regular community service.

Persisting in College. Antonio had planned out his route to finish college with his degree in Mechanical engineering. When asked for specifics, Antonio said, "I went to my

counselor, like three weeks ago, and asked her what classes I need to take to graduate. I was going for the four-year plan, but I don't know, it's too hard." Antonio explained that taking four upper division Mechanical engineering classes every quarter would be very difficult. He is now considering the five-year plan, but took summer school classes at his local community college to make up for the units lost while taking the Subject A classes. Antonio also plans to take two engineering classes this summer at UCSD. He explained, "This coming summer I had to do it [summer school] here. It's upper division classes, so upper division you can't take at community college."

Financially, due to recent increases in tuition, Antonio needed to bring in more money during the school year, as well as take out "more loans." He just started a part-time job during winter quarter. He works at a pizza parlor not far from campus. I asked about how this had impacted his schedule.

Well, I work at six. Six to ten. And after that I have study hours to make it up.

From ten [p.m.] to one [a.m.]. Yeah. We study and do homework together and everything. If you have problems you can ask my friend and he knows how to do it. We meet four times and it has to be ten hours a week. So, yes, four hours on Sunday and another six just for the week.

Antonio's study groups have stabilized since last year. The study hours he referred to above stem from LUCHA, which has grown to about twenty members this year. The LUCHA members have applied for an official school club charter and want to expand. The club members are required to study together at least six hours a week and four hours on the weekend. They are also actively volunteering as a group. Antonio told me about some upcoming activities. He said,

We just volunteer. We're going to like give to the homeless, this Saturday...I don't know where we're going, just one of the members, told us about it, so like all of us have to go. Because we're a club, we have to be there.

UCSD has a reputation for being very competitive. When asked about the competitive nature of his engineering classes, Antonio stated, "I don't want to compete with my friends." They study together, "because we don't want anyone to fall behind." Antonio recounted another recent study session by saying,

Yesterday, one of my friends asked me about a problem, because we had a final for engineering class, so he was trying to figure out how to do it, and he asked me for help, and I just went. It was electromagnetism. The concept was really hard to understand, so we had to solve every problem a different way. So it was kind of hard to understand it. I got a C [in the class]. I don't know how I did it.

Antonio gave me yet another example of his study network from this last quarter. "Well, in my math class, I have four friends that study together, so my study group is set."

His network has provided Antonio with multiple layers of human resources that were accessible and collegial. Antonio saw persistence to graduation as a joint effort with the Latino group who had bonded together for success. When I asked him how he felt about his ability to keep up and meet the challenges of this school, Antonio replied, "So far it's been very hard, and I didn't do well in the beginning. But so many friends have helped me out, you know." His connections have paid off both socially and academically.

Last quarter he happily reported getting Bs in mathematics and physics and a C in his mechanical engineering class. Antonio reflected on the difference between his college

friends and those from high school by saying, “In high school you had friends, but, you know the friends I’m making here are gonna be like [for] a lifetime. This is...a network.” He continued, “This is what I want to do, the friends here are really part of the university, so there’s no distraction. I met lot of people from here so that’s rewarding.” Antonio also shared, “I don’t have a girlfriend right now because the classes, they just take a lot of time.” He is determined to limit any distractions and stay focused on his graduation goal. He is also contemplating graduate school, but staying at UCSD. “Oh, I’m really happy here. I can apply to go to graduate school here.”

His next, more immediate task was to find a place to live next year. UCSD students must move off campus after two years. Antonio, though, has already made contacts with his network to secure a university apartment. He said, “Yeah, only two years to live on campus, and after that you have to live off campus. So I might live somewhere pretty close by. Yeah, we just want to stay here.”

Summary. In Figure 8, a concept map visually displays the primary categories identified in Antonio’s case from the interview transcript data. The number of times a category was coded represents the relative frequency of occurrence and is indicted in parentheses below the dominant coding categories that emerged from the data analysis.

Antonio used three words, challenging, rewarding and networking to summarize his college experiences at UCSD. He spent the last year and a half developing a strong academic identity by forming and solidifying networks of friends into regular study groups. His early involvement with LUCHA, the Latino club, enabled him to formalize a strong network of male support with set rules for studying and community service.

Antonio came to the United States at fourteen without speaking English, and graduated from one of the lowest performing high schools in San Diego County. His connection with the AVID program provided social and cultural capital in the form of crucial bits of information, teacher advocacy and the academic guidance he needed to get into UCSD. Antonio took English Language Development (ELD) classes every summer and worked tirelessly on improving his English. Parts of high school were stressful for Antonio, but he managed to overcome those academic barriers. He took five AP classes his senior year, and remained goal oriented and motivated. He continued to use AVID strategies such as study groups, academic advising, Cornell notes, and tutoring services.

Family is very important as a social support and anchor for Antonio. He goes home almost every weekend and is very connected to his home community. Antonio realized that one way to be financially successful lay through higher education and an academic life.

In college, some of his initial adjustments to academics were negative at first, including the intense pace of the quarter system, the fast talking teachers, and the required Subject A classes. However, his social transition was smooth and provided a strong support system that focused on academic integration rather than social “distractions.” This, in turn, made persistence to graduation much more likely for Antonio.

Figure 8. Antonio's Case Study Code Map

Cross-case Analysis: Three UCSD Students

This cross-case comparison considered each individual case and examined them for intersections of themes as well as divergences across the UCSD three cases (Yin, 2003). The previous individual cases explored the students' transition experiences to the university across four dimensions: family influences, getting ready for college, transitioning to college and persisting in college. The focus group session provided additional transcript data and allowed for the participants to respond to the accuracy and relevance of the emerging themes, and to explore areas not previously covered in the individual interviews. As a result, three predominant themes emerged from the data reduction process and on-going analysis. The three prevalent themes impacting the UCSD students' college transition and persistence experiences were (1) family influences, (2) AVID influences and (3) persisting in college.

Family Influences

All three students expressed gratitude to their families for supplying the emotional encouragement to go to a major four-year university and giving financial support. Two families, Antonio's and Samuel's took out loans, as did their sons. Antonio also received the San Diego Foundation scholarship of \$1,000 per year. Carlita received a full academic scholarship. Since all three students lived on campus, there were additional expenses that their families covered. All three were the first in their families to go to college, and they were acting as role models for younger brothers and sisters and for their extended families. As Carlita said about how her family helps her,

I get support from my extended family. So there's the extended family and my family. There's a lot of pride in what I'm doing. So that's a good support factor.

And there's some financial support. So if I need some money for something, I know I can call my dad and he'll help me out a little bit. And I know that he's fine with it because he knows that I'm working really hard for what I want to do.

Samuel added,

The biggest thing coming from my family would have to be the support. My parents, they want me to stay in college because not only it helps my life, but at the same time they love the bragging rights and want me to set a good example for my brothers, sisters and my cousins.

Antonio also had younger siblings. He reported feeling responsible for being a positive influence on them. "They [parents] just want me to be like a role model for my brothers. Because I have three younger brothers who look up to me." This conversation sparked further examples about family influence. Samuel elaborated, "They [parents] just like to keep me in check and make sure that I'm doing what I need to do. And my brothers and sisters, they're always interested in what's going on." Carlita added,

My sister Maria wants to be a professor, my sister Sara wants to be a doctor. So they're always interested in what I'm doing and they want to follow my step stones. I guess actually realizing that they are doing that pushes me even further.

These three students altered their existing family structures by being the first to access college. All reported that their brothers and sisters now talk about going to "a good college" and becoming professionals. Antonio said, "When I don't understand something, I just see my brothers looking up to me, and I don't want to disappoint them. My little brother wants to be like me. He's number one in his school." Carlita, who also has younger brothers, summarized her experience by saying,

To them [younger brothers] homework is coloring a picture and stuff like that. So it's cool for them because they think school is one teacher and I have to explain, I have four teachers and there's 100 plus people in all my classes. So I know that when they get older they're going to go because they're ten times smarter than I was when I was their age.

Two of the participants, Antonio and Samuel, went home quite frequently.

Antonio reported that he went home every weekend to visit with his parents and brothers. Samuel went home every few weeks, but has frequent telephone contact. Carlita went home less often. Carlita was the only one to articulate that she had begun to think of her small on-campus apartment as "home."

Although all three students had strong home ties, they have also made new friendships at the university and expanded their social networks. Living on campus in small colleges with others who share similar classes has been a major factor in allowing these new relationships to flourish. In effect, the students are operating in two worlds, that of their home communities and their college lives.

Interestingly, two students, Carlita and Samuel disclosed that they did not share information with their families about failing or withdrawing from classes. These two felt such information might upset their families, and both Carlita and Samuel made plans to deal with these academic setbacks by attending summer school, or by taking the course the following quarter. The rationale for this behavior emerged during the focus group session. Both students felt responsible for performing up to the family's expectations. Samuel shared, "My parents say, 'Oh, my son gets to go to UCSD. They just go rub it in everybody else's face, you know?'"

Carlita agreed and added, “That’s a huge part of it.” She continued, “My mom works with a bunch of doctors. She loves to tell people at work that her daughter goes to UCSD. They say, ‘isn’t that such a hard school to get into?’ My mom and dad both love being so proud of me and all the things I get to do, especially because I’m the only one who’s been able to go to college. Not to mention, I’m going to this college. That just makes them bubble over.”

Antonio did not say whether his parents knew about the quality of the institution, but he indicated that going to a “good college” was important to his family, and that his family knew the connections he was making at UCSD could help him have a successful career and a high paying job, preferably at a local engineering company.

Table 6 summarizes some of the family influences reported by the participants as having an impact on their adjustment to the college experience.

Table 6. Summary of Family Influences

	2 Parent Household	Focus of social networks	Family financial contribution	Sibling in college
Samuel	yes	College friends and family	High (no scholarship)	no
Carlita	no	College friends, family and AVID job	Low (full scholarship)	no
Antonio	yes	College friends, LUCHA club and family	Moderate (annual \$1,000 scholarship)	yes (younger brother)

AVID Program Influences

All three students had positive experiences in their respective high school AVID programs. For Antonio, the most important moment was coming on his first AVID college field trip to UCSD and making a personal decision to do whatever he could to be able to attend the university. That one trip galvanized his academic action plan for the next three years of high school. He acknowledged that without AVID he would not have known how to attempt his goal. AVID offered not only the blueprint, but also the personal contact with teacher advocates to mentor him through the process. According to Carlita, “AVID’s all about college.” She then summarized the essence and impact of the AVID program by saying,

College preparation in high school and help with Honors classes, doing things like AVID write-offs, which help college preparation in writing. And support from your peers to know that you can take really hard classes and you can go to college. Help with admissions and deadlines and financial aid. And then there’s stuff like the AVID Institute, so you’ve got more teachers involved and more teachers aware of the AVID program so that they can help get more students interested in going to college.

Samuel had a few more key program elements to add to the conversation. He said, “notes and tutoring and college applications, and how they all link to class and going to college.” Getting ready for college was a daily event in all their AVID classrooms. For Carlita, the most significant impact AVID had was to change her thinking. She commented,

I was first generation college and I didn't think that I was going to have the grades or the money, especially to go to the University. I didn't think I could do it. I had no idea financially. I'm like we're poor, maybe we're not that poor. So getting into AVID helped me change that mindset. Freshman year I took college prep. I wasn't looking much into AP classes. I'm like ok, I'll take an honors class here or there. When I went into AVID, you are going to apply for [the] university. You do not have any choice in this matter. You will work hard in high school. So that changed my mindset a lot. It made the preparation a lot more difficult but a lot more rewarding because I'm here. So it worked.

For Antonio, the AVID program also brought him willing mentors and gave him access to the AP courses he needed to be admitted to UCSD. He commented enthusiastically about the impact of the teachers who helped him achieve, and how he continues to keep in contact with a few special teachers, including his AVID teacher, saying "he is still my friend."

Table 7 provides a summary matrix showing (1) the number of years that the three participants were enrolled in the AVID program, (2) the percent contribution AVID influenced college going and (3) a listing of three central practices taught in the AVID program that the participants were using in college. The students, through their interview data, indicated how often they used these key strategies. Interestingly, the three students used study groups most often, Cornell Notes less often, and made professor contacts the least. In addition, all the participants felt the AVID program contributed 70 percent or more to helping them get into UCSD, which is a testament to the importance of the program for these participants.

Table 7. AVID Experiences Summary Matrix

Name	Years in AVID program	% AVID contributed to getting into college	Core AVID Strategies Used in College		
			Cornell Notes	Study Groups	Professor Contact
Samuel	4	75-80%	rarely	often	some
Carlita	3	98%	always	often	no
Antonio	4	70%	some	often	some

Persisting in College

For the three study participants from UCSD, the difficulty of the courses was a common theme. They each reported having to struggle with adapting to the intense pace of the quarter system, along with adjusting to the quantum leap in course content volume and complexity as compared to their high school coursework. Each participant developed a variety of strategies to cope with the academic stress. Carlita explained how she felt about the atmosphere at UCSD. She said, “You have almost no grade competition in high school and it is all about grade competition when you get to college.” She added,

The number one thing at UCSD is academics. We have no sports here. And so it’s all about academics. It’s all anyone ever does. You study and you learn, and if you’re lucky you get to hang out with your friends on the weekends and play videogames. Then you’re pulling all-nighters every few weeks to try and cover so much material in so little time. So it’s very, very academic. Very focused on school.

Carlita had primarily used study groups, TA sessions and all-nighters to pull her through difficult coursework. Nevertheless, her grades have dropped and she withdrew

from a class last quarter. Her work schedule along with the increasing difficulty of her courses had combined and resulted in her falling behind in her classes.

Samuel, who had dropped, withdrawn and failed classes during his first four quarters, said by way of explanation,

In high school I was always used to doing my homework in class. And so you can't do that because you have to listen to the professor. It's tough and basically I had to switch my whole time management around. I had to set times and do my homework and in order to make the grade I had to start going to classes, because you can get really lazy.

Carlita agreed saying, "Going to your classes is so hard to do sometimes." When questioned about the status of his current classes, Samuel admitted, "Well today I woke up at 9:30. I had math at 10 but I dropped that math class." I asked, with concern, why he had dropped it. He answered, "Because I missed too many classes. It was either keep it and then get an A on the final in order to get a B, but it was really sketchy so I just dropped it and took the W."

Although Samuel recognized that the university was academically challenging, he was not totally committed to doing what was required. Samuel said knowledgeably, if a bit paradoxically,

You have to learn that you have to be independent and you have to go to class on your own. You have to do your homework on your own. The courses are hard, but if you really focus and you really push yourself, which I don't, you can get the A.

Both Carlita and Samuel found videogames to be an outlet for social interaction and a welcome distraction, but Samuel indulged in playing them to an extreme degree

and neglected going to class and doing homework. He called himself an “addict,” which perhaps explained why he had been unable to control this self-defeating behavior.

Antonio, who also found UCSD academics challenging, took a completely different path. He also had problems adjusting to the quarter system. He said, “You have quarters that are only ten weeks, so everything goes by fast. You study all the time.” He chose to form a social network based on study groups, which evolved into an academic support club for Latinos, LUCHA. Although Antonio came into UCSD with the lowest SAT scores, he currently has the highest GPA of the three participants. Antonio utilized tutoring services available through Oasis on a weekly basis.

Carlita had used the service occasionally, but her work schedule interfered with Oasis workshop days. Samuel did not feel he needed help in mathematics or physics, so he chose not to attend. Carlita pointed out,

In high school, it’s usually so easy, you don’t have to ask for help. Then you get here and there are kids who’ve never had to ask for help before and they don’t know how to ask for help. And they don’t think they need to ask for help, whereas if you’re an AVID student you understand how to ask for help and that you’re gonna need it and so you find out where to get it and you do it.

Carlita and Samuel had difficulty adjusting their priorities to effectively transition to college level work. They had both had a relatively easy time in high school, and seemed reluctant to adjust their study and attendance habits to meet the new academic requirements that would ensure greater success at the university. Their behavior was in direct opposition to the strategies and habits they had theoretically learned in AVID.

Staying at the university also required having the financial resources to pay for your education. This was an area that troubled all three students to varying degrees.

Samuel had the most trouble with his financial situation. He said in regards to barriers at the university, "Then another thing with me was financial aid. You have to make sure your money is all set aside, so you can stay in. Because they'll drop you if you don't pay." His concern over money, loans and meeting deadlines may have contributed to his negative academic spiral. He alluded to the fact that he may have to move home in order to save money, and felt depressed by the possibility. Antonio made few references to his financial situation other than to mention the rising cost of tuition which meant "more loans" and the necessity to get a part time job to help pay for school. Even Carlita, with the full ride scholarship, felt concerned about finances. She said,

You always talk with financial [aid] and plus if you drop to below full time enrollment or your GPA goes down, your financial aid is out the window. So what are you going to do? Financial aid is always, always in the back of your mind.

Like OK, what do I need to do to make sure everything's paid for?

When asked, "What's the best thing that's happened to you here since 2002?" Carlita answered, "it really is the people I've met and the interesting experiences I've had. It's not really the classes but the stuff you get to do outside of class." Samuel's surprising response was: "The best thing for me was failing my first class." He elaborated by adding, "It's like a reality check. I needed to get my butt into gear. Otherwise they're going to kick me out." He continued,

You start to realize it's not a game anymore. Before I used to do the whole juggling, can I turn this homework assignment in and I'll be fine. I pulled C's you

know because that's passing, but then I failed. If my mom sees my transcript, I'll never hear the end of it. So, I have to first of all retake that class in order to get rid of that, but then I have to keep myself from getting F's in the other classes. At the same time I have to balance my social life and somewhere I have to work my family in there. So I think that's the reason why it's the best part for me because it made me realize what I'm here for and how I have to stay here.

Antonio found the social networks with his Latino friends the most rewarding. He was confident about his ability to meet the academic challenges and to graduate from UCSD. Antonio said, "I'm really happy here."

Each student negotiated his or her way through the academic transition with varying degrees of success. For Samuel, now on academic probation, his future at UCSD was in jeopardy. Carlita had committed to getting an education and was determined to stay in, although her attendance behavior cast doubt on her stated goal. Antonio, with his strong social network and study habits, was already planning on graduate school. All three participants, as first generation college students, recognized they were the beneficiaries of AVID strategies and advocacy in high school. They reported that without this program they would not be at UCSD.

Intersections Between Cases: SDSU and UCSD

The previous four sections explored the individual cases attending two public universities in San Diego County and provided cross-case analyses of the participants attending each institution. In this section, the intersections and distinctions between the two groups of students will be examined in relationship to the two research questions concerning college transition and persistence experiences and the influence of the AVID

program from the participants' current perspectives. Since the participants shared a common high school experience, the AVID program, the first section will focus on the elements of that program that reportedly affected the participants' persistence in college.

Research Question 1: How do AVID program graduates adapt academically and culturally to a four-year public university during their first year?

Braxton et al. (2000), through a meta-analysis of research on college persistence, distilled Tinto's theoretical college integration model (1975, 1987, 1993) into the following four critical factors found to influence student persistence: student entry characteristics, individual attributes, pre-college schooling experiences and the student's participation in the social community of the college. The two categories most pertinent to this study, pre-college schooling experiences and the students' participation in the college social community, were integrated into the chronological network (See Figure 9) and will also be used to compare to the participants' reported college transition experiences.

Table 8 provides a summary matrix of all the participants self-reported transition experiences in regards to their academic and cultural and social adjustment during their first year of transition. The displayed data includes summary descriptors about the participants' transition period to the respective university's cultural and academic environment.

Table 8. Transition Experience Matrix

Name	University Attended	Current GPA and Major	Cultural and Social Transition Descriptors	Academic Transition Descriptors
Serena	SDSU Commutes	3.64 Accounting	Freedom! She can be herself here. Married, her social life is at home.	Loves her classes, major and learning. All A's & B's.
Sandra	SDSU Commutes	2.14 Psychology	Lonely, has trouble meeting others. No friendships formed. Feels disconnected and lost.	Scary! Afraid. Not managing courses well. Failed a class plus two incompletes.
José	SDSU Commuter	2.81 Criminal Justice	Fun, exciting, and many high school friends go here. They gather between classes.	Study time is not scheduled. Knows how to improve. Failed a class.
Angelica	SDSU Commuter	2.43 Social Work	One friend here, but she dropped out. Friends are at home, not here.	Loves learning, but writing is hard, and so is reading. Failed a class.
Kendra	SDSU Commuter	2.97 Psychology (Art minor)	Was alone first semester, then found good friends in the sorority and is connected to campus life.	It's scary. Afraid of failure, but motivated to learn and doing well.
Samuel	UCSD Resident	2.01 Physics (Math minor)	Great social life, has new friends here. Plays videogames with roommates most days.	Erratic grades, skips classes, failed a class, withdrew from two others.
Carlita	UCSD Resident	2.33 Biology	Summer bridge helped her make friends. Likes to go to parties for videogames. It's home.	Really hard classes. Studies, but skips classes. Withdrew from two classes.
Antonio	UCSD Resident	2.45 Mechanical Engineering	Some friends came here from high school, so feels connected. Started LUCHA.	Very hard here. Studies all the time. Study groups and tutoring helps.

The five students who commuted to college tended to compartmentalize their transition experience as one of taking classes, with little concern or expressed need to connect socially to the campus environment. Only one commuter participant, Sandra, discussed feeling the acute lack of social connection, which may have endangered her academic status, since she was depressed by the absence of friends on campus. She also experienced the least academic success with a failure and two incompletes in classes last semester. Since they commuted, all the SDUS students had a much more difficult time socially connecting to the campus environment. With the exception of Kendra, they did not participate in as many study groups, and did not form friendships with fellow SDSU students. Not living on campus did make a difference in their reported college transition experience.

The three UCSD students who lived on campus felt a much stronger social connection to the university and had formed social networks on campus outside of their home communities. These students identified their university living spaces as “home” and began to decrease their visits to their parents’ home as time went on. In short, living on campus made a difference as far as the types of social and cultural connections experienced by the UCSD participants.

Even though all the students expressed dedication and motivation to do well at the university, only one of the study participants had a cumulative GPA over 3.00. Two of the participants, one at SDSU and one at UCSD, are currently on academic probation. Both seem to have been unwilling or unable to put in the necessary study time, or to seek outside help, in order to complete their coursework successfully. These two also tended to blame outside factors for their academic situation. Samuel said, “It was boring, so I

stopped going [to class]" and Sandra said, "Those [EOP] tutors don't help me." Also pertinent was the fact that four of the eight participants failed a class, and three had withdrawn from classes in anticipation of failure. This suggests that some of these AVID program graduates either lacked adequate preparation for the rigors of the university curriculum, or were not able to effectively negotiate the college system as independent learners without the support of a teacher-advocate to guide them.

One interpretation of this phenomenon, as suggested by several of the participants, was the sudden release from a very structured school day schedule as found in high schools, to a system that did not require attendance or attempt to coordinate class and study time for students. The reaction to this freedom from school rules and parental oversight did result in a lack of class attendance for at least five of the eight participants during their first few months of college. As Samuel mentioned, "I found out the hard way," referring to his low grades the first quarter at UCSD due to his lack of attendance.

Another key factor leading to lower grades, withdrawals and class failure is the transition to rigorous university curriculum. The three UCSD participants universally bemoaned the difficulty of the coursework and the pace of the quarter system which resulted in stress and long hours of study, saying "it's hard here." According to Carlita and Samuel, the rapidity of the quarter system caused them to get behind, exacerbated by their irregular class attendance, so that withdrawal seemed the only viable option to avoid course failure.

Participants from both campuses reported being overwhelmed with the amount of reading and the type of critical thinking and analysis required of them. The combination

of rigorous coursework and lack of required class attendance created a difficult academic transition for Samuel, Carlita, Sandra, Angelina, and José. These students, along with Antonio and Kendra, seemed confused by the type of academic writing required in college as compared to what they had been taught in high school. All but José addressed their need for writing help by accessing EOP tutors at SDSU or TAs at UCSD. José expressed his confidence in his ability to manage the required academic writing and referred back to his AP English class as “teaching me how to write.” Serena thrived on the academic challenges and did well in her courses, although she also chose to skip classes fairly regularly, but only after ascertaining whether she needed to attend, or could do the work on her own. Since her feedback, by way of A and B grades, did not challenge her attendance behavior, she continued to skip the classes she felt she did not need to attend.

In contrast, Antonio marshaled study groups and used the campus tutoring service at UCSD regularly. He also formalized his network of academic peer support by co-founding the all male Latino club, LUCHA, which served to provide an infrastructure of social and academic support to the group members. “Persistence may be aided by the existence of a supportive subculture in one’s home community as well as within the college” (Tinto, 1993, p. 63). Antonio was the only participant to integrate support from members of his Latino community attending UCSD, which made more likely his goal of graduation with an undergraduate degree in mechanical engineering.

Another aspect of the transition experience is to develop an intellectual life, or academic identity, due to the influence of an expanded opportunity to learn new material and through faculty interactions. “Of the variety of forms of contact which occur on

campus, frequent contact with the faculty appears to be a particularly important element in student persistence” (Tinto, 1993, p. 56). These faculty-student interactions often begin in the classroom setting, and then may extend, usually by the instigation of the student, to informal meetings outside of class, such as during office hours. Only two participants at UCSD, Antonio and Samuel, and one at SDSU, Kendra, reported making personal contact with their professors outside of class. Reasons for not doing so included feeling uncomfortable, not having the time, and not feeling the need to do so.

Interestingly, as former AVID students, all knew that this was an important part of their academic experience, but nevertheless chose not to do so. One possible reason is the intimidation factor due to the power imbalance between underrepresented students and high status professors. Professors, who breeze into a lecture hall filled with a hundred students, often do not connect with their students. Added to the mix is the sentiment, voiced by four of the participants, of not wanting to appear “stupid” or to ask questions that the professor might feel they should already know. Several participants also stated they were afraid of wasting the professors’ time.

However, since the participants needed academic help, they looked for other avenues. All three UCSD students availed themselves of the TA system, and more frequently got help from these younger graduate students who were easily accessible and knowledgeable about homework and exams. The SDSU students did not seem to have a TA system, since none referred to meeting with TAs during the interview sessions. Two of the students, Sandra and Angelina, had used the EOP tutoring service, but both stated it was “not very helpful.” The SDSU students used study groups as the most frequent

source of academic help, although not universally. Sandra was unable to connect with other students in her classes and had not been in study groups, which she regretted.

Another reason for lack of professor contacts can be attributed to the time factor. Four of the five SDSU students had jobs and none lived on campus. Carlita, a UCSD student, worked two eight-hour days a week off campus and had not made any professor contacts. These two impediments, along with a common reticence to make contact with a seemingly remote professor, may have decreased the likelihood of student-initiated contact. As Tinto (1993) commented, "Classrooms often serve as gateways for further involvement in the intellectual life of the campus. In nonresidential settings generally and for commuting students in particular, they may be the primary if not the only place where students and faculty meet" (p. 57). It can be concluded that these former AVID students did not feel ready to initiate professor contact, even though this had been stressed as important in their high school AVID programs.

Research Question 2: In what ways did they attribute their persistence in college to their high school AVID experience?

Although each of the participants graduated from a different high school with different AVID teachers, the AVID program nevertheless provided a place where each participant formed strong academic networks. As Stanton-Salazar (2001) explained in his study of support networks in minority teens:

The development of self-empowering networks and help-seeking orientations among low-status minority adolescents must not be underestimated. Although supportive relations with school agents and positive help-seeking orientations do not guarantee school success among minority youth, such integrative processes

would be expected to foster academic persistence and developmental resiliency; most certainly, negative embeddedness spells disaster for too many minority youth. (p. 246)

Participants were asked to describe their experiences in AVID and to talk about what parts of the program, specifically, had made a difference for them. In Table 9, this information is displayed in a matrix format. The AVID descriptors were pulled from individual brainstorm maps made by participants prior to beginning each focus group session (Appendix C) and from the individual interview transcripts. In addition, the percentage that AVID contributed to the participants' college entry success is also redisplayed here. All of the students attributed a third or more of their ability to access a four-year university to the influence of the AVID program. Other areas of contribution described in the interviews included participants' own personal motivation and the positive influence of their families.

The matrix, displayed in Table 9, shows the types of descriptors that students attending different AVID programs attributed to their program. Points of overlap include the participants' commentary describing how their AVID teachers provided information, structure and a blueprint for getting to college, along with a personal concern and advocacy. Participants reported in various ways how their AVID classes provided a "safe place" or a "second home" with others who wanted to attend college and helped them keep focused on that goal. Other areas of importance for the participants were the weekly tutoring sessions, help with college applications, financial aid advising, time management, and study and organizational skills. The AVID teachers provided social capital by building informational and support networks to help students who "face

obstacles to success despite their positive school attitudes, behavior and performance” (Croninger & Lee, 2001, p. 571).

The AVID curriculum emphasized mandatory Cornell notes in all academic classes, essay writing, vocabulary development, critical reading based on an inquiry model, and SAT test preparation. The organizational skills taught included binder organization, use of planners to schedule study time and instruction in time management. Other types of cultural knowledge (cultural capital) taught included sitting in the front of the classroom, public speaking and talking with professors about content questions or grades.

Although none of the participants knew each other prior to the focus groups, all were able to relate to a common body of knowledge and practice that they possessed due to their participation in the AVID program. This can be seen in through the many common program descriptors used by the students in Table 9.

Many of these study skills, first taught in AVID, have persisted as part of the participants’ repertoire of practice. The participants recited the AVID strategies without hesitation in both the individual interviews and the focus groups. However, there was indeed a gap between the strategies and study skills the participants knew how to do, and what they actually did in college. In the focus group sessions the academic realities of college and how the students had responded was discussed. Apparently, the loss of structure provided by the AVID program, and decreased parental supervision, threatened five of the participants’ academic persistence. Three others, Antonio, Serena and Kendra adapted by becoming independent learners and assuming greater personal responsibility to manage their academic lives. The stress of more rigorous curriculum, the rapid pace of

Table 9. AVID Matrix: SDSU and UCSD Participants

Name and University	AVID Descriptors and Percent Attributed to "Going to College"	AVID program elements used in College
Serena – SDSU	Resources, advice/counseling, notes, tutoring, learning, teamwork, excelling, goals, teacher pushes you and helps you, how to get financial aid. AVID was 35-40 %.	Cornell Notes usually Sits in front rows Study groups occasionally Uses a Planner
Sandra – SDSU	Challenges, support, friends, security, accomplishments, determination, teacher is a friend. AVID was 100%.	Cornell Notes always Sits in front rows Uses a Planner
José – SDSU	College applications, tutoring, notes, friends, AP help, information, structure, incentive to be a "straight arrow for college." AVID was 35-40%.	Developed own note style Sits in back Uses planner - occasionally Study groups as needed
Angelica – SDSU	Second family, tutoring, mentoring, visiting colleges, encouraging, success, helpful, learning, teacher helps get you ready, financial aid. AVID was 33%.	Cornell Notes Sits in front rows Uses a Planner Studies with brother
Kendra – SDSU	Fun class, organizational skills, college applications, deadlines, safe space, challenging, teachers care. AVID was 60%.	Cornell Notes. Sits in front rows. Uses a Planner Study groups occasionally
Samuel – UCSD	Tutoring, taking notes, college applications, friends, learning, reminding, teacher gets on you. AVID was 75 - 80%.	Developed own note style from Cornell note basics Uses a Planner (PDA) Study groups when needed.
Carlita – UCSD	Support, teacher is a friend, college prep, help with AP classes, admissions and deadlines, financial aid (FASFA), AVID Institute. AVID was 98%.	Cornell Notes Sits in front rows Study groups/ TAs Uses a Planner
Antonio – UCSD	Community service, college trips, a blueprint, friends, good teachers, help with deadlines and applications, help with AP. AVID was 70%.	Cornell Notes (usually) Sits in front rows on side Study groups meet weekly Uses a Planner

courses, the required general education classes, the lack of adult support and supervision as well as individual gaps in the participants' ability to critically read and write at the level demanded, resulted in academic setbacks for five of the eight participants; three at SDUS and two at UCSD.

However, these barriers did not deter these former AVID program graduates from persisting in college. Two attending UCSD and three at SDSU responded by taking community college classes to backfill or supplement their university coursework. All who had experienced failure, withdrawals or incompletes, related a plan of action to address these barriers to degree completion.

Evident in all the participants' behavior was their ability to seek out help. As AVID students, they participated in tutorial sessions twice weekly. This preparation allowed them to practice studying in groups, to formulate academic questions and to help others learn difficult material. Although connecting to professors was unexpectedly rare for this group, all but one did participate in regular study groups and all went to at least some professor sponsored study sessions or university sponsored tutorial sessions. Help seeking behavior is a strong predictor of school success. "The development of self-empowering networks and help-seeking orientations among low-status minority children and adolescents must not be underestimated" (Stanton-Salazar, 2001, p. 246). From this perspective, these AVID program graduates had a distinct advantage over their non-AVID trained peers.

Finally, one underlying factor permeated the interviews and focus group sessions. The participants shared a sense of excitement that they had an opportunity to be first-generation university students. They expressed feeling responsible for being the

torchbearers, watched and admired by other family members and younger siblings. They were also proud of their accomplishments, both in high school and at college, and expressed the certain knowledge that without the AVID program, they would not be attending their respective institutions.

In Chapter 5 a chronological network of factors influencing these participants will be graphically presented in order to give perspective to the participants narratives. Four general stages of the participants' experience will be explored and related to the findings discussed in Chapter 4. The factors emerged and were synthesized from the individual data analysis, the cross-case analyses and the focus group interviews.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the transition experiences of AVID program graduates who were beginning their second year of college at competitive four-year public universities. This qualitative study used a narrative case study methodology to investigate the lived college transition experiences of these AVID program graduates, and explored the degree to which being in the AVID program had influenced the participants persistence behaviors. This chapter summarizes the findings from the study, framed by the research questions, and interwoven with pertinent elements from the literature review. The implication section will explore the major study conclusions and recommendations for the AVID program and for higher education policymakers. The limitations of the study and need for further research will conclude Chapter 5.

Chronological Network of Factors Influencing College Persistence

In this section, using a chronological network (Miles & Huberman, 1994) of factors leading into and through college, four general stages of the participants' experience will be explored, namely: (1) high school factors, (2) the internal and external influencing factors, (3) the college transition phase, and (4) the college persistence phase. Figure 9 (p. 238) graphically summarizes the main influential factors participants experienced over time as reported during this study, and also displays the development of the chronological stages that these case study participants described as they transitioned into college over time. A brief introduction to the major sections of Figure 9 follows.

As the participants moved through high school they were influenced by their family backgrounds, home language, and socioeconomic status. In addition, their own

personal biological attributes along with their schooling experiences interacted to form the basis of their academic and behavioral skill sets. AVID influenced the participants while in high school by shaping academic behaviors and designing a four-year plan to prepare the participants for college admission.

Once admitted to college, the students were influenced by “life” factors such as their own personal goals, family responsibilities, jobs, and financial resources. These factors all impacted the college transition experienced by the participants. During the college transition phase, the AVID program graduates had to adjust to new, and sometimes stressful, academic and social environments at the university.

If the transition phase was successful, then the participants moved into the college adaptation and persistence phase during their second year. While in this phase, participants experienced continued academic identity development along with more established cultural and social networks centered on the academic community at the university. Continued persistence, and overcoming academic or environmental barriers, will lead to an undergraduate bachelor’s degree, and potentially graduate level work.

The next section describes in more detail the application of the chronological stages as shown in Figure 9 to the findings in Chapter 4.

Figure 9. Chronological network of factors influencing college persistence

High School Factors - Getting Ready for College

High school factors needed for getting into college include the possession of individual skills and attributes (Tinto, 1993). Although not a focus of this study, the aptitude and skills of the students matter, as well as academic knowledge in order to get meet college entrance requirements. AVID built upon the natural aptitudes and personal goals of these students by providing study strategies and time for knowledge acquisition.

Another factor that emerged from the participant interviews was the foundational support from their families sustaining the goal of going to college. This family support, although also not a central focus of this study, became evident as part of each participants' emotional and cultural base to which they all regularly retreated for ongoing encouragement and nurturing while making the transition to the university. Ianni (1989), speaking of the educated classes said, "Parents can and do plot a steady course for their children through the long and arduous educational preparation in order for them to achieve an occupational and life style similar to their own" (p. 59). In this case study, the parents of the AVID participants wanted to help their children achieve an occupational life very different from their own. AVID provided that vehicle for these families.

Four of the Latino participants, Antonio, Serena, José and Angelica, also described a high degree of ethnic identity and affiliation. These four came from recently immigrated families, which may have also influenced their strong ethnic association. Ethnic identity is transmitted by families, and is best described as the feelings about values, symbols and common histories that identify the person with their ethnic group (Smith, 1991). The task of integrating an ethnic identity along with a personal identity of self is a central focus of late adolescence (Steinberg, 1996). This is not to say that the

other participants did not share a similar ethnic identity; however, it was not strongly evident in their interviews.

The high school factors addressed by this study focused on the pre-college preparation for college, and in particular the influence of the AVID program. The participants perceived the program as crucial to their ability to get to college. As mentioned in the individual case studies, this program, through the teacher advocates, was reported to be pivotal in negotiating students through the cultural and academic requirements necessary to enter college. Once in college, students would be on their own to put the AVID strategies to work and to become “independent learners.”

Another pre-college factor that emerged from the participants was the importance of taking AP classes. All but two students had taken at least one AP course, and those who did universally reflected on the increased rigor and stimulating academic challenge that had helped them in their subsequent adjustment to more difficult college courses.

Internal and External Factors Influencing College Entry

In order to be successful in college, students must have established personal goals and commitments to getting a higher education (Tinto, 1993). All of the participants expressed numerous times their dedication to this goal, even in the face of acknowledged barriers such as failed classes and financial concerns. Each expressed a personal plan, including summer school at the community college, retaking classes for a higher grade and getting a job as ways around these barriers. The strength of their personal commitments will continue to be tested as the participants move into more advanced courses. However, for students at both universities the evidence supported their desire to

have a more viable economic future than their families did, and the participants desired future was most achievable through higher education and a bachelor's degree.

Additional influences from external factors also put these students under stress. "Though the competing external pressures of families and peers for disadvantaged students are no different in kind than those for other students, they may well be more intense" (Tinto, 1993, p. 63). For Samuel, Antonio, Carlita, José, Sandra and Angelina, the combination of holding jobs and family responsibilities, and maintaining adequate financial resources added to the stress these students had to adjust to. For some, it has been a difficult balancing act and may have made their college transition additionally stressful. In addition, all five of the SDSU students commuted to classes and reported more home responsibilities than the UCSD resident students did. As a result, the three participants living on campus apparently had less pressure from their home communities and families to participate in local community life, so they were free to spend more time studying, often with peers or TAs, on campus.

A repeated concern from both groups involved finding the financial resources to continue their educations. Five students, Serena, Sandra, José, Angelina, Antonio had been awarded renewable academic scholarships dependent on the maintenance of at least a 2.0 GPA, and enrollment in at least twelve units of coursework per semester. Carlita, uniquely, was the recipient of the Gates Foundation scholarship and had a "full ride" as long as she earned a minimum of a 2.0 GPA and took at least 36 quarter units a year. Serena, who was being supported by her husband, did not indicate any financial issues, although she wanted to maintain her scholarship to "help out." Only Samuel did not have a scholarship, and along with his father had taken out extensive loans, which caused him

great anxiety every quarter. Sandra, as of this writing, was in danger of losing her scholarship due to academic difficulty. Although this undercurrent of financial concern existed for the majority, none of the participants felt that this factor alone would cause them to leave school.

College Transition Phase

Once in college, the participants faced two major areas of adjustment. One was the academic transition and the other the social and cultural transition to a new environment. Bronfenbrenner (1979) postulated that human development could be seen as an ecology, or as a system of dynamic interactions between human beings and the environment surrounding them, both capable of influencing and changing the other. He said, "An ecological transition occurs whenever a person's position in a ecological environment is altered as a result of a change in role, setting or both" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 26). The new roles required of these participants included that of college student, independent learner, self-directed and responsible time manager and conscientious scholar. The new settings were both large university campuses with thousands of other students, unknown professors and confusing geographies.

For the three resident students, the new environment required learning how to live on their own and manage their own laundry, food and roommates. It also allowed them to become part of a university environment and to adopt a new social identity as university students. As these three UCSD students adapted to their new roles and environments, it impacted their families by expanding the participants' intellectual development, strengthening an academic identity, and opening up new areas of influence and social networks not previously open to them.

For the five commuter students, their social environments did not change as much. They had to adapt to balancing more demanding coursework, jobs and family pressures which created new environmental stresses as they adapted to their new university student roles.

The academic environment required going to large classes, with often distant professors, and discovering how to earn decent grades, form study groups and utilize the most effective learning strategies. For these participants, the AVID program helped mediate some of these demands. The participants all knew how to work in small groups (tutorials) and had intimate knowledge of note-taking skills. Although most did not put into practice making contact with their professors, seven of the eight did use study groups and tutorials for academic assistance.

The social and cultural adjustment necessitated making connections with the campus community. For most of the students at SDSU, this adjustment was rather rocky. The two students who had siblings at the university, Serena and José, found this transition easier and did not express any difficulty connecting with others on campus. José, in particular, had a number of friends from his high school who also attended SDSU, so he felt very comfortable and “exhilarated” at SDSU. At the other extreme, Sandra, reported feeling depressed and lonely and had not made any friendships or connected with any others outside of class. Angelina felt she did not need to make any connections with other students, and met her social needs through her home community and family. The three most socially integrated students, Carlita, Antonio and Samuel, all lived on campus and reported feeling very much a part of college community life. They had all formed

friendships at school and felt that these relationships were important for future advancement through “networking.”

College Adaptation and Persistence Phase

As the students made it through their first year at their respective campuses, it became evident that they had begun to exhibit adaptive behaviors and had become more comfortable with the college environment. They shared that they “knew what to do now.” They knew how to register for classes, where the classes were located on campus, where to go for tutorial help, how to use the library and where to meet their friends. Two simultaneous events describe the evolution of these students’ transition experiences.

The first is the continued development of a distinct academic identity. The participants expanded their intellectual development through exposure to rigorous courses and new ideas fostered by the university environment. During the interview sessions, they all discussed their excitement about taking interesting classes with provocative content that they “never learned in high school.” However, many also complained about having to take “boring” general education classes; classes in which they had no interest. Some decided not to attend, take notes or read the texts for these classes and consequently failed or withdrew. This lack of academic persistence is troublesome for AVID trained students, especially in the critical early stages of their college transition.

Concurrently, the participants universally deepened their academic literacy through demanding critical reading and writing assignments. Some participants, not accustomed to the academic reading and writing standards of the university, used a trial and error method to attempt to meet the requirements, which most participants from both

universities reported were “different than in high school.” Surprisingly, five of the participants, four of whom had taken AP courses in high school, did not consistently execute the reading or writing strategies they had learned in AVID. These students reported avoiding reading assignments, not being able to concentrate and not doing “what I should do.” The possible reasons for this mismatch between the participants’ behavior and stated beliefs may be due to the lack of structure, and personal mentoring that went along with the new college environment. The self-defeating behaviors may also be due to a deeper lack of self-confidence about their personal academic abilities or intelligence. Three participants reported that they were merely “average” or just “OK students.”

Those who had taken more advanced coursework in high school had the least academic difficulty with meeting the university standards, but had not consistently chosen to do so. Those who had not taken advanced (AP) English; Carlita, Sandra, Angelina, Antonio, and Kendra, were more likely to use available tutoring options including TAs, EOP tutors or study groups to get help with the writing assignments.

These events, even the negative ones, added to the participants’ identification as college students with stronger academic identities and firmly stated commitments to “get a degree.” The participants demonstrated resourcefulness in devising plans to overcome acknowledged academic barriers and all professed confidence in their abilities to address any setbacks.

The second part of the college persistence phase results from establishing social networks at the university including study groups, professor or TA interactions and taking part in the extracurricular events sponsored on campus. Four of the participants had established strong social ties with their respective universities, Carlita, Antonio and

Samuel, living on campus at UCSD and Kendra, who joined a sorority at SDSU. The other SDSU participants did not involve themselves in campus activities or have active relationships with professors. José, at SDSU, had formed strong community based networks of friends who also attended SDSU, but the focus of their activity was in their home community. Two of the four, Angelina, and Serena, occasionally participated in study groups, but did not identify with the social community or have extensive networks there. Only one of the eight, Angelina, was not able to make any connections on campus, and reported feeling the most “disconnected and lonely.”

Relevance of Two Theoretical Frameworks to AVID Students' Experiences

In this study, two theoretical frameworks were used to assist in the data interpretation: sociocultural theory and social and cultural capital acquisition. Vgotsky's (1986) sociocultural theory asserts that full cognitive development requires prerequisite social interaction, though adult or peer teachers. He stated,

Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level. This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals. (Vgotsky, 1986, p. 57)

Sociocultural Theory and Academic Identity

Vgotsky's theoretical construct was used to examine the development of an academic identity by the participants as they negotiated the transition to four-year public universities. One prevalent finding echoed Vgotsky's research: there was a connection

between providing the social and cultural scaffolding, through their AVID teacher advocates and the college attendance of these students. The AVID class structure allowed the participants to interact and learn together with an explicitly shared goal that collectively pushed their academic development steadily forward as they acquired the academic behaviors required for college entry.

Jackson (2003) described the importance of the early development of an academic identity, especially for ethnic minority students aspiring to access higher education. He stated that the agency of a teacher is needed to help encourage and foster this identity formation. The hallmarks of academic identity include a strong literacy foundation, knowing how to study, learning academic language, knowing how to ask questions, getting help and taking rigorous high school classes. Jackson also indicated the necessity of having these groups of “boundary crossers” together in a common class in order to assist each other.

Since academic identity is an abstract concept or construct, it can only be seen through proxy behaviors such as note-taking, contact with professors, habituated study behaviors and participation in study groups. Therefore, by examining the types of academic behaviors students have chosen to practice, we can identify whether these behaviors have resulted in increasing academic development and consequently, persistence. All of the participants in this study exhibited signs of a developing academic identity. The narrative interview evidence documented their common descriptions of AVID study habits, Cornell note-taking, reading and writing practices, participation in study groups, and an expressed desire to “learn more.” Underlying these commonly shared practices was a deeper element of implied need. The necessity of acquiring more

academic language prior to entering the university became evident from the descriptions the participants shared about their difficulty with critical reading and academic writing. They all needed stronger academic language in order to do well in university level courses, especially in those required classes the participants found “boring,” and to be successful in their majors as the courses escalated in difficulty. The majority of the participants were under prepared in both AVID and by their high schools to navigate the critical reading and expository writing demands of university level classes.

As students progress through the grades, academic language becomes increasingly complex, particularly in the content areas. Academic language includes: 1) understanding difficult concepts, 2) a vocabulary that includes low frequency and technical words, and 3) sophisticated grammatical constructions rarely used in conversations. (Cummins, 2002, p. 20)

Tierney and Hagedorn (2002) reiterated the necessity of creating “safe spaces” for underrepresented students in high school programs where students access the help of an advocate who can guide them through the hidden curriculum localized in institutionalized school practices that create barriers faced by poor and minority students. The findings from the current study indicate that the AVID program provided a significant intervention leading to college for these eight participants. Because of well documented institutionalized high school tracking practices (Mehan et al., 1996), these underrepresented students required a special program, AVID, with a teacher advocate who could help them negotiate both the high school system and college entry requirements. These advocates acted as bridges to link the students to a college future through access to advanced high school coursework, college applications, reading and

writing curriculum, college test preparation, college field trips and financial aid information.

Social and Cultural Capital

The second theoretical framework influencing the data analysis used in this study was Bourdieu's theory of social and cultural capital. He defined social capital as the value resulting from the flow of information available to those who belong to and participate in culturally dominant social networks. In schools, social capital refers to the available information about getting into college and the formation of social networks, such as mentors and peers, who help group members reach a common socially valued goal, such as college (Bourdieu, 1977). The term cultural capital represents the collection of non-economic forces such as family background, social class, and varying investments in and commitments to education, which directly influence academic success (Bourdieu, 1977). Furthermore,

Bourdieu's (1973) term, 'cultural capital' refers to high-status cultural resources (including beliefs, knowledge, and practices) that can be employed to gain economic capital and social prestige. Such resources are not inherently better than other cultural resources, but in a hierarchical society they are "worth more" because they are valued by those in positions of power. So those with more cultural capital have greater access to power and privilege than those with less. (Lubienski, 2003, p. 33)

These two theories were used to understand the underlying drive the participants needed to acquire the language of power, mediated by the AVID program, through the formation of school-based social and cultural capital networks. These networks were

accessed by these participants in their high school AVID programs, thereby giving them admission to institutions of academic power, the university, which improved their community standing and financial futures. As Attinasi (1986) stated, “ By virtue of its role of gatekeeper for entry into the most financially rewarding and prestigious occupations, higher education has been a potent force for social mobility in America” (p. 200). These participants acknowledged in various ways throughout their interviews that the economic power of a “degree” was a specific, desired and attainable goal.

Additionally, the two theories intersect around the common foundational belief that society acts to promote groups of individuals through the possession of cultural assets, in the form of knowledge, that are both academic (language based) and cultural. In order to promote cognitive development, students must be challenged and supported by teachers who continue to provide intellectual challenges along with on-going social support and interaction (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). These premises will be more closely examined by discussing the findings in terms of the two research questions posed in this study.

Research Questions Revisited

Negotiating the Academic Transition

Question 1: How do AVID program graduates adapt academically and culturally to a four-year public university during their first year?

The findings indicated that most of the AVID program graduates felt both academically and culturally challenged during their first transitional year of college. Academically, the majority of these AVID students were challenged, although not during the first semester (SDSU) or quarter (UCSD). All of the participants attending SDSU,

except Serena, were required to take remedial coursework since they did not pass the mathematics or English entry-level examinations. The students, who were required to take no-credit classes, reported the courses were a “waste of time.” The mandatory classes caused these students to “get behind” in course units during the first term. One student, Angelina, reported that her first semester at SDSU was easier than high school. Antonio, at UCSD, had to take remedial coursework to pass the Subject A exam, and felt “scared” that he might be dropped from the university if he did not pass the test. Many of the students at both universities said they were advised not to take a full load of courses the first semester or quarter and to take some courses credit/no credit. Perhaps because of this, all the participants reported having “fairly good grades” the first semester or quarter.

This situation changed during the second semester for the SDSU students, and the second and third quarters for the UCSD students. Most of the students acknowledged that the combination of academic freedom to skip classes and the different academic structure, including only few large value tests and a limited amount of homework, caused their grades to drop. This extreme lack of structure and personal accountability was very different from the participants’ high school experiences. In addition, they did not have an advocate, like their AVID teachers, to keep them on track. The students had to transition to become independent learners and to allocate study time according to their own personal academic needs. Becoming an independent learner appeared to be a crucial part of the academic transition experience. Five of the eight students had still not routinely disciplined themselves, but all were able to articulate how they had learned to learn (metacognition) and what steps were necessary to improve their grade point averages.

An additional factor emerged from the participant interviews and focus group sessions. As the coursework increased in difficulty, the students were able to adjust, although not without some course failures, withdrawals and incompletes (see Table 8). However, the participants were very willing to talk about their academic setbacks, and they shared reflective assessments of changes they needed to make along with plans to replace the failing grade by retaking the class or making up units at the community college. As of this writing, all of the participants had GPAs above 2.0 and were beating the attrition odds, although two, Angelina and Samuel, were in danger of academic probation depending on their performance in the spring semester or quarter.

Tinto's research and numerous related studies have strongly supported the importance of the formation of student-professor connections as being instrumental in forming strong academic integration with the university (Tinto, 1988;1993;1998). These AVID participants, although taught the importance of this behavior, had made few personal connections with their professors. Nonetheless, the students did not report feeling distant from their instructors, although in the case of the student failures, contact with the professors may have prevented their poor grades. Instead, many of the participants formed study groups and sought out tutorial help to bridge their academic gaps in the more difficult courses, especially in the area of mathematics. Students at UCSD had the dual benefit of a strong TA system and a tutoring center, Oasis. The TAs acted as available resources for academic help and procedural assistance, and Oasis was available for larger groups of students to get additional instruction for specific courses in a classroom setting. The SDSU students had fewer tutorial resources where there is no TA system in place. A few participants took advantage of the Educational Opportunity

Program (EOP) tutors, but they relied more frequently on informal study groups or professor sponsored study sessions prior to exams.

Negotiating the Cultural Transition

Three participants, two attending UCSD and one attending SDSU, went to summer bridge programs thereby easing their cultural transition as far as navigating the campus and meeting other university students and staff. The students attending UCSD had more success assimilating to campus. The structured social environment allowed daily contact with roommates, shared meals, and taking classes located near the small residential colleges. The five SDSU commuter students reported having less social connection with the university, and focused their time at the university attending scheduled classes or having study time at the library between classes. The SDSU students, with the exception of Sandra, did not feel it was necessary to connect to the cultural or social environment at the university since their primary personal relationships were with their families located in their home communities. The SDSU students' experience contradicts the Tinto (1993) research findings on social integration, in that the SDSU participants did not appear to be any less committed to "getting the degree" than did their UCSD peers, who had high levels of social integration. During the SDSU focus group session, the students referred to their AVID training by mentioning that they knew how to study in groups and get help. In this study, the underrepresented students who commuted did not necessarily find useful support networks at the college, but constructed them in their home communities.

In contrast, the UCSD students reported feeling more a part of the campus and felt "at home" in their residence halls and apartments. Two of these UCSD students, Samuel

and Carlita did not report participating in any ethnically identified activities, unlike Antonio, who co-founded the first all male Latino club on campus. Conversely, at SDSU, all five students clearly articulated their identification with their ethnic group, Latino or African American, and indicated they sought out others of their same ethnicity or community background, but not necessarily on campus. “The concept of subcultures also serves to highlight the particular experience of students of color in many institutions of higher education and the importance of critical mass in the forming and sustaining of diverse student communities” (Tinto, 1993, p. 59). Feeling part of a group and seeing others who look like you do and who share your background may have empowered the SDSU students to feel comfortable in the SDSU cultural environment where many others of Latino ethnicity attend classes. Not a single student mentioned feeling unwelcome on either campus. Kendra, the African American participant, found connection within her small sorority and she expressed going from “walking around by myself” to interacting with a supportive group of friends she saw daily and with whom she shared campus-based activities.

Research question 2: In what ways do they attribute their persistence in college to their high school AVID experience?

All of the participants repeatedly reported that the AVID program had made going to a university a possibility that had previously seemed beyond their reach (See Tables 4 and 7). The AVID program offered a combination of a daily class organized around the participants fundamental commitment to attend a four-year college. The structured AVID curriculum included essential study skills, time management skills, critical reading and writing practice, test preparation, and college information and admission guidance. All of

these program components resulted in forming a bridge to college for the study participants.

For these eight participants, the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program acted a gestalt. The combination of all the program's elements produced a synergy that could not be easily dissected into specific components. The participants, when asked about possible improvements to the program, were unable to construct any substantial recommendations. Apparently, for them, the power of the program had worked to help them enter college, and they were unwilling or unable to effectively criticize either specific program elements or particulars as to their individual teacher's implementation of the program. AVID worked for these participants, because they willingly met the program demands so that they could enter college and obtain a degree.

As repeatedly reported by these participants, the program's success was also predicated upon having a strong teacher advocate who constructed an environment that encouraged underrepresented students to acquire social and cultural capital in order to become among the first in their families to go to college. As these AVID students were introduced to academic discourse, through both the AVID curriculum and advanced content coursework (i.e., AP), they became more capable over time of accessing this "book" language, which began to restructure their thinking. This acquisition of academic language, fostered by critical reading and expository writing assignments, was in contrast to the familiar informal discourse of their families and home communities. As Bourdieu (1977) noted,

Language is not simply an instrument of communication: it also provides, together with a richer or poorer vocabulary, a more or less complex

system of categories, so that the capacity to decipher and manipulate complex structures, whether logical or aesthetic, depends partly on the complexity of the language transmitted by the family. (p. 73)

To some degree, the participants' facility with academic discourse predetermined the types of academic transition issues they experienced, and could potentially be used as a measure of preparation for college work. Serena, who had the highest GPA, also reported her extensive personal literacy habits, such as reading and journaling, which she found helped her in her college courses. She alone indicated no problems with the reading or writing assignments, and had the most successful academic transition.

Another commonality that emerged among the participants was the strong connection and support given by their families toward the participants' personal goal of college graduation. However, each participant also stated that although supportive, their families did not have the information or knowledge to help get them into college. In other words, the participants and their families lacked social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977). In his research on social networks, Stanton-Salazar (2001) used the theory of social and cultural capital based on family assets to explain the achievement gap between middle-class and working-class Latino students.

We see this decapitalization manifesting itself in terms of parents not possessing the knowledge forms, resources, and middle-class cultural capital that would socially and academically empower their children and ensure their mobility. We see parents experiencing difficulty in generating the personal connections to those familial and nonfamilial agents and webs that could provide key forms of

institutional support. Such connections, however tacit, are the founding matrix of middle-class suburban life in the United States. (p. 253)

The study participants universally reported their AVID teachers filled this achievement gap by becoming surrogate school parents who enthusiastically provided the social and cultural capital in the form of information, study skills and organizational structure that allowed the participants to navigate their way into college. Throughout the interviews, the participants expressed determination to earn a degree. Now it is up to them to follow through on their potential and create a different future for themselves and their families as first generation college graduates.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this study led to more questions about the complex issues surrounding the preparation of underrepresented students for college and their subsequent persistence in college. As the participants reported, they are still benefiting from the literacy and study skills training provided in the AVID program, but most importantly, the program gave them a way into the university system. The majority of San Diego high schools have at least one section of AVID. The program has moved underrepresented students in significant numbers into four-year colleges and universities, especially when compared to the low college-going rates of their non-AVID peers. However, the program remains limited to a few sections on most high school campuses and impacts relatively few students. The findings of this study support that the program works to move underrepresented students into college, therefore significantly more students deserve to benefit from this program.

The findings indicate that this program works for the very students most likely to be denied access to higher education. Further, through the mediation of a teacher advocate, AVID has the power to change the futures of students from poor ethnic minority backgrounds by giving them access to critical information in a structured daily school program. The program, nevertheless, can be strengthened.

The following recommendations for improving the AVID program were derived from the findings this study generated and fall into three categories: (1) expand the goals of the AVID program (2) increase the academic rigor of the AVID curriculum, and (3) explicitly teach high school seniors how to successfully navigate the freshman year in college.

Recommendations for the AVID Program

Expand the Program Goals

The goal of the AVID program, as stated above, has been to enroll underrepresented students into four-year colleges and universities. This goal needs to be expanded from AVID students enrolling in college to graduation from college. Currently, the AVID program does not track its graduates, nor does it have any reliable data on the actual college graduation rates of its former students. As accountability measures increase, and universities are pressured to publicize graduation rates by ethnicity, the AVID program must be able to show evidence of its effectiveness over time. If public universities in California required AVID program graduates to indicate their participation in this program on the application, then these students could be flagged and disaggregated as a group so that their progress at the university could be followed over time. The information could then be shared with the students' high schools and the national AVID

organization, in order to more accurately measure how this particular group of students has progressed. Without such a feedback loop, assumptions based on entry statistics and anecdotal evidence will replace concrete data.

Increase the Rigor of the AVID Program

The AVID curriculum, first developed over twenty years ago, has been under sporadic revision at their national headquarters for the last few years. The demands of a standards-based education, the required high school exit examination and annual California Standards Tests were non-existent when AVID was started in San Diego. Adding to the problem is that the teaching of the AVID course is teacher dependent. Although there are guidelines and workbooks AVID teachers construct their own course content, which may vary wildly from school to school. What worked to help get a few underrepresented students to college twenty years ago is no longer adequate. There is a distinct need for alignment and restructuring of the AVID curriculum to support the needs of today's students.

There has been an increased flow of applications for college, but the available openings have not kept up with the demand. Therefore, high school students are required to become more desirable university candidates by taking more advanced classes, achieving higher SAT scores and maximizing their high school GPAs. The public universities in California have responded by raising the entry requirements for first time freshmen. Students are required to pass the entry-level tests, the ELM and EPT at California State Universities, and the Subject A at the University of California. If these tests are not passed, the students will be required to attend their local community college until they have mastered the requisite level of academic skill. AVID teachers should be

incorporating preparation for these exams into their senior AVID classes. With more systematic coaching and preparation, it is likely that more AVID students would be able to pass these exams and limit time spent in remedial courses at the university.

AVID programs must respond to this increased level of university competition by substantially strengthening the AVID curriculum in all areas of academic literacy, most importantly, in the areas of critical reading and expository writing. The majority of participants in this study had difficulty comprehending their college textbooks and writing rhetorical essays. The result was failure for some and loss of confidence for others.

AVID students must learn to boundary cross, not only socially but also linguistically. By helping students move from informal registers into more formal academic ones, AVID students can safely practice new linguistic constructions, which can then be incorporated into academic writing. Since most AVID students come from low SES backgrounds, and do not have the opportunity to develop academic language at home, training in academic discourse should be consistently incorporated into AVID classrooms so that students can appropriate academic language along with a constantly expanding vocabulary into their personal repertoires.

Navigating the Freshman Year

Many of the study participants were under prepared for the transition to college. The AVID teachers, aligned with the goal of helping students get into college, rarely spend time on what students should do when they arrive. Once the participants left the care of the AVID teacher, they were literally on their own. Some made use of summer bridging programs, others relied on older brothers or sisters who were in college. For

some, who were the first in their families to go to college, the transition was more difficult. However, with planning and explicit instruction, many of these students' foreseeable issues could have been dealt with earlier.

A portion of the AVID senior class should be dedicated to preparing students for the transition. Putting students through simulations about the freedom in the college environment will lead to explaining the importance of going to class, doing homework, contacting professors and finding tutorial help.

Another way to help support AVID students' transition would be to connect them through a central website so that they can make contacts with other AVID students who are attending the same university. The participants in my study, all from local high schools, did not know one another. Realizing the importance of social networks, AVID teachers could help promote these connections before students leave high school and make sure that students are prepared to utilize the human resources available to them.

AVID teachers must also help students become their own advocates and assume more responsibility for their actions. The controlled structure and scheduling of high school can be gradually loosened so that students learn to accept the consequences of their behaviors. Five of the participants struggled with self-discipline, attending class and doing homework. Most did not understand how the required general education courses counted, and were not prepared to take classes they were "not interested in." AVID students should be better prepared to face the reality of the college environment as an integral part of the AVID program.

Addressing the Achievement Gap

Another implication for this study is to address the persistent achievement gap existent between subgroups of students (Haycock, 2001) by starting more AVID programs. The “achievement gap” in education refers to the disparity in academic performance between student groups. It is most often used to describe the disturbing performance gaps between and among Latino, African-American, and American Indian students and their white and Asian peers. The achievement gap shows up in classroom grades, standardized test scores, advanced course enrollment, high school completion and college graduation rates. The findings of this study address one way the achievement gap can be closed: identify more underrepresented students who want to access college, place them in AVID elective programs and accelerate their learning by enrolling them in rigorous high school coursework with concurrent support through inquiry based tutorials.

In a recent white paper by Jack O’Connell (2004), California’s State Superintendent of Public Instruction, he shared his recommendations for addressing the dismal educational quality and performance of the state’s high schools:

A rich and deep curriculum is extremely important. This requires assigning all students to college prep (or “a-g”) courses. It also requires increasing numbers of students to be enrolled in Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate programs. Career academies can also provide a method to develop a rigorous college prep curriculum. All of the necessary safety nets and access to supportive programs must be made available to students so that they can be prepared to meet these challenges. Intervention programs in mathematics and reading are essential for struggling students. Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), for

example, has successfully readied many students for postsecondary education and training who would have otherwise dropped out of high school. (p. 5-6)

Why then have districts and schools not utilized the strengths of the AVID program to improve equity and access for more of their underrepresented students? More teachers, administrators and policymakers need to know about the options open especially to underrepresented students for college and systematically to create a college-going culture on campus. Simple, but far reaching changes, such as making the “a-g” requirements (see Appendix F) part of the mandatory curriculum could go a long way toward changing the low expectations for underrepresented students that seem endemic in K-12 public schools.

My hope is that the findings of this small study will open a dialogue for educators and policymakers, a dialogue focused on better serving the needs of all students through systemic educational reform in order to close the K- 16 achievement gap.

Limitations of the Study

This study, based primarily on the perceptions of the eight AVID program graduates from two individual in-depth interviews and focus group sessions, formed the nucleus of the data used for analysis. The data analysis process concentrated on using the verbatim words of the participants represented in individualized case studies using “rich, thick description” (Geertz, 1973) allowing the participants to speak for themselves and tell their own stories. The reader then, within the context of his or her own experience, can best make use of the study through direct interpretation and thereby situate its validity. It should be noted however, that the representation of African American voices is limited. Only one female African American AVID program graduate who met the

study criteria could be found to participate in this study. The AVID program in San Diego County does not seem to be serving this student community as well as the larger Latino population.

The data were analyzed using triangulation through four distinct types of coding strategies including: Contact Summary forms, Coded Summary forms, HyperRESEARCH (2003) analysis software, and concept map development. The culmination of this data analysis resulted in a chronological network, which presents a model of the distilled themes that emerged leading to college transition and persistence for these participants (see Figure 9). The findings generated by this study rested on interpretation of the available data in the context of these particular students at these universities during a short period of time. Ultimately, the data were analyzed through my own filter of experience and advocacy and should be read from that vantage point.

One of the goals of this study was to hear an authentic student voice as the participants recounted their own experiences about the AVID program and as new college students. As both a participant and an observer, I became the “primary instrument for data collection and analysis” (Merriam, 2001, p. 7), and used open ended questions to overcome potential researcher subjectivity (see Appendix B and C). As an employee of the San Diego County Office of Education in a position with the AVID program, I had insider information about the workings of the program from a district, school and teacher perspective. This information allowed for the fine-tuning of some questions that helped me build rapport with the participants and tap their experiences in AVID.

The generalizability of this study, and of qualitative studies in general, are not necessarily transferable to other AVID students or universities. That being said, it is

possible to consider the trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of the study due to the similar organizational structure and curriculum content of AVID programs across the nation. Thus the sentiments shared by these former AVID graduates may be applicable to other AVID students, programs and teachers.

Directions for Further Research

The findings from this qualitative study resulted in additional related questions concerning the influences affecting underrepresented students in general, and AVID students in particular, in their complex journey through the California K-16 school system. It should be noted here that research about the experiences of AVID program graduates who are attending college is limited because no previous studies using qualitative case study methods about this particular population existed. The research recommendations below would add to the body of knowledge about AVID program graduates.

First, the influence of AVID family networks and support structures should be researched in order to evaluate the types of institutional support most needed by the parents of underrepresented students. From anecdotal reports by AVID teachers, it is not uncommon for AVID students to gain admission to a four-year university and then fail to matriculate when denied financial or emotional support from their parents. "Whether parents can perform effectively in their child-rearing roles within the family depends upon the role demands, stresses, and supports emanating from community settings...The availability of supportive settings is, in turn, a function of their existence and frequency in a given culture or subculture" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 7). On-going parent educational and support programs taught by AVID teachers could address this issue for

families and widen the informational networks shared with their students. A longitudinal study with a cohort of AVID parent participants could provide important research data on the impact of informational networks begun in high school and continued into college.

Second, research into the delivery of counseling services and course placement for underrepresented students is needed, with a special emphasis on African American and Native American students. These groups have the least representation at public universities in California. Several participants in this study noted their personal difficulty in being allowed to enroll in honors or AP courses. Counselors who either felt the minority students were under-qualified for these classes, or were not college bound denied them access to advanced courses and reduced their chances to be competitive in the college admissions process.

Longitudinal research by Adelman (1999) reported the strong positive correlation between students taking AP coursework and the subsequent increase in their college graduation rates. The AVID program recommends that all students take a minimum of one AP class, preferably more. The additional importance of these courses results in students' higher high school GPA's and increased college eligibility. Inequitable advising for underrepresented students has been well documented (Venezia et al., 2003), which is one reason the advocacy of AVID teachers was an important intervention for the participants in this study. As schools adapt to the requirements of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, multiple data sources have become available to schools on the very subgroups that AVID is trying to impact. Disaggregated data analysis by teachers, counselors and principals on high school course-taking patterns and achievement by subgroups could provide the basis for a site-based action research project and result in

additional opportunities for students. As the AVID program spreads nationally, additional research could provide local school communities with strategies to close the achievement gap.

Third, a case study on the habits, practices and motivations of effective AVID teachers is needed. Although the study participants reflected on the importance of their AVID teachers to their personal college-going experience, many specifics about the actual pedagogy and practices of such teachers has yet to be investigated. The AVID teachers form a small, but vital, subset of professionals that intervene on behalf of the underserved and underrepresented. Why do some teachers believe that these average and perhaps unlikely students belong in college? The AVID program may offer these teachers a way to expedite the hopes and dreams of disadvantaged young people, and other educators could learn from the philosophies and strategies that have had such powerful results.

Finally, an area of research not yet explored is the schoolwide effect of AVID in creating a college going culture. There are some high school campuses in California that have in excess of ten sections of the AVID program and that have trained the administrators, counselors and a majority of their teachers in AVID methodologies. To study the impact on campus of one fourth of the student body taking the AVID elective would be of interest to many educators.

In some ways it is a tragic indication of the failure of the public education system that a program such as AVID is needed at all. Students, regardless of their ethnicity or economic status deserve the best that teachers and schools have to offer. Schools have tacitly relied on a few teacher advocates to pave the way to college for a few

underrepresented students in a few sections at scattered high schools. It is not enough. In our rapidly evolving multicultural and multiethnic society of the twenty-first century, those of us entrusted with the education of the next generation must fundamentally address how legitimate educational opportunities can be delivered to all students in order to maximize the strengths of the American system – equal opportunity through real access to the institutions of higher education leading to a college degree.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A.
Research Question Matrix

Research Question Matrix

Research Questions	Purpose of Question	Assumptions	Procedures
1. How do AVID program graduates adapt to college academically and culturally in their first year?	To establish a basis for understanding what the students' lived experience during their transition to college had been.	Students use a variety of strategies to adapt to new environments. For some the biggest challenge may be academic, for others the college cultural environment may be the most difficult. Sociocultural theory gives a framework to understand their experiences.	*Interview 1- build initial rapport and follow the interview guide topics. *Interview 2- Focus on probing areas for clarification that need further elaboration from the first interview. *Focus Group- to explore the emerging themes and evaluate their verisimilitude.
2. In what ways do they attribute their persistence in college to their high school AVID experience?	To understand the relationship between participation in the AVID program and persistence behaviors in college.	After completing the first year of college, students will be able to reflect more deeply of the influence of their pre-college experiences in AVID. Tinto's theory may not adequately explain their experiences.	Results from individual interviews 1 and 2, followed by creation of matrices, common themes, metaphors and experiences explored in the Focus Group session.

Appendix B. Interview Guide

Interview Guide

The numbered items are general topic areas, and the bullets are potential probe areas that may, or may not be used during the actual interview depending on the interviewee's responses.

1. Tell me about a typical high school day you experienced during your senior year:
 - ☐ What was high school like for you?
 - ☐ What do you remember that challenged you academically?
 - ☐ What high school achievements do/did you feel good about?
 - ☐ What were some low points in high school? High points?
 - ☐ What was most stressful about high school?
 - ☐ Tell me about your AVID classes in high school (structure, teacher, classmates).

2. Describe what your first few weeks/months at college were like.
 - ☐ What was/is a typical day like last semester/this semester?
 - ☐ Describe the college atmosphere/environment/sense of comfort/ you experienced.
 - ☐ What would you tell incoming freshmen about your college experiences?
 - ☐ What has been your most stressful experience in college so far?
 - ☐ What could have been done to lessen the stress?
 - ☐ What has been your most successful experience in college so far?

3. What adjustments to college academics did you have to make last year?
 - ☐ What classes did you take last semester? This semester?
 - ☐ How did you do in them?
 - ☐ What did you do to adapt to the classes/assignments/reading & writing load last year?
 - ☐ Do you feel like you've been successful? Why? Why not?
 - ☐ How did your high school classes help prepare you?
 - ☐ If you'd had more of _____, how would it have been helpful?
 - ☐ If you need help in your college classes, what do you do?

4. What adjustments to college culture have you noticed you've made?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ Personal ☐ Family, friends ☐ Academic Work load/ Job 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ Financial issues ☐ Academic or Social Barriers
---	---

5. Tell me about....

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ How you study in college ☐ What you do for academic support ☐ What you do for social support ☐ How prepared for college work you are. ☐ How do you manage your time and keep organized 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ Taking [Cornell] notes ☐ How you tackle the reading ☐ How you tackle the writing ☐ When do you talk to professors?
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6. How do you see your future college career unfolding?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ Anticipated college graduation date ☐ Anticipated roadblocks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ Your Major?
---	--

7. As a college student, what are your recommendations to improve the AVID program?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ Advice for other students in AVID ☐ Improvements needed ☐ Describe specific program areas have worked for you 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ What would you like to tell your AVID teacher? ☐ Other high school or AP teacher(s)?
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Appendix C.
Focus Group Interview Guide for SDSU & UCSD

Focus Group Interview Guide for SDSU & UCSD

Facilitator states: The goal of this focus group is to give us an opportunity to discuss, as a group, some of the issues involved in being the first in your family to go to college as former AVID students.

Facilitator makes introductions and explains process: Introduce Observer (SDSU). Explain our roles. Give each participant a blank paper. Facilitator says, "I'll ask a question, and give you a few minutes to think about your response to the question. Try to speak loudly. I'll probably say your name and ask the question so it can be transcribed accurately."

A. Introductions: Tell us something about yourself (go around group).

B. On your paper... write the word AVID. Start writing down words that you associate with AVID. (2 minutes) * Review charts – Ask: What do AVID students have in common? (go around group).

- 1) Think about what "getting ready" for college in HS was like. Anything that comes to mind – words, phrases, etc. (go around group).
- 2) Next, think about "getting in" and about your transition to [SDSU/UCSD]. Anything that comes to mind – words, phrases, etc.
- 3) Now, think about "staying in" and about what you've done. What does it take to stay here? Anything that comes to mind – words, phrases, etc.
- 4) How would you describe the university? What kind of a place is it?
- 5) What would you tell a new AVID freshman about how to survive at [SDSU/UCSD]?
- 6) What can/do your families do to support/help you here?

C. *Facilitator says:* "On the back of your paper write the word FAMILY. Start writing down words that you associate with your FAMILY." (2 minutes). Share out around the group.

D. Closure: Thank the participants for being in the study. Remind them they will be getting their case via email to read (for member checking purposes) within the next two months.

* Collect the papers for analysis.

Appendix D.
Contact Summary Form

Contact Summary Form
(Miles & Huberman, 1994)

Contact Type:

Visit _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Site _____

Contact Date _____

Today's Date _____

Written by: _____

1. What were the main issues or themes that struck you in this contact?

2. Summarize the information you got (or failed to get) on each of the target questions you had for this contact

Question	Information

3. Anything else that struck you as salient, interesting, illuminating or important in this contact?

4. What new (or remaining) target questions do you have in considering the next contact with this person

Appendix E.
Coded Summary Form

Coded Summary Form
(Miles & Huberman, 1994)

CONTACT SUMMARY

Name _____ Phone _____ Email _____ Data type _____	Place _____ Date _____ Coded by _____ Date coded _____
---	---

1. Pick out the most salient points in the contact. Number in order on this sheet and note line number (from transcript) or page number (from field notes) on which point appears. Number point in text of transcripts or field notes. Attach theme or aspect to each point in CAPITALS. Invent themes where no existing ones apply and asterick those. Comment may also be included in double parenthesis.

Page/ Line #.	Salient Points	Themes/ Aspects

Appendix F.
The a-g course requirements for public universities in California

The a-g course requirements for public universities in California.

	UC	CSU
A. English	4 years	4 years
B. Mathematics	3 years (4 rec)	3 years
C. History/Social Studies	2 years	2 years
D. Laboratory Science	2 years (3-4 rec)	2 years (3 rec)
E. Foreign Language	2 years (3 rec)	2 years
F. Visual/Performing Art	1 year	1 year
G. Elective	1 year	1 year

A More Detailed Description of the “a-g” courses required for university admission.

A	History / Social Science -Two years required, including one year of U.S. history or one-half year of U.S. history and one-half year of civics or American Government; and one year of world history, cultures, and geography
B	English -Four years of college preparatory English that include frequent and regular writing, and reading of classic and modern literature.
C	Mathematics - Three years of college preparatory mathematics that include the topics covered in elementary and advanced algebra and two- and three-dimensional geometry.
D	Laboratory Science -Two years of laboratory science providing fundamental knowledge in at least two of these three disciplines: biology (which includes anatomy, physiology, marine biology, aquatic biology, etc.), chemistry, and physics.
E	Language other than English - Two years of the same language other than English.
F	Visual & Performing Arts - One year, including dance, drama/theater, and/or other approved visual arts.
G	College Preparatory Elective - In addition to those courses required in "a-f" above, one year (two semesters) of college preparatory electives are required, chosen from visual and performing arts, history, social science, English, advanced mathematics, laboratory science, and language other than English.

Appendix G.
Case Study Code List

Case Study Code List

1. Academic identity development
2. Adjustment to academics - positive
3. Adjustment to college culture - negative
4. Adjustment to college culture - positive
5. Adjustments to academics - negative
6. Barriers to degree completion
7. Career plans after college
8. College academic behaviors - classroom
9. College academic behaviors - Cornell Notes
10. College academic behaviors - professor contacts
11. College academic behaviors - reading
12. College academic behaviors - study groups
13. College academic behaviors - support seeking
14. College academic behaviors - writing
15. College help program participation
16. College initial transition - negative
17. College initial transition - positive
18. College major and coursework
19. Connection to college life
20. Cultural and social capital seeking.
21. Evidence of independent learning
22. Family - Experience and behaviors
23. Family - support
24. Family - values
25. Financial issues
26. High School - AVID Experiences
27. High School - Boring
28. High School - Challenges
29. High School - Frustration
30. High School - Positive Experiences
31. High School - Stressful
32. High School -Low Points
33. HS preparation for college - AP or other
34. HS preparation for college - AVID
35. Personal choices
36. Personal values or beliefs
37. Recommendations to improve AVID
38. Social support behaviors
39. Time management
40. Work experiences

Appendix H.
Sample Case Code Frequency Matrix

Sample Case Code Frequency Matrix

Sample case	Academic identity development	Adjustment to academics - positive	Adjustment to college culture - negative	Adjustment to college culture - positive	Adjustments to academics - negative	College initial transition - negative	College initial transition - positive	study strategies or practices
Interview 1	7	6	3	5	8	0	0	6
Interview 2	5	5	5	15	14	1	6	0
Total	12	11	8	20	22	1	6	6
	College academic behaviors - classroom	College academic behaviors - Cornell Notes	College academic behaviors - professor contacts	College academic behaviors - reading	College academic behaviors - study groups	College academic behaviors - support seeking	College academic behaviors - writing	College help program participation
Interview 1	4	5	3	3	0	4	1	2
Interview 2	4	5	8	6	2	4	6	6
Total	8	10	11	9	2	8	7	8
	Personal choices	Social support behaviors	College confusion-contradiction-discrepancy	Barriers to degree completion	Time management	Career plans after college	College major and courses	Work experiences
Interview 1	5	6	5	9	5	2	11	6
Interview 2	15	10	0	3	3	4	5	3
Total	20	16	5	12	8	6	16	9
	Connection to college life	Cultural & Social capital seeking	Evidence of community service	Evidence of independent learning	Evidence of problem solving or responsibility	Family Support	Financial issues	
Interview 1	2	0	4	4	5	8	0	
Interview 2	8	2	4	2	9	5	6	
Total	10	2	8	6	14	13	6	
	high school - AVID experiences	high school - challenges	high school - frustration	high school - positive experiences	HS preparation for college - AP or other	HS preparation for college - AVID	Recommendations to improve AVID	
Interview 1	7	0	0	3	1	8	0	
Interview 2	13	1	4	2	5	6	5	
Total	20	1	4	5	6	14	5	