College-Going Capital: Understanding the Impact of College Readiness Policies on Schools and Students

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COLLEGE-GOING CAPITAL:
UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF COLLEGE READINESS POLICIES ON
SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS

By

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ABSTRACT

Leibrandt, Ohle Sarah (Ph.D, School of Education)

College-Going Capital:
Understanding the Impact of College Readiness Policies on Schools and Students

Thesis directed by Professor Margaret A. Eisenhart

This dissertation investigates how low-resource high schools support (or not) high achieving, low-income students depending on how they enact college readiness agendas. My study was motivated by the lack of empirical research in two areas—how college readiness policies are being actualized for high achieving, low-income students and how these students leverage network ties to their schools, families, and communities to access college. I conducted a longitudinal case study analysis of twenty focal students attending two low-resource high schools in the Denver area. Data were analyzed with a new construct—college-going capital—that I developed from aspects of social capital (Bourdieu, 1986) and community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005). I present three key findings: (1) one school focused on preparing students for careers first and college second, often in large group settings. Unless the focal students actively sought out staff, they had a hard time navigating the college readiness agenda at their school and accessing college. (2) The other school focused on preparing all students beginning in ninth grade for college and created a college readiness agenda that facilitated multiple connections between students and institutional agents. Nonetheless, many of the focal students faced barriers in accessing specific programs. (3) Although both schools took a deficit perspective towards their students, the focal students drew upon many valuable resources of college-going capital outside of school via network ties to families (familial capital) and to peers and community members (communal capital). These findings are particularly useful in a time in which the opportunity gap is only widening among high- and low-income students who have college aspirations. Amidst reduced funding and pressure to meet state accountability measures, low-resource high schools often have few resources to commit to college readiness agendas that cultivate the necessary social networks their students need in order to access college. Yet my findings suggest that high achieving low-income students will benefit if their schools (1) implement college readiness initiatives that facilitate individual connections, (2) ensure that students have multiple opportunities to connect to college-linking programs, and (3) recognize and leverage the college-going capital that their students access outside of school.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

It is imperative that we understand how low-resource high schools enact college readiness policies and initiatives specifically for high achieving, low-income students because the number of high achieving, low-income students attending college does not match the number of these students wanting to go to college. Indeed, a fascinating, rather disturbing trend in higher education is emerging: although the number of high school students planning to obtain a bachelor’s degree has risen over the past thirty years from less than half to almost all students, with the greatest increase seen among low-income students (Bailey & Dynarsky, 2011; Goyette, 2008), a substantial proportion of these students find it difficult, if not impossible, to fulfill their college enrollment expectations. For every three students from middle- and high-income families who enroll in four-year colleges after high school, only two students from low-income backgrounds do the same (Access Matters, 2013). Statistics that indicate just how few high achieving, low-income students are enrolling in postsecondary education are particularly alarming considering all of the students from low-income backgrounds who have the credentials and desire to attend college but don’t enroll in selective colleges or – what’s worse – don’t enroll in college at all. While there are many structural forces outside of schooling that influence postsecondary matriculation rates, I believe that high schools can either improve or corroborate these alarming statistics depending on how they choose to enact college readiness initiatives specifically for high achieving, low-income students.
So, in this dissertation, I investigate how low-resource high schools actively support (or not) high achieving, low-income students depending on how they enact school-wide college readiness initiatives. In particular, I conduct a case study analysis of two high schools to understand how they imagine and implement college readiness agendas. Within this context, I studied the college-going trajectories of twenty high achieving, low-income focal students attending these two high schools to understand how they accessed and activated (a) the social and cultural capital historically considered necessary to access college (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988) and (b) the capital developed and used by students who have been historically underrepresented in four-year colleges (Yosso, 2005). I utilize the theories of social capital and community cultural wealth to investigate how high achieving low-income students access and activate “college-going capital” through network ties with high school and college staff and with their families, communities, and peers. To provide the rationale for my project, I next define two components of college readiness, identify a distinct gap in the research on college readiness, preview the theory that undergirds my study, describe my research questions, and explain the significance of my dissertation.

College Readiness

In 2013, I asked Steve Brown¹, the Honors and AP Physics teacher at Southside High School, what college readiness meant to him. I was particularly curious to hear what Steve had to say because he taught some of the highest achieving students in a school with a graduation rate just under 65% and an even smaller college enrollment rate. According to Steve,

College readiness is kind of a buzzword throughout education. I don’t know if it is beyond Denver, but it, I mean we have a director of college readiness in the school. So those words are around, but I am not sure how much it is internalized by students. As a

¹ All names of students, staff, and schools have been changed in this dissertation to protect the privacy of participants.
teacher, I don’t [really] use the word college readiness because I am kind of stubborn about it, it is just a buzzword.

Steve’s language around college readiness, “those words are around” and “it is just a buzzword” suggest to me that he thinks the phrase “college readiness” does not mean very much. It is no wonder veteran teachers like Steve are tired of having to implement education’s “buzzwords” year after year, yet his dismissal of “college readiness” as a whole seems extreme. If I understand college readiness to be comprised of two equally important components—academic preparation and college knowledge—it appears that everything Steve did in his classroom could be seen as focused on getting his students ready for college. Moreover, he promotes academic preparation by helping students study for the ACT and the AP physics exam in addition to “getting students to think critically, to write, to do something long term, to do multiple-step problem solving.” Steve also promoted college knowledge by telling his students over and over again what to expect in college: “in college when you do a lab, it is a three-hour lab, when you take a final in college, it is a two-hour non-stop-writing kind of thing” (Personal Interview, Spring 2013). Lastly, he brought in local scientists to talk about their research, where they went to college, and what college was like for them. For students—particularly those who are high achieving from low-income backgrounds—aspiring to go to college, college readiness is not just some “buzzword,” but rather it is college-going capital that they can leverage to achieve their college aspirations.

**What is College Readiness?**

College readiness is most often defined as the academic preparation students need to succeed—without remediation—in credit-bearing college level courses (Conley, 2007). So that schools and policymakers can measure students’ levels of academic college readiness, the U.S. Department of Education lists a variety of indicators like high school GPA and scores on
standardized tests such as the SAT and ACT. The ACT has even determined “benchmark scores” in each of the test subject areas that – if met – indicate a student has “approximately a 50 percent chance of earning a B or better and approximately a 75 percent chance of earning a C or better in a college level course” (ACT, 2013).

Defining college readiness as the academic preparation students need to succeed in college through measures such as GPA and college entrance exam scores (ACT, 2013; Conley, 2010) can be valuable to high school students, parents, and personnel. For example, colleges require that students have mastered particular subjects in high school to meet admissions requirements (at selective four-year colleges and universities) and to meet course prerequisites to enroll in college level coursework (at community colleges). When students do not meet these academic college readiness markers, they could be denied admission to college or required to spend time and money completing remedial coursework before enrolling in courses that count towards a degree. Furthermore, high achieving students who are on track to graduate high school and planning to enroll in college, without clear signals from their high school as to whether they are also on track to apply to and succeed in college, could suddenly find themselves without college acceptances or in remedial courses. Lack of college readiness for low-income students is particularly worrisome because these students, unlike their more affluent peers, do not have the luxury of resources that would enable them to spend additional time and money preparing to succeed in college level coursework.

Yet, academic preparation should not be the sole focus of college readiness policies. Indeed, college knowledge (Roderick, Nagaoka, Coca, 2009) is an equally important component of college readiness because students need to understand “what college is” in order to gain admission to, and navigate within, the postsecondary system. There are myriad forms of
postsecondary education in the U.S.: selective and non-selective, public and private, residential and commuter, full time and part time enrollment, certificate and licensure programs, and associate’s and bachelor’s degrees. Some forms of postsecondary education (like four-year schools) can and do spend more money per student on faculty, advanced technologies and higher quality student support services such as tutoring and academic and career advising than their less selective counterparts (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013). These schools also tend to graduate more students, better prepare students for graduate school, and offer access to jobs that lead to higher potential lifetime earnings for students (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013; Gewertz, 2011).

The opportunity gap at the postsecondary level will continue to exist as long as high achieving, low-income students do not have access to the same college knowledge as their more affluent peers. For instance, low-income students are less likely to apply for admission at the most selective colleges and universities than their more affluent peers, even when they have the credentials needed for admission (Hoxby & Avery, 2012; Stephan, Rosenbaum, & Person, 2013). This phenomenon, termed “under-matching,” occurs when low-income students do not have the college knowledge – knowing that selective schools exist and that low-income students are eligible for large financial aid packages that can greatly reduce the initial sticker price – needed to apply to selective schools (Hoxby & Avery, 2012). Access to college knowledge (such as where to apply, when to apply, and how to apply) can introduce a wider range of postsecondary possibilities for high achieving, low-income students. Therefore, in addition to academic preparation, high achieving, low-income students must also obtain the college knowledge needed to appreciate and take advantage of the various opportunities available to them.

**How are college readiness policies defined at the federal and state level?**
While both academic preparation and college knowledge are equally important components of college readiness, the federal government has pressured states and schools to implement college readiness policies (even in the lower grades) in an effort to ensure that all students have the academic preparation needed to succeed in college. This intensified call for college readiness began in 1983, when the National Commission on Excellence in Education presented President Reagan with the report, *A Nation at Risk*. This report “served as a clarion call for education reform in America” (Bloom, 2010, p. 3) and presented a dire picture of current education outcomes that would eventually lead to a bleak economic, civic, and social future of the U.S. if students were not better prepared for college.

Today, federal policies such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (enacted in 2002) and subsequent waivers from NCLB and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (signed into law in 2015) continue to push for academic college readiness standards for all students beginning as early as the primary grades. For example, NCLB, a K-12 policy, required that students be “prepared for high achievement at the next grade” (Swail & Williams, 2005, p.3). And to be eligible for the NLCB waiver, states were required to set the expectation that all students would be “college- and career- ready” by the end of high school. Specifically, states were required to (1) adopt content standards in at least reading and math for all grades and (2) develop assessments to measure mastery of these standards beginning as early as third grade (Frequently Asked Questions, 2012). Over time, states partnered together to address those waiver requirements through initiatives such as the Common Core State Standards and the Partnership for Assessment of College and Careers (PARCC). Both of these initiatives offer standards and assessments for the youngest grades (K-2) through high school in an attempt to insure all students are prepared for postsecondary education (Core Standards, 2015; PARCC, 2015). ESSA
continues to “hold all students to challenging academic content standards that will prepare them
to graduate from high school prepared for success in college and the workforce” (White House,
2015).

Even though policies like NCLB and ESSA do not initially seem harmful, this focus on
“high achievement” may often lead to a punitive cycle because states are required to “annually
determine school and district progress in meeting performance targets” that include college
readiness (District Accountability Handbook, 2011). If these targets are not met, then schools
might face reduced funding or even closure (Swail & Williams, 2005). Faced with such
sanctions, schools have an even harder time preparing students for all aspects of academic
preparation. That is to say, academic preparation cannot just be measured by high school GPA
and college entrance exams. Rather, academic preparation also includes aspects of cognitive
strategies (problem solving, research, interpretation, communication, and precision and
accuracy) and academic behaviors (time management, self-direction, and study skills) (Conley,
2010). Even if students meet particular GPA and college entrance exam cut scores, without
these cognitive strategies and academic behaviors, students will likely be ill-prepared for college.

In contrast to federal policies that focus primarily on academic preparation, federal grant
programs have been funding both academic preparation and college knowledge initiatives.
However, a disproportionate amount of money is awarded to states implementing college
readiness policies that focus on academic preparation for all students (College Access, 2014;
Race to the Top, 2014). For example, the federal government has spent four billion dollars on
Race to the Top (RTTT), a grant program that provides funding for states to develop and
implement assessments to measure the academic preparation (what students know and can do)
for all students, since 2009 (Race to the Top, 2014). In contrast, the government has spent less
than a quarter of that amount in the same amount of time on the College Access Challenge Grant (CACG), a grant program that provides funding for states to support the college knowledge component of college readiness policies specifically for low-income students (College Access, 2014).

A further concern is the fact that the federal government provides few actual guidelines for how states should implement college readiness policies, and so, policies and guidelines vary significantly across states (Glancy, Fulton, Anderson, Zinth, & Millard, 2014). Colorado, Maryland, and Texas are just three examples. Colorado has implemented a college readiness policy that requires all school districts to meet Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Indicator thresholds (measured by high school graduation rates, high school drop out rates, and ACT scores) as part of their annual accreditation rating from the Colorado Department of Education (District Accountability Handbook, 2013). If schools do not meet particular thresholds, they will face sanctions, such as reduced funding or even closure. Maryland uses the same academic measures, GPA and scores on standardized tests as part of their college readiness policy. But rather than using these measures in a punitive manner to sanction under-performing schools, Maryland uses these measures to predict and send clear signals to students and families if students in the fourth, eighth, and tenth grades will be “college ready” by twelfth grade (Zhao, 2011). Students who are not on track to be college ready by twelfth grade receive extra attention and tutoring from the school. Unlike Colorado and Maryland that use specific academic measures to determine college readiness, Texas has implemented a college readiness policy that focuses on aligning K-12 curriculum with the curriculum required in the first year of college at the state universities (Conley, 2010). Although Colorado, Maryland, and Texas have all implemented college readiness policies in different ways, the common thread across these
policies is a focus on academic preparation for all students as the primary way to ensure college readiness.

**How are college readiness policies implemented at the school level?**

Unfortunately, schools are often left to interpret and implement federal and state college readiness policies on their own. Schools are held accountable for both components of college readiness—academic preparation and college knowledge—yet they are usually given guidelines and measures for academic preparation only. Luckily, there are several resources and guidebooks that can help high schools implement both components of college readiness policies. Suggestions for promoting academic preparation include offering a rigorous curriculum, expecting excellent work from all students, and helping students study for college entrance exams (Conley, 2010).

Schools can promote college knowledge by creating a college-going culture in which teachers, counselors, and the principal work together to design a clearly communicated mission and vision of college readiness (i.e. that all students can excel in rigorous coursework and can attend college) for the entire school (Bloom, 2010; Conley, 2001; Corwin & Tierney, 2007; Neinhusser, 2013; Tierney, 2009). Schools can promote college knowledge by also providing students with information and knowledge about the college process—thinking about and planning for going to college, learning about different types of colleges, applying to colleges, and deciding to enroll in a specific college (Hossler & Gallegher, 1987; Kinzie et al., 2004; Perna, 2006). Indeed, several researchers have found that high school counseling centers that focus on helping students navigate the college process (Cabera & La Nasa, 2001; Horn, 1997; & McDonough, 1997) and school-wide counseling efforts designed to encourage all students to
attend college (Corwin & Tierney, 2007; Hill, 2008; Roderick et al., 2008) can provide some of the college knowledge that students need in order to be college ready.

**Research Problems**

Although pressure is being exerted to improve college readiness across the US, there are currently few federal and state guidelines for implementation and very little empirical research to demonstrate how college readiness is being actualized for low-income, ethnically diverse students (Militello, Schweid, & Carey, 2011). How do low-resource schools implement college readiness policies that include college knowledge components in addition to academic preparation when the schools are under pressure to adopt multiple reforms? When schools face sanctions for not preparing all students for college, can schools also implement college readiness policies that specifically support high achieving, low-income students? The lack of empirical research regarding the ways in which college readiness policies are being actualized especially for high achieving, low-income students is the first research problem that I address in my dissertation.

I also address another related – and more specific – research problem: the lack of empirical research regarding the ways in which partnerships between high schools, outside organizations, and colleges and universities might impact high achieving, low-income students. In recent years, guidance counselors’ responsibilities have shifted from college advising to high school scheduling and student progress reporting as they respond to funding requirements based in part on graduation and retention rates (Eisenhart et al., 2015; Weis et al., 2015). Even more concerning, researchers have found that schools with the fewest resources are likely to spend more time on meeting accountability measures such as achieving specific graduation rates and scores on state-mandated tests and less time on college counseling (Choy, 2001; Oakes, 2005;
Perna et al., 2008). To ensure that students still receive some form of college counseling, schools have begun partnering with specific college linking programs such as Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP), and Federal TRIO Programs (TRIO) (Gándara & Bail, 2001; Perna & Swail, 2001; Schultz & Mueller, 2006; Stephan & Rosenbaum, 2013) to prepare students to be college ready. Because college linking programs are often funded by outside sources, they can sometimes specifically support small groups of students who are from low-income and first-generation college backgrounds.

High school-college partnerships, a particular type of college linking program, have great potential for preparing high achieving, low-income students for college by providing students access to resources through network ties with other high achieving high school students, current college students, and high school and college staff. For example, concurrent enrollment, the most well-known form of high school-college partnerships, can provide high achieving students both academic preparation and college knowledge by allowing them to take college level coursework through a community college while still enrolled in high school (Adelman, 2006; Bailey, Hughes, & Karp 2003;). Other high school-college partnerships might offer students the opportunity to spend several weeks living on a college campus in the summer, provide weekly drop-in sessions to help high school students complete college and financial aid applications, or create mentoring programs between high school and current college students (Allen & Murphy, 2008; Bowen, Kurzweil, & Tobin, 2005; Carrell & Sacerdote, 2013; Ohle & Eisenhart, 2014). Although these various high school-college partnerships have been documented, no one to date has investigated the ways in which multiple and varied college partnerships within high schools
might work to specifically address the college knowledge component of college readiness for high achieving low-income students.

**Conceptual Framework Summary**

In my dissertation, I draw on the theories of social and cultural capital to explain how low-resource high schools implement college readiness policies at the school and student level. In their 2005 paper, Perna and Titus suggest that social capital, when drawn upon by students, allows them to enhance productivity (Coleman, 1988), gain social mobility (DiMaggio & Mohr, 1985; Lamont & Lareau, 1988), and ultimately access economic capital (Lin, 2001; Bourdieu, 1986). In its most basic form, social capital affords students the opportunity to access resources they otherwise could not access through participating in social networks comprised of members with valuable resources and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Lin, 2001; Perna & Titus, 2005). Valuable resources could represent almost anything but are often controlled by the dominant class. In the context of this dissertation, some of the most highly valued resources in the college process range from understanding the variety of postsecondary institutions and their resources; knowledge of college financial aid and scholarship application components; and understanding what a “strong” application looks like and how to create it. While this type of cultural capital is widely available among groups of middle and upper middle class Americans who have attended college, it is much less available in low-income families and communities where today’s high school students may be the first in their family to attend college.

Although the theory of social capital that is currently used in education research will allow me to investigate the social networks of the focal students in my study, Bourdieu and Coleman’s definition of social capital suggest strategies that reproduce the status quo in higher education and in society. Their definition of social capital supports the assumption that more
education (as it is) is needed for social mobility and that dominant-group cultural capital is what matters for success in education. This approach lends itself to a deficit perspective: college knowledge is seen as another “resource” that underrepresented “individuals, families, communities, and neighborhoods lack” (Morrow, 1999, p. 760, as cited in Dika & Singh, 2002, emphasis mine). This approach ignores the knowledge that high achieving, low-income students may bring with them from their homes and their communities and use in navigating the college process. Thus, I feel that I need to use more than just social capital as defined by Bourdieu and Coleman to investigate the impact of college readiness policies on high achieving, low-income students.

So, in addition to using the historical definition of social capital theory, I also draw on the definition of social capital used in the theory of community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005). Unlike the deficit perspective in which schools must compensate for the lack of resources held by low-income students and students of color, community cultural wealth theory encourages schools to recognize and learn from the cultural assets and resources of the students’ community (Yosso, 2005; Solórzano & Solórzano, 1995; Valencia & Solórzano, 1997; Villalpando & Solórzano, 2005). Yosso argues that connections with family members and members of the community can offer students valuable capital that can aid in accessing college. This capital can take many forms: moral (instilling a set of values that guide students to pursue education) (Cooper et al., 1994), aspirational (maintaining hopes and dreams for the future), linguistic (intellectual and social skills attained through communicating in more than one language), and navigational (skills of maneuvering through social institutions) (Yosso, 2005, pp. 79-82). Theoretically, schools and colleges that take up the theory of community cultural wealth can create a transformative rather than reproductive role in their institution by changing the
fundamental way schools operate – by embracing and coordinating the resources held by non-dominant communities and the resources that are defined as valuable by the dominant class. When enacted by school staff, community cultural wealth can support and validate the resources brought by high achieving, low-income students. Given this information, Bourdieu, Coleman, and Yosso’s theories of social capital could possibly be complementary or in conflict with one another. In other words, schools might recognize all forms of social capital accessed by their students as valuable resources to college access or they might only recognize the forms of dominant social capital. In my dissertation, I refer to the aspects of social capital and community cultural wealth as they relate to the college-going process of the focal students as “college-going capital.”

The value inherent in college-going capital lies not just in access to resources but also in the activation of these resources (Lareau, 2000) – something that Bourdieu, Coleman, and Yosso fail to carefully investigate. If resources aren’t activated once a student has accessed them, then the student cannot benefit from these resources (Lareau, 2000; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Monkman, Ronald, & Theraene, 2005; Simon 2007). Moreover, other individuals react to a student’s activation of resources (Lareau, 2000). Specifically, Lareau suggests that researchers might “look at the contexts in which capital is situated, the efforts by individuals to activate their capital, the skill with which they do so, and the institutional response to the activation of resources” (p. 277). So, in my dissertation, I ask two questions related to the activation of college-going capital: (1) which sources of college-going capital do students choose to activate and why? (2) in what ways do schools respond to students’ attempts to activate various form of college-going capital throughout their path to college?

I argue that all forms of college-going capital (regardless of where they came from) need
to be acknowledged and valued for non-dominant students to successfully navigate the college process. Few researchers have simultaneously investigated the capital available to students from their schools and from their non-dominant communities in college readiness studies. So, in chapter two, I explain in greater detail how I use theories of social capital and community cultural wealth to investigate the impact of college readiness initiatives on high achieving, low-income students.

**Research Questions**

This study has one primary research question: *How do low-resource urban high schools, in the context of preparing all students to be “college-ready,” make the social capital that is historically considered necessary for success in accessing college (Bourdieu, 1986) available to students and recognize and build upon and the capital developed and used by underrepresented students and their communities (Yosso, 2005)?* To answer this question, I investigate the intersection of policy, practice, and social capital theory at three levels: school, program, and individual.

High schools navigate the need for students to be college-ready through coordinating a myriad of school-wide college counseling strategies, counseling center initiatives, and college linking programs including high school-college partnerships. These college readiness initiatives at different levels within the school can either build on each other, creating a cohesive school-wide network that promotes college readiness, or act in tension with each other, creating confusion for high achieving, low-income students attempting to navigate the college process (Ohle & Eisenhart, 2014). When schools create cohesive programs, high achieving students are more likely to have an easier time navigating the college process compared to their peers attending schools filled with confusion (Ohle & Eisenhart, 2014). Because I am interested in
how students navigate the college process in the context of college readiness initiatives, I investigate how two focal high schools enact college readiness initiatives at all levels (school, program, and individual). I address the following research questions in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5: What forms of college-going capital do low-resource high schools make available through their college readiness initiatives for their high achieving, low-income students? Which resources do high achieving, low-income students actually access?

Because I am also interested in the ways in which high schools might address the forms of college-going capital brought by students, their families, and their communities while also providing access to more dominant forms of capital through network ties with school staff, I investigate all forms of college-going capital that the students access. So, in Chapter 6, I ask my next research question: What forms of college-going capital do high achieving, low-income students have access to outside of school via network ties to family, peers, and community? To gain advantage from these sources of college-going capital, students must activate these resources (Lareau, 2000; Lareau & Hovart, 1999). To better understand the ways in which the focal students in my study access and activate capital resources that can assist them in accessing college, also in Chapter 6, I address my final research question: Of all of the college-going resources that high achieving, low-income students have access to both in and out of school, which resources do students choose to activate as they prepare for college? As I explored answers to each of these research questions, I constantly looked at how network ties between students and individual high school staff members, between students and their parents, peers, and communities, and between their school staff and their families helped the focal students navigate these college readiness initiatives as they completed the college application process.

Significance of this study
This study is significant for several reasons. First, we know that policymakers at the federal and state level are pressuring schools to promote academic preparation when implementing college readiness policies. Yet, college readiness is more than just meeting specific academic markers; it is also gaining an understanding of what college is, what kinds of colleges there are, and, ultimately, how to get into college. As mentioned earlier, the resources embedded in this form of college readiness are accessed through social capital networks. All students, regardless of social class, access some form of college-going capital to navigate the college process. In an interview with Inside Higher Ed, Ben Castleman suggested, “I don’t think it is an accident that affluent families spend a lot of money to hire college consultants to guide students through the process. Choosing colleges, applying to colleges, and applying for financial aid are very complex processes that require, or at least benefit from, expert knowledge” (Supiano, 2013). All students navigating the college process can benefit from expert knowledge. This is particularly true for low-income students who often look to their high school to help them navigate the college process. In her critical review of college linking programs, Bloom (2008) suggests that high schools and programs should "attempt to simulate the processes by which advantaged students gain familiarity about the landscape of higher education and develop networks of people that can provide critical knowledge about applying for college and financial aid" (p. 6).

High schools are attempting to simulate these processes in which students can access sources of college knowledge through school-wide counseling efforts and college linking programs (Corwin & Tierney, 2007; Gandara & Bail, 2001; Martinez et al., 2002; McClaferty et al., 2002; Perna & Swail, 2001; Roderick et al., 2008; Schultz & Mueller, 2006). Yet, little is known about how high schools are actually taking up and implementing federal and state
mandated college readiness policies. Even less is known about how high schools implement (or not) college readiness initiatives specifically for high achieving, low-income students. My study builds on the work of Bloom (2008) by investigating how college readiness initiatives in conjunction with or in contrast to the ways in which high achieving, low-income students access and activate various forms of capital can help these students learn about the variations in the higher education landscape. My findings are particularly useful in a time in which the opportunity gap is only widening among high- and low-income students who have college aspirations.

My study also offers practical significance for high school and college staff because I specifically investigate the impact of high school-college partnerships. My findings are especially timely given how reduced funding and pressures to meet accountability measures leave counselors little time to provide individual college counseling to high achieving, low-income students. High school-college partnerships have the ability to offer high achieving, low-income students access to college-going resources needed to navigate the college process. Although some researchers have investigated specific high school-college partnerships like concurrent enrollment (Adelman, 2006; An, 2012; Bailey, Hughes, & Karp, 2003) and mentoring programs (Bowen, Kurzweil, & Tobin, 2005), no one to date has investigated the impact that multiple high school-college partnerships can have on low-resource high schools and their high-achieving students. My results shed light on the ways in which high school students access various forms of college-going capital through participating in one or more high school-college partnership.
In this chapter, I critically examine the literature regarding college readiness policies implemented at the high school level, point out the gaps in this literature, and demonstrate how my dissertation adds to this body of work. Additionally, I explain how I combined aspects of the theory of social capital as defined by Pierre Bourdieu (1986) and the theory of community cultural wealth as defined by Tara Yosso (2005) to create a new construct—college-going capital—that I used to analyze my data. Because I am specifically interested in how students activate resources acquired through social capital networks (Lareau, 2000), I discuss the various ways others have defined and used activation in social capital research. Lastly, I discuss the differences between “availability of,” “access to,” and “activation of” college-going capital and how I used these three distinctions to analyze my data.

Literature Review

I address two related research problems in my dissertation. First, there is a lack of empirical research regarding the ways in which college readiness policies (and their academic preparation and college knowledge components) are being actualized especially for high achieving, low-income students. Second, it is unclear how low-resource high schools, under pressure to adopt multiple reforms, actually manage college readiness activities.
The current body of literature regarding school-level college readiness policies and initiatives appears fragmented: some researchers specifically focus on college counseling (McDonough, 1999; Perna & Titus, 2005) while others look at the effects of school-wide college going cultures (Corwin & Tierney, 2007; Hill, 2008; Martinez et al., 2002; McClaferty et al., 2002; Roderick et al., 2008) and still others focus on college linking programs (Gandara & Bail, 2001; Perna & Swail, 2001; Schultz & Mueller, 2006). Even within the literature regarding college-linking programs, there is a smaller body of research dedicated to just high school-college partnerships (Adelman, 2006; Bailey, Hughes, & Karp, 2003; Barnett and Hughes, 2010). Although Ohle and Eisenhart (2014) suggest that these various initiatives might actually work in concert with one another to build a stronger, more cohesive college readiness agenda within a school, because the college readiness literature is fragmented, I will discuss the literature regarding each ‘bucket’ of research in turn: college counseling, school-wide college cultures, specific college-linking programs, and high school-college partnerships.

**College Counseling**

Applying to college is an intense process, one that even the most affluent students do not easily navigate on their own. Students first aspire to, then apply to, and finally enroll in college via a “complex, longitudinal, interactive process involving individual aspiration and achievement, learning opportunities in high school and intervention programs, and institutional admissions” (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; McDonough, 1997; Oakes, 2004; as cited in McDonough, 2005, p. 8). It is not surprising, then, that students continue to want information regarding types of colleges, admissions requirements, and the subtleties of what it takes to be a competitive applicant (Jarsky, McDonough, & Nunez, 2009; Kirst, Venezia, & Antonio, 2004). To support
students through this complicated process, high schools provide varying levels of college counseling and support based on their resources.

High resource high schools spend the greatest amount of time and money on individualized, high-level college counseling for students (Weis et al., 2014) and are often not bothered by “high-stakes testing and punitive accountability measures because the pass rates of students are extremely high” (Barnes & Slate, 2013, p.3). And yet, for some high-income students and their families, even this school-wide support is not enough to gain the greatest educational benefits; families will hire private college counselors to “provide access to specialized knowledge, coach on tests and essays, ‘hand-hold’ students through the admissions process, keep the admissions process organized and the students on schedule” (McDonough, 2005, p. 26). This specialized college counseling affords high-income students greater opportunities to successfully apply to and enroll in some of the nation’s most selective colleges and universities (Bozick & Lauff, 2007; Engberg & Wolniak, 2010).

In contrast, low-resource high schools are more likely to spend more time on meeting accountability measures such as achieving specific graduation rates and scores on state-mandated tests and significantly less time on college counseling (Choy, 2001; Eisenhart et al., 2015; McDonough, 1997; Oakes, 2005; Perna et al., 2008). This lack of focus on college counseling is particularly troublesome because students from lower socio-economic households, who are often the first in their family to attend college, often look to schools to provide the necessary guidance for admission to college (Acker-Bell, 2007; Bloom, 2010; Broussard, 2009; Corwin, Venegas, Oliverez, & Colyar, 2004; Kinzie et al., 2004). Even though parents who did not attend college often convey the value of college to their children (Acker-Bell, 2007; Cooper et al., 1994), they
nonetheless often do not have the financial and informational resources that affluent families have (Kinzie et al., 2004; Oliva, 2008; Pascarella et al., 2004).

Researchers suggest that high school counselors can help students access dominant forms of college-going capital, especially if they provide individualized, in-depth counseling. According to McDonough (2005), there is “definitive evidence that improving high school counseling and equalizing students’ access to counseling would likely have a significant impact on improving college access for underserved populations” (p. 31). However, due to time and resource constraints, counselors most often find themselves giving classroom and grade level presentations or passing out lists of activities for students to complete (McDonough, 1997; Perna et al., 2008) rather than individually asking students “what they are wondering or are worried about, or providing experiences in which the students discover answers for themselves” (Bloom, 2008, p. 6). Unfortunately, this “banking or transmission model of information transfer” (Tierney and Auerbach, 2004, p. 45) is not sufficient for many students, particularly those who are the first in their family to attend college and those who have access to the fewest dominant forms of college-going capital outside of school. Only if counselors actively support students and their families in the college process by helping students investigate colleges, complete applications, and write college essays, will students’ chances of enrolling in four-year colleges and universities increase (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Horn, 1997; McDonough, 2005).

However, some researchers suggest that simply providing individual attention is not enough. In particular, Bloom (2008) argues that “building college-going cultural capital around the landscape of higher education is necessarily a social and relational activity that requires interpersonal contact with a wide range of actors over time: these contacts are then used to create a set of experiences foundational to understanding the landscape” (p. 4). Students are much
more likely to understand – and successfully navigate – the college landscape if they have opportunities to meet current college students, interact with college faculty, and spend time on a variety of actual college campuses (Luna De La Rosa & Tierney, 2006; Hill, 2011; Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2008; Martinez & Klopott, 2003; McClafferty et al., 2002).

To help low-income students access and leverage the interpersonal contact and knowledge needed to navigate the college process, researchers recently have begun looking at a variation of college counseling: college coach programs (Farmer-Hinton, 2008; Stephen & Rosenbaum, 2011). Rather than rely on the traditional college-counseling model in which counselors simply disseminate information about college, “college coaches” in a college-prep charter school facilitated small working groups of students and developed mentor-like relationships with students over the course of the school year (Farmer-Hinton, 2008). Similarly, the Chicago Public School District placed college coaches in twelve high schools to organize formal college activities (i.e. campus tours, workshops, and college fairs) and staff a “college room” to provide on-going assistance to students. Unlike traditional counselors who generally reacted to student or parent requests, college coaches proactively engaged students and parents in the college process. Students at ‘coach schools’ were much more likely to enroll in four-year colleges than two-year colleges or no college at all (Stephan et al., 2011, p 14). Unfortunately, most low-resource high schools do not have the district level support to provide dedicated college counselors and coaches in their high schools, let alone traditional guidance counselors with time available to address college-going needs. So, what other strategies do schools employ to implement college readiness policies?

School-Wide College Readiness Initiatives
A growing body of research finds that cultivating a school-wide college-going culture is a more promising way to address both the academic preparation and college knowledge components of college readiness policies. Specifically, research has shown that when school leadership, teachers, parents, and peers join high school counselors in creating a college-going culture that encourages all students to pursue academically rigorous coursework and to consider college, students are more likely to achieve their college aspirations (Corwin & Tierney, 2007; Martinez & Klopott, 2003; McClaferty et al., 2002; Roderick et al., 2008). High schools looking to create a school-wide college-going culture can use a template that describes nine principles of a college culture—such as college talk, clear expectations, dissemination of information, and faculty, student, and parent involvement—“that are designed to allow schools to determine the extent to which they are currently fostering a college culture and the steps they might take in the future to strengthen that culture” (McClaferty et al., 2002, p. 11).

However, not all school-wide college-going cultures are created equally; Hill (2008) adds to the literature regarding school-wide college-going cultures by identifying three distinct college counseling strategies that a school might implement. She suggests that schools that employ the “traditional” strategy offer some information to students considering career options post high school and even less information to students considering college; the school does little to facilitate individual access to these available resources. Schools that implement the “clearinghouse” strategy offer substantially more information about college and career options, but again do little to proactively provide this information to families and students. Finally, schools that engage the “brokering” strategy not only offer substantial college-going information but also show a strong organizational effort to help students and families access this information.
Not surprisingly, schools that engage the brokering strategy tend to implement many of the qualities and characteristics that McClaferty (2002) and Martinez & Klopott (2003) promote for successful school-wide programs. When schools leverage the brokering model and “make strong commitments to practices that promote equitable access to resources,” the greatest number of students can successfully access postsecondary education (Hill, 2008). Hill points out that schools with many resources, often serving wealthier students and families, most often emulate the brokering college counseling strategies. In contrast, schools with few resources, which often serve low-income and underrepresented populations, tend to display traditional or clearinghouse counseling strategies (Hill, 2008).

Hill’s (2008) analysis of college counseling strategies helped me consider which strategy the two schools in my study illustrate. However, her work alone does not show us the variation that is possible within a school. Take, for example, this possibility: although a school might follow the traditional style of counseling strategies, there could be several ways in which individuals within this “traditional” school might provide personalized, brokering-like attention for some students, allowing them to better navigate the college process. Indeed, as I found in Chapter 4, Chavez High School illustrated the traditional college-counseling model, yet several focal students experienced more of a “brokering” college counseling experience because of their individual connections with high school and college staff.

**Specific College-Linking Programs**

College linking-programs focus specifically on college counseling and aim to guide small groups of students (often selected to participate based on income level, ethnicity, and academic achievement or teacher/counselor recommendations) through the college and scholarship application process (Gándara & Bail, 2001; Perna & Swail, 2001; Schultz & Mueller, 2006).
These programs can provide students and families with the necessary information to access dominant forms of college-going capital through network ties with other students, their parents, and high school staff (Gándara and Bail, 2001).

In the early 2000s, the National Postsecondary Education Cooperative (sponsored by the National Center for Education Statistics) reviewed 33 distinct college-linking programs categorized by one of five sources of funding: private non-profit, government sponsored, community-based, K-12 sponsored, and university-based (Gándara and Bail, 2001). Regardless of funding source, the authors found that every program employed at least one of six components: counseling, academic enrichment, parental involvement, personal and social enrichment, mentoring, and scholarships. Building on the work of Gándara and Bail (2001), Schultz and Mueller (2006) updated evaluations for the programs reviewed in the NPEC report and added seven additional yet similar programs. Both of these reports provide educators and program coordinators with checklist recommendations of major categories of program components including: academic preparation such as tutoring and study-skills training, college knowledge such as college visits and fairs, and technical support such as completing college and scholarship applications.

More recently, researchers have focused on specific programs to look at their outcomes and have come to similar conclusions as Gándara and Bail (2001) and Schultz and Mueller (2006). For example, programs like small learning communities and advanced-level courses offer students not only rigorous academic preparation but, more importantly, college knowledge through social network ties with peers and high school and college staff (Cates & Schaefle, 2011; Chajeski, Mattern, & Shaw, 2011; Martinez & Klopott, 2003). Moreover, research has found that small peer groups led by an adult with college knowledge and information about the college
application process can increase college-going rates among low-income and first generation college students (Naffziger, 2011 as cited in Stephan & Rosenbaum, 2013; Stephan & Rosenbaum, 2013). Additionally, programs with a parental involvement component can strengthen family and social networks through parent and high school and college staff interactions (Auerbach, 2006; Perna & Swail, 2001)

While these researchers have found positive effects of individual college linking programs, students often participate in several, and the overall impact on participating students remains unknown. In particular, it is important to ask: In what ways do students’ social networks change and grow when students participate in more than one program or when programs share information and resources with each other? Do students activate social capital available in every program in which they participate? If not, why do they activate capital in some but not all programs? The first question in particular is key to my results chapters 4 and 5. In Chapter 4: The Chavez Context, for example, I found that access to specific programs was often contingent on students’ initiative to join, students’ grades, and students’ historical participation in such programs. In Chapter 5: The Southside Context, I found that the majority of focal students participated in several different college linking programs. Each of these programs offered the focal students unique network ties and different forms of college going capital.

**High School-College Partnerships**

Colleges can also assist high school counselors in implementing college readiness policies through high school-college partnerships (Feldman, 1999; Harkavy, 1999; Haycock, 1997, 1998; McClafterty, 2002). For example, high school-college partnerships can improve students’ postsecondary options because they expose students to novel university and college settings (Jarsky et al., 2009). Indeed, there are a variety of programs ranging from college
courses for credit (concurrent enrollment), to residential programs for one to five weeks in the summer, to drop-in college advising (Barnett and Hughes, 2010; Martinez & Klopott, 2003; McClaferty, 2002). By taking college level courses or participating in tutoring programs with current college students, high school students can improve their academic skills (Adelman, 2006; Bailey et al., 2003). By visiting various college campuses and participating in residential summer programs, high school students can experience college life before even applying to college (Gándara and Bail, 2001; Schueltz & Mueller, 2006). Opportunities for high school students to interact with other college students like themselves and to take college classes allow high school students to better understand college life as well as the differences among colleges and their offerings (Bailey et al., 2002; Barnett & Hughes, 2010; Karp et al., 2007).

High schools and colleges can turn to various publications to assist them in designing effective partnerships. In their policy brief prepared for the White House Summit on Community Colleges, Barnett and Hughes (2010) suggest that partnerships between community colleges and high schools can increase the number of students who enroll in, not require remediation in, and graduate from college. Some of these partnerships such as admissions outreach, concurrent enrollment, and early assessment support students through already existing college resources and course offerings. Other partnerships such as Career and Technical Education (CTE), Summer Bridge, and Early College support students through programs designed specifically for high school students (Barnett & Hughes, 2010, p. 58). Barnett and Hughes further suggest that the success of high school-college partnerships hinges on funding and other incentives for colleges to create them. However, colleges are only one half of the partnership, and Barnett and Hughes fail to discuss what high schools need to do in order for high school-college partnerships to be successful.
Indeed, high schools might face several difficulties as they create partnerships with institutions of higher education. While partnerships with universities allow high school staff to draw on additional resources (financial, personnel, and material) that wouldn’t otherwise be available, these partnerships can cause distress among high school staff (Jarsky et al., 2009). For example, counselors may be hesitant to create such partnerships if they feel their position as counselors is jeopardized as schools begin to rely on college personnel to provide that college counseling (Jarsky et al., 2009). High school teachers may also resent partnerships with local universities if they have to give up teaching higher-level courses to college faculty who hold the degrees required to teach college courses (Valadez & Snyder, 2006; Weerts, Sanford, & Reinert, 2012; Yonezawa, Wells, & Serna, 2002).

Understanding that both partners might face struggles when implementing high school-college partnerships, a policy brief published by Jobs for the Future highlights three different levels of partnerships that high schools and colleges might pursue (Allen and Murphy, 2008). Level one partnerships require the least amount of resources to provide students with information about colleges. These partnerships often take the form of mentoring or tutoring programs with current college students or hosting college visits and information sessions. Level two partnerships require that the college provide more resources like offering concurrent enrollment courses taught either on high school or college campuses and after school or summer residential programs on college campuses. Level three partnerships require that both high schools and colleges provide the greatest amount of resources; here the high school might be based on the college campus or the college might use the high school as a training ground for pre-service teachers. At level three, high school and college staff team-teach concurrent enrollment courses. Level one partnerships reach out to all students while partnerships at levels two and three can
provide more intense support to fewer students.

Although Allen and Murphy’s toolkit is invaluable for high school staff thinking about creating high school-college partnerships, the toolkit seems to suggest that a high school would select only one of the three levels of partnership with one college or university. Ohle and Eisenhart (2014) point out, however, that high schools often partner with multiple colleges at multiple levels. For example, in Chapter 4, I found that Chavez High School in Denver partnered with a four-year non-selective college to offer drop-in assistance to students looking for help in completing applications (level one) and a two-year college to offer concurrent enrollment courses taught on the high school campus (level two). When a high school partners with more than one college at more than one level as described by Allen and Murphy (2008), what types of network ties become available to students? Do students choose to access the resources embedded in some but not all high school partnerships? If so, why? These questions are currently left unanswered in the literature. While a full exploration of high school-college partnerships is outside the scope of my dissertation, I do begin to address these questions in Chapters 4 and 5. While both high schools partnered with several colleges and universities, I found that the college-going capital inherent in these partnerships was more easily accessible to Southside focal students—partly due to the fact that Southside made different level-one partnerships available to all students each year of high school.

Because federal and state policy makers have mandated that schools implement college readiness policies, this literature review has focused specifically on the ways in which schools have addressed these policy mandates through creating college-going cultures, college counseling strategies, coordinating college linking programs, and partnering with institutions of higher education. However, policy makers, community members, and families can also support
schools in college readiness initiatives (Engberg, 2014; Perna & Titus, 2005). Indeed, students can learn a great deal about the college process from their peers, family members, and community outside of school (Coleman, 1988; Luna & Martinez, 2013; Yosso, 2005). Students access and activate college-going capital and become “college ready” through multiple avenues both within and outside of formal schooling. I suspect that the ways in which high schools might acknowledge or ignore the forms college-going capital that students bring from their communities and families to the college process can impact the schools’ efforts in helping students gain the academic preparation and college knowledge needed to succeed in getting to college. So, in the following section, I describe the ways in which I used theories of social capital and community cultural wealth to inform my research.

**Conceptual Framework**

Several forms of capital – human, cultural, and social (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Perna et al., 2005) – are central to understanding the impact of high schools on students’ postsecondary opportunities. Indeed, Engberg and Wolniak (2010) find that:

> Across all student-level measures of human, cultural, and social capital, the variables with the greatest overall impact on college enrollment (2-year *and* 4-year) include academic achievement variables (i.e., highest level of math taken and high school grades) [their measure of human or academic capital], aspirations of family and friends for the student to attend college [their measure of cultural capital], and all college-linking activities…[i.e.,] students’ abilities to develop college-linking networks with a range of individuals (e.g., teachers, counselors, peers, parents, and college representatives) [social capital]…” (pp. 148-149).

As I pointed out in the earlier literature review, formal schooling can offer students opportunities to improve academic achievement and to participate in various college linking activities. Like many high schools across the country, Colorado high schools focus mainly on providing academic and human capital because of state requirements to meet particular test score benchmarks, higher graduation rates, and lower dropout rates (Glancy et al., 2014). While I
understand that there are several forms of capital that students must leverage to successfully access college (such as academic and human capital), I have chosen to specifically focus on social capital as my analytical lens. In its most basic form, social capital affords students the opportunity to access valuable resources through network ties to peers, family, and school and college staff (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Gándara, 1995; Herbert & Reis, 1999; Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999; Stanton-Salazar, 1997, 2001). Moreover, Perna and Titus (2005) suggest that social capital, when activated by high school students, allows students to enhance productivity (Coleman, 1988), gain social mobility (DiMaggio & Mohr, 1985; Lamont & Lareau, 1988), and ultimately access economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Lin, 2001).

I draw from three theorists to frame my study of how high achieving, low-income students navigate the college process via network ties with other individuals in low-resource high schools. In the following pages, I first look to Pierre Bourdieu (1986) to understand the need for accessing network ties that lead to dominant forms of college-going resources. I then look to James Coleman (1988) to investigate the social capital that can be cultivated in peer relationships and relationships between parents and schools. Lastly, I look to Tara Yosso (2005) to understand several forms of capital—familial, social, navigational, resistant, linguistic, aspirational, and cultural—brought to schools by low-income students and often overlooked by mainstream scholars. Taken alone, none of these theories allows me to address the complexities of navigating the college process; I have chosen, then, to combine components of each to create a more dynamic, cohesive theory of social capital—what I term “college-going capital” in this dissertation—that seeks to overcome the deficit perspective so often applied to low-income students while also understanding that students must be able to navigate a system defined by the dominant class (Table 1).
Table 1: Theories of Social Capital

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<td><strong>Definition:</strong></td>
<td>Social Capital: network ties can offer access to highly valued (mainstream or elite) resources</td>
<td>Social Capital: network ties with peers and parents create trust and can lead to the creation of more capital</td>
<td>Several forms of capital (aspirational, moral, linguistic, navigational, communal, and familial) are valuable resources of low-income students</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Benefits of using this model:</strong></td>
<td>Demonstrates the need for high schools to provide access to dominant forms of social and cultural capital through network ties</td>
<td>Demonstrates the value of network ties between peers; between students and parents; and between parents and school staff</td>
<td>Highlights various forms of capital brought by non-dominant students from their home communities; demonstrates the values of network ties between non-dominant students, family, and community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Issues with using only this model:</strong></td>
<td>(1) Does not address value of non-dominant forms of capital (2) does not address the activation of resources</td>
<td>(1) Takes a deficit perspective of the capital brought by low-income students and families (2) does not include discussion of the structural inequalities inherent in access to or activation of capital</td>
<td>(1) Does not provide discussion of how schools might incorporate non-dominant forms of capital to successfully access college (2) does not address activation of resources</td>
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While Bourdieu, Coleman, and Yosso have unique ways of defining social capital, they share the common belief that capital can be gained through social network ties with other individuals. As I demonstrate, though, Coleman and Bourdieu lean towards a deficit perspective while Yosso doesn’t provide examples of how her model alone can be successful in a hierarchical society. So, in the following pages, I discuss my three key theorists; for each, I describe their theory and
illustrate how other researchers have employed the theory in education research. I then illustrate how I will use aspects of both theories in my new construct: college-going capital. Because neither Bourdieu nor Coleman nor Yosso include a discussion of how these resources must be activated to gain educational advantages, I next demonstrate how others have used the idea of capital activation (Hovart & Lareau, 1999; Lareau, 2000) as a way to further inform my own dissertation. I conclude by providing one example of how I will use the ideas of “formal access”, “access”, and “activation of” college-going capital in my dissertation.

**Bourdieu’s Theory of Social Capital**

Bourdieu (1986) believes that individuals can gain access to opportunities or resources such as cultural capital through social network ties. According to Bourdieu, cultural capital is the knowledge, actions, and preferences that allow people to participate in and successfully navigate (dominant) society. Regarding college, some of the most highly valued examples of cultural capital include understanding the variety of postsecondary institutions and their resources, knowledge of college life and expectations, financial aid and scholarship application components, and understanding what a “strong” application looks like and how to create it. While this type of cultural capital is widely available among middle and upper middle class Americans who have attended college, it is much less available in low-income families and communities where today’s high school students may be the first in their family to attend college.

In fact, Bourdieu sees social capital in a more negative light than other theorists. For instance, while Coleman (1988) believes that network ties can provide individuals access to resources that then allow them to advance their social situation, Bourdieu sees social capital as a way for the dominant class to maintain its position. Indeed, Bourdieu discusses the unequal distribution of power and privilege, pointing out that “biases embedded in state-regulated
cultural and educational institutions reflect and reward the social-cultural capital of upper classes and devalue that of lower classes, thereby ensuring the reproduction of social inequality” (Lopez & Stack, 2001, p. 32). Bourdieu further argues that the social capital available to someone is based not only on the size and strength of the network but also on the nature and amount of social, cultural, and economic resources that the members of the network bring to the group (Bourdieu, 1986; Portes, 1998). For students who will be the first in their family to go to college, high school staff (many of whom have bachelors and masters degrees) are especially important potential sources of valuable college-going social capital. Therefore, Bourdieu’s theory of social capital alerts me to the need to understand how relationships and network ties between students and their families and the high school staff affect low-income students’ access to dominant forms of social capital needed to access college.

What might these network ties look like among my high achieving, low-income focal students and their families, communities, and school staff? I turn to the work of several theorists and educational researchers who have developed and used theories social networks to investigate how students acquire and use resources and relationships to access educational opportunities (Gándara, 1997; Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper; Stanton-Salazar, 2001, 1997). At the most basic level, there are two types of ties: vertical or horizontal (Granovetter, 1973). Vertical ties are considered to be ties between people from different social backgrounds that allow the individual with less social capital to gain access to cultural and social capital that is more highly valued (Granovetter, 1973; Monkman, 2005). These vertical ties are often characterized as “weak” ties (Lin, 1981) or “structural holes” (Burt, 1992) because the individuals that make up these networks are from different backgrounds. Both Burt (1992) and Lin (1981) believe that these vertical ties potentially lead to social mobility because these ties can provide new resources and
knowledge (Portes, 2002). In contrast, horizontal (or strong) ties are considered to be ties between people who come from the same family (Granovetter, 1973) or who have similar backgrounds, interests, or jobs (Burt, 1992, Lin, 1981, Monkman, 2005, Woolcock and Narayan, 2000). These horizontal ties tend to be stronger than vertical ties because individuals in the network know each other well and often have more frequent and varied interactions with each other (Monkman, 2005, p.22).

Most theorists seem to agree that both types of ties are needed for a person to successfully access resources. Indeed, Hansen (1999) complicates previous theorists’ ideas about weak and strong network ties. He suggests that the complexity of the resource (simple information or richer forms of knowledge) influences the effects of weak and strong ties. Other theorists have suggested that network ties be measured by looking at their frequency and the expertise that they offer. For example, Burt (2000) measured ties based on frequency of contact, emotional closeness to the other person, and the types of information that was shared. Hansen (1999) measured the types of knowledge or resources that were shared across ties, such as easy-to-follow documents, personal knowledge and experience, and a mix between the two. Cynthia Coburn (2012) used indicators of social closeness, frequency, and expertise to measure network tie strength. Stanton-Salazar (1997) looked at network ties as a measure of mentor vs. gatekeeper: she argues that school staff such as teachers, counselors, and program leaders can act as mentors and gatekeepers which can either help or hinder students’ access to resources. In Chapter 5, I highlight the various forms of network ties that the focal students had access to at Southside—what is particularly interesting about these ties is that some seemed infrequent while others seemed more common—yet both network ties provided students valuable college-going capital.
Coleman’s Theory of Social Capital

James Coleman’s (1988) theory of social capital also suggests that through one’s network ties to others, individuals can achieve things in life that would otherwise be unattainable. In particular, Coleman sees social capital in a positive light, in which social capital contributes positively to a community by increasing social control (Coleman, 1988, Dika and Singh, 2002). The more trust, information channels, and norms that exist, the more social control and social cohesion that exists in a community. Coleman purports that these groups, or social networks, produce and maintain beneficial authority relations and sanction norms between and among people (Monkman, 2005). These social groups rely on trust, such that, "a group within which there is extensive trustworthiness and extensive trust is able to accomplish much more than a comparable group without that trustworthiness and trust" (Coleman, 1988, p. 101). What does this quote mean? Well, Coleman uses the New York City wholesale diamond industry as an example; strong family, religious, and community ties facilitate efficient trade amongst diamond dealers. Trustworthiness is promoted and maintained because of strong social networks and elaborate insurance policies are thus not needed for diamond transactions to take place. If one person tried to cheat, he would be shunned from this community and his familial, religious, and community ties would be severed, preventing him from remaining in the diamond business. In this sense, the norms in the diamond industry are promoted and maintained through a high level of trustworthiness. Participation in the diamond merchant social network affords dealers resources and opportunities they would otherwise not have. With respect to education research, there are three particular groups of people that Coleman believes can foster the trust needed to increase relevant social capital: (1) students and their peers, (2) students and their parents, and (3) parents and school staff.
First, Coleman (1988) found that peers play an important role in one’s performance and future aspirations. Following Coleman’s work on peer influences, several other researchers have reported similar findings. For example, Choy (2001) found that students whose friends planned to attend college were four times more likely to enroll in college than their peers with friends who did not plan to attend college. Similarly, Horn (1997) found that first-generation college-going students from low-income backgrounds were more likely to intend to be enrolled in a four-year college if their friends also intended to enroll in college. Yet, this body of research, based on large-scale datasets, does not answer the question: what resources do students have access to through network ties with peers and how do students activate these resources in order to access college? Using qualitative data, my dissertation allows us to better understand what it is about peer networks, the resources available through these networks, and how students activate these resources that can lead to positive college-going outcomes. As I show in Chapter 6, several of the focal students who had access to college-going capital through ties with both peers and institutional agents, time and again, chose to activate the capital accessed through their peers rather than the school staff. This is particularly interesting because in Chapter 5, while I found several examples of peer network ties, I noticed that Southside staff did not leverage these peer ties when connecting students to college-going capital.

Second, Coleman believes that student-parent and parent-high school staff relationships are key to building social capital because these relationships can regulate social norms related to the college-going process (i.e. what types of colleges their students ought to apply to, when their students ought to apply to college, etc.). Using the High School and Beyond dataset, Coleman (1988) found that high school sophomores with one sibling, two parents, and a mother’s expectation for college had an 8.1% dropout rate compared to the 30.6% dropout rate of a
student with four siblings, one parent, and no parental expectation for college (controlling for all other factors) (p 113). In other words, Coleman argues that students with greater access (ties) to parents in the home – parents who support the child’s college aspirations – are more likely to stay in school. Educational researchers have followed Coleman’s lead by examining variables—which they believe are indicators of social capital—such as family structure, parent-child discussion, parent-school involvement, parent-parent interactions, parents’ expectations, moving among schools, and religious participation that appear in longitudinal datasets such as the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 (Carbonaro, 1998; Hofferth, Boisjoly, & Duncan, 1998; Merolla & Jackson, 2014; Perna & Titus, 2005). Perna and Titus (2005), for example, determined that greater parent social capital (as measured by the number of times that a parent visits the school, sits on the PTO, and calls teachers) positively influences students’ probability of enrolling in more selective colleges. These examples all suggest that Coleman and these other researchers considered social capital from solely a dominant perspective. What I mean by that is families with two parents (family structure) and parents having the time to volunteer in their child’s classroom (parent-school involvement) are representative of the dominant ideal of social capital.

Although I agree that the network ties between students and their parents as well as between their parents and school staff are integral to accessing social capital, I argue that measuring school-related social capital based solely on Coleman’s theory is insufficient because it ignores non-white, non-middle-class forms of social capital. For example, Luna and Martinez (2013) reported various ways in which low-income parents without college degrees supported their students: they worked multiple jobs so their students could study; they had high expectations; and offered “encouragement in the forms of advice, stories, and hard work” (pg. 6).
There must be other ways that I can measure the college-going capital of parents. Pedro Noguera (2001) offers an interesting hypothesis:

When connections between school and community are weak or characterized by fear and distrust, it is more likely that the school will serve as a source of negative social capital. However, when school and a community have formed a genuine partnership based on respect and a shared sense of responsibility, positive forms of social capital can be generated (p. 193).

What if, rather than just measuring the number of interactions that a parent has with the school in various settings as Coleman (1988) and Perna and Titus (2005) do, I measure social capital and the network ties between the school and parents by looking at how parents feel about the school, if the parents feel welcomed and valued by the school, if the parents feel the school makes an effort to communicate with them (such as speaking in Spanish), and if the parents believe the school has high expectations for their children? How might I incorporate non-dominant parents’ negative feelings towards or interactions with the school in this discussion of capital? In the following results chapters, I have attempted to address these questions by reframing the definition of social capital accessed through ties between students and parents and between parents and schools in ways to explore the college-going resources that do not immediately conform to dominant group norms and expectations. In doing so, I reveal a more nuanced picture of how high achieving, low-income students navigate the college process via network ties with their parents, school programs, and school staff. In particular, Chapters 4 and 5 illustrate the ways in which the focal students accessed college-going capital from their school while Chapter 6 illustrates the ways in which the focal students accessed college-going capital from their communities. Chapter 6 is particularly interesting because it illustrates the variety and breadth of college-going support non-dominant families and communities offered the focal
students against the backdrop of the schools’ varying perceptions of family involvement in the college-going process.

**Yosso’s Theory of Community Cultural Wealth**

One issue with using either of Bourdieu or Coleman’s social capital frameworks as they apply to education is that they suggest a deficit view of non-dominant students and parents by emphasizing the “necessary” resources that these individuals lack (Dika & Singh, 2002). Similarly, Valenzuela suggests that Coleman’s use of social capital assumes that people of color and people from low-income backgrounds lack the social capital required for social mobility. As such, “schools most often work from this assumption in structuring ways to help ‘disadvantaged’ students whose race and class background has left them lacking necessary knowledge, social skills, abilities, and cultural capital” (Valenzuela, p. 70 as cited in Yosso, 2005). When working from this deficit perspective, even the most well-intentioned schools can hurt the very students and families they are trying to help. For example, high schools might work from the assumption that the school needs to provide students and families with information about college, and thus structure ways to help students navigate the college process by implementing school-wide college application policies or placing students into college linking programs. While seemingly helpful, these actions alone are not enough because they rely on an assimilationist viewpoint in which students must conform to the current system in order to successfully navigate the college process (Tinto, 1993). Schools need to acknowledge the capital that students and families bring into the school and incorporate that capital into college readiness policies.

Therefore, I also draw on the definition of social capital used in the theory of community cultural wealth, a theory that encourages schools to recognize and learn from the cultural assets and resources of non-dominant communities rather than solely taking a deficit perspective.
Cultural assets acquired through network ties with non-dominant family members (familial capital) and peers and community members (communal capital) are important forms of capital that students bring with them into school and that can contribute to college-going processes (Yosso, 2005). Additionally, there are several other forms of capital that make up community cultural wealth. In chapter 6, I unpack four: moral (parents instill a sense of obligation in their children to attend college, Cooper et al., 1994), aspirational (the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers), navigational (skills of maneuvering through social institutions), and linguistic (skills gained through communicating in “more than one language and/or style”) (Yosso, 2005, pp. 79-82).

Luna and Martinez (2013) used Yosso’s theory of community cultural wealth to demonstrate how high school students can successfully navigate the college process by leveraging non-dominant forms of capital. For example, Linda, a psychology major studying at a four year college recounted, “family members, aunts, they would always [ask] me, when are you going to sign up for school? We’re waiting for you to go to [college]” (Luna and Martinez, 2013, p. 6). Another student suggested that he was able to complete applications and enroll in college by participating in a non-dominant community organization: “I met a lot of mentors and leaders in the community that helped me through the process of going to college” (p. 9). These examples suggest how students have drawn upon and activated non-dominant forms of college capital. Luna and Martinez argue that high schools, in particular those with non-dominant

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2 Yosso (2005) uses the term “social capital” to describe the “networks of people and community resources…[that can] provide both instrumental and emotional support to navigate through society’s institutions” (pg. 79). While her label for this form of capital makes sense, I have chosen to rename Yosso’s “social capital” as “community capital” in order to more clearly distinguish this form of capital from the social capital as described by Bourdieu and Coleman.
students, should acknowledge these forms of capital embedded in community cultural wealth as the schools work to support students in their college plans. Indeed, when enacted by school staff, Yosso emphasizes that community cultural wealth can support and validate the school resources related to college-going of high achieving, low-income students. Yet, as far as I could tell, there are no research studies to date that have supported this argument with evidence.

Although Yosso (2005) would argue that high school students can benefit from attending a high school that acknowledges and builds upon the capital of non-dominant students and their families, the capital available in community cultural wealth is not enough when these families and students are competing against the dominant class who has access to more highly valued and widely available social, cultural, and economic resources in the college process. Furthermore, neither she nor others have been able to demonstrate how leveraging these non-dominant forms of capital can help students access college. Thus, the theory of community cultural wealth cannot be used by itself because it ignores the fact that there are structural inequalities in access to dominant forms of capital that are useful for accessing college. For example, Cabrera and la Nasa (2001) propose that students and parents must understand the college admissions process early on so that parents can ensure students are enrolled in algebra and other gatekeeper courses in middle school, which subsequently enable students to enroll in high school courses that are aligned with competitive college admissions. Even if parents support their child’s education by having high aspirations for the student and by working more than one job so that their child can complete his homework, rather than work, in the evenings, without the type of dominant forms of capital suggested by Cabrera and la Nasa, students will have a hard time navigating the college process. Therefore, the dominant theories of social capital as defined by Bourdieu and Coleman must also be taken into account.
So, in my dissertation, I have chosen to analyze my data and answer my research questions by developing and employing a new construct--college-going capital--that is informed by the work of these three theorists (see figure 1). Unlike Yosso’s theory of community cultural wealth, which only highlights the forms of capital students might bring from non-dominant communities to the college process, and unlike Bourdieu and Coleman’s theories of social and cultural capital, which only highlight the dominant forms of capital that students might bring to the college process, my version of “college-going capital” encompasses these many various forms of capital.

![Figure 1: College-Going Capital](image)

In my theoretical construct, the focal students could access college-going capital in school as well as outside of school. In school, through network ties to institutional agents, students had the

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3 I think that Yosso’s theory of community cultural wealth purports that these various forms of capital (aspirational, moral, linguistic, navigational, etc) are forms of capital cultivated by non-dominant communities. I think it could be argued though that dominant communities could also access these forms of capital (i.e. high income students have access to aspirations to attend college, they have parents who have instilled in them values to pursue college educations, they access capital from peers and family members to help them navigate the college-going process). And so, in my dissertation, I try to suggest that Yosso’s forms of capital are available to the high achieving, low-income focal students in their non-dominant communities without specifically calling these forms of capital “non-dominant”.

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opportunity to understand the higher education landscape and to successfully navigate the college and financial aid application processes. Outside of school, the focal students could access capital through network ties to peers via communal capital (e.g. “My friends told me I should join [the College Summit program], so I did” (Bayon, Southside)) and through network ties to family members via familial capital (“They give me an opinion on [which college] they think is right” (Lorena, Southside)). These connections to others helped the focal students access various resources such as moral capital (e.g., “Basically, we came here to Denver for my education, so I felt that ever since I got here, that was my goal, to go to school” (Eduardo, Chavez)), navigational capital (“My brother and I filled out the application for paperwork” (Alamar, Southside)), and linguistic capital (“[My mom] did not know English so I went and translated my brother’s court proceedings” (Rafael, Southside)). Lastly, the focal students demonstrated drawing upon aspirational capital (e.g. “I always knew I didn't want to...after high school not go to college" (Cathy, Chavez)) to realize their college goals. Including forms of social and cultural capital available to students in their schools and forms of capital available to students in their non-dominant communities provides a more full and accurate picture of the college-going capital the focal students had access to as they navigated the college process. And so, going forward, unless otherwise specified, I’ll refer to the social and cultural capital and the community cultural wealth that the focal students had access to (or not) and activated (or not) as they navigated the college-going process as college-going capital.

Lareau’s Theory of Activation of Capital

The value inherent in college-going capital lies not just in access to resources but also in the activation of these resources (Lareau, 2000) – something that Bourdieu, Coleman, and Yosso’s theories do not fully acknowledge. If resources are not activated once a student has
access to them, then the student cannot benefit from these resources (Lareau, 2000; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Monkman, Ronald, & Theraene, 2005; Simon 2007). Even middle- and high-income students with college educated parents must activate their capital; only when students and their parents *activate* their cultural resources and take specific actions that influence the children’s educational experiences in school (i.e. selecting the best teachers, advocating for advanced course placement, taking an issue to the principal) will the students gain the educational advantages of the capital resource (Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2003; Lareau, 2000; Useem, 1992).

While low-income families can gain access to dominant forms of capital, they too must activate the resources in order to give their children an educational advantage (Branton, Qunitos, & Civil, 2004). Take for example, the Math and Parent Partnership in the Southwest (MAPPS), in which parents from low-income backgrounds had the opportunity to participate in a leadership program sponsored by the school district. Branton et al. highlight, on one hand, a parent who did not participate in MAPPS and did not believe she could do anything to change math classes for her daughter because “it is not allowed.” On the other hand, they discuss how a parent who volunteered with the program not only had access to more resources (she worked in the schools, knew the teachers, understood the types of math education taking place in the school, and realized that students could actually move between classes) but also *activated* those resources to successfully move her daughter from one classroom to another (Branton, Quintos, and Civil, 2004; Quintos, 2008).

More recent research demonstrates that students must activate social and cultural capital resources such as asking questions and seeking out help to gain advantages (Calarco, 2011; Merolla & Jackson, 2014). Teachers often expect students to ask for help or clarification when
needed (Patrick et al., 2001) and are more likely to provide students institutional resources and opportunities when asked (Stanton-Salazar et al., 1997). Moreover, Calcaro (2011) found that elementary school-aged students differed in their “help-seeking” or “question-asking” behavior based on their class background. For example, Calcaro points to a non-timed science quiz in which fourth grade students were asked to analyze and answer questions about a particular fuzzy image. While eight of ten middle-class students addressed the teacher asking clarifying questions about this image, none of the four lower-class students asked for help. Because they did not ask for help from the teacher, these students had a harder and slower time completing the quiz even though they “tried to deal with problems on their own” (Calcaro, 2011, p. 8). The takeaway point here is that if students had difficulties with the problem but did not seek help from the teacher, then they either did not have access to this form of capital or they did have access but did not activate it. Either way, these students did not gain the same educational advancements as their peers who both accessed and activated their capital.

More directly relevant to my work, Merolla and Jackson (2014) studied issues regarding access and activation of college-going cultural capital among white and black high school students. Using ELS data, Merolla and Jackson found that the more often students asked questions, participated in college exam prep activities, and gathered information, the more likely they were to attend a four-year college. While these findings regarding access and activation of college-going cultural capital are interesting, Merolla and Jackson’s sole focus on dominant forms of cultural capital ignores the capital brought by families and communities. When students have access to college-going capital from their school and their community, which sources do they choose to activate? How does activation of these forms of capital assist students in the college-going process? Chapter 6: The Family Context provides interesting insight to these
questions. Bayon, a focal student at Southside, had access to college-going capital from both his school and his family. Interestingly, Bayon appeared to activate the capital resources available from his family sometimes while other times, he activated capital resources available from his school.

Even when students activate their capital, their efforts can be thwarted by institutional agents and structures (Lareau, 2000). Specifically, Lareau suggests that researchers might “look at the contexts in which capital is situated, the efforts by individuals to activate their capital, the skill with which they do so, and the institutional response to the activation of resources” (p. 277). The ways in which students activate their capital is especially important in regards to the ways others perceive this capital and these attempts at activation. For example, Carter’s study of the ways in which low-income, ethnic minorities activate both dominant and non-dominant forms of capital in schools demonstrate how school personnel respond to students’ capital. For example, black students attempted to activate their non-dominant capital such as “slang and other community based status symbols” in a school setting that inherently favored dominant capital (Carter, 2005, p. 69). These students simultaneously attempted to activate dominant forms of capital such as displaying strong academic effort. However, school personnel (institutional agents) only took notice of the non-dominant forms of capital, interpreting these actions as “disruptive” and “disrespectful”. Carter’s study is revealing to my work because she suggests that institutional agents (such as high school staff) and institutional structures (such as the organization of school that requires counselors to spend the majority of their time on tasks unrelated to college counseling) can act as either gatekeepers or connectors in the college process.

As Lareau and Carter seem to suggest, activation per se is not all that is necessary—rather activation has to take place in the appropriate context (which may or may not be available
or understood). Unfortunately, Carter does not provide counter examples in which institutional agents looked favorably on the forms of capital accessed from non-dominant communities activated by students. And, although Yosso (2005) and Luna and Martinez (2013) suggest ways in which students might activate non-dominant forms of college-going capital, they too do not discuss how institutional agents respond to this activation. Do high school staff build on college-going capital brought to school by students from non-dominant communities, or as in Carter’s example, do they use this against students even when they also activate dominant forms of college-going capital? While a full discussion of the ways in which context matters for activation and for appropriate activation is beyond the scope of my dissertation, I begin to answer these questions in Chapter 6: The Family Context where Lareau’s (2000) activation of resources concept becomes key to my analysis. Indeed, I found that Southside’s staff responded favorably to Bayon’s activation of college-going capital while Chavez’ staff responded negatively to Nicole and her father’s activation of college-going capital.

It is clear from this review of the literature that activation of resources—and contexts for activation—are just as important as access to resources. Furthermore, Merolla and Jackson (2014) suggest that future research should continue to distinguish between cultural capital possession and activation and seek to develop multi-item measures of these concepts. Developing reliable and valid measurement instruments for cultural capital activation and possession would further clarify both their distribution across race and class and the impact they have on educational outcomes (p. 291).

Indeed, we must do more to distinguish between issues related to access to and activation of college-going college capital. Bourdieu (1986) and Coleman (1988) suggest ways in which students can access dominant forms of college-going capital while Yosso (2005) provides a theoretical lens to look at the ways in which students may use non-dominant forms of capital to
assist them in the college going process. However, we must also look at the ways in which students choose to activate these forms of capital (Lareau, 2000; Merolla & Jackson, 2014) and the ways in which institutional agents and structures respond to or allow for students’ activation of capital (Carter, 2005). Although Merolla and Jackson’s challenge of developing a reliable and valid measurement instrument is beyond the scope of my dissertation, I attempted to interrogate the possession and activation of college-going capital among high achieving, low-income students in Chapter 6 as a way to highlight “the impact they have on educational outcomes.”

In analyzing my data, I continuously looked for examples of “availability of,” "access to," and "activation of" college-going capital. Specifically, “availability” referred to the college-going capital that the schools purported providing to the focal students (i.e. counseling center initiatives, college-linking programs, high school-college partnerships) whereas “access” referred to the college-going capital that the students acknowledged having access to through their participation. “Activation” referred to the way in which students reported using or benefiting from the college-going capital to which they had access. The following decision tree provides one example of the many ways in which Chavez High School purported making college-going capital available to their students, how some focal students (and not others) had access to the college-going capital, and of the students who had access, how some (and not others) activated that college-going capital as they navigated the college process (see Figure 2).
Figure 2: College-Going Capital Decision Tree. Availability of, access to, and activation of individual college counseling provided by Chavez High School.

This example demonstrates the differences between formal access (the resources the school purports to offer to the focal students) and access (the resources students actually had access to through program participation) as well as the need to investigate the activation of the resources. While most of the college counseling at Chavez took place in large group settings, counselors did provide individual college counseling to students--most often when students initiated the appointments. One student, Diego, did not actually have access to this college going capital; he said multiple times throughout high school that the counselors don't help students like him and that he "can't make an appointment with the counselor." As I demonstrate in Chapter 4,
three other students at Chavez also did not have access to this college-going capital. Unlike those students, as the decision tree indicates, Alma and Cathy did access this college-going capital. They both talked about making appointments to see their counselor and that their counselor was a resource they could draw on to answer their college-related questions throughout high school. Four other students at Chavez also had access to this college-going capital. While Alma and Cathy both had access to their counselor as a source of college-going capital, Cathy did not activate that resource. Rather, she felt her counselor did not have “many answers” for her and so she turned to another college-going resource, college admissions officers, to help her navigate the college application process. Unlike Cathy, Alma not only had access to this college-going resource but she also activated that capital: she made an appointment with her counselor senior year to get help completing her college application for University of Colorado Boulder, one of several schools to which she applied. In the following chapters, I continue to push on these distinctions of college-going capital as I investigate the ways in which low-resource high schools implement college-readiness policies and the forms of college-going capital that the high achieving, low-income focal students accessed and activated as they navigated the college-going process.
CHAPTER 3
METHODS

The overarching goal of this dissertation is to investigate how low-resource high schools purposely support (or not) high achieving, low-income students while enacting federal and state mandated school-wide college readiness policies. In particular, I want to understand the dominant and non-dominant forms of college-going capital that can assist students in accessing college, the ways in which high achieving low-income students access and activate this capital, how high schools offer formal access to dominant forms of college-going capital, and how high schools acknowledge and build upon the non-dominant forms of capital of these students and their communities when enacting college readiness policies. I also want to know how high schools partner with organizations, colleges, and universities to provide high achieving, low-income students access to college-going resources that offer the college knowledge needed to successfully navigate the college process. To understand these complex phenomena, I have chosen a case study methodology because it is a valuable method for gaining depth of knowledge about communities or groups in specific contexts (Stake, 1995). Here, I define the group of interest as high achieving, low-income students and the context of interest as two low-resource high schools enacting college readiness policies in the Denver Metro area. In the remainder of
this chapter, I describe how the focal sites and sample populations were selected, define the methods used for data collection and analysis, and discuss my efforts to make the results in my dissertation as valid, transparent, and generalizable as possible.

Site and Sample Selection

The data in this dissertation is a subset of the data collected for Dr. Margaret Eisenhart’s NSF Project (09-601), High School Opportunities Structures and Figured Worlds of STEM, which took place in eight low-resource high schools in two cities from 2010-2014 (Eisenhart et al., 2015). Although Dr. Eisenhart’s study focused on high school opportunity structures for STEM, many of the interview questions and artifacts collected are relevant to my dissertation because questions were asked about college readiness policies implemented in these schools and the experiences of their high achieving low-income students (See Appendix B for a list of interview questions that were used in my dissertation).

School Selection

In the larger NSF study, four high schools in Denver (and four others in Buffalo, NY) were selected because they represented urban high schools with large numbers of low-income and majority minority students. Table 2 shows some of the academic and demographic characteristics of these four schools and their districts.
I selected two of these four high schools (Chavez and Southside) to study in my dissertation based on two criteria: (1) the two schools had similar student populations and academic performance backgrounds, yet (2) the two schools were situated in different districts and neighborhoods in the Denver Metro Area.

I chose to compare two high schools with similar student populations and similar academic performance measures as a way to control for how those variables might influence the manner in which high schools enact federal and state college readiness policies. Schools with the majority of students who are low-income and the first in their family to attend college are likely to implement college readiness policies differently than schools in which these students are in the minority (Pham & Keenan, 2011; Weis, Cipollone, & Jenkins, 2014). Furthermore, schools that are under pressure to meet state or federal imposed academic benchmarks (like NCLB and RTTT)—which is true for both Chavez and Southside—might also enact college readiness policies differently than schools that regularly meet and exceed academic benchmarks (Ohle & Eisenhart, 2014).

First, I chose to study Southside and Chavez High Schools because they are similar in size, they both serve majority minority populations, and they have been under pressure to
improve academic achievement and graduation rates for the past several years. In 2009, more than 70% of students at Chavez and 90% of students at Southside were eligible for free and reduced lunch, and over 80% of the students at both schools identified as Latino. Less than 10% of the 9th grade students in 2010 scored proficient or advanced on the math state standardized test (CSAP) and less than 35% scored proficient or advanced on the reading CSAP across both schools. In 2011, the high school juniors took the ACT and scored on average 15 (at Chavez) and 16 (at Southside) out of a possible 36. Roughly two thirds of the students graduated high school in 2013 from both schools.

Second, these schools represent very different cultural and physical contexts. Schools do not act in isolation when implementing college readiness policies; rather, the external context such as the high schools’ neighborhood or school district plays a key role in how schools implement college readiness policies. For example, cultural context, like the types of social capital and community cultural wealth available in the surrounding neighborhoods, can influence the college-going capital of students and thus the college readiness issues a school will face. Additionally, the level of support at the district level can influence the types of college readiness policies that high schools implement. Physical context, like the geographic location of the high school and access to public transportation that connects students to other neighborhoods, schools, and institutions of higher education, can facilitate or hinder the formation of high school-college partnerships that support college readiness policies.

I selected two low-resource high schools with differing contexts. Southside and Chavez, which are located in different school districts and distinctly situated in their respective districts (See Table 2), provide valuable means of exploring these cultural and physical factors. Southside, a high school in a large school district, receives three thousand dollars more per pupil per year
than Chavez, a high school in a small school district (Fiscal Year, 2013). Unlike Chavez, Southside’s school district runs a college coach program (Farmer-Hinton, 2008; Stephen & Rosenbaum, 2011), providing each high school with additional college counseling services.

I also selected these schools because they are situated on opposite ends of the Denver Metro Region, and between them sit more than a dozen different institutions of higher education. This landscape is particularly relevant because my third research question specifically asks how low-resource high schools partner with institutions of higher education to implement college readiness policies. The partnering institutions of higher education vary in selectivity from open access two-year colleges (CCA-Chavez, FRCC-Chavez, CCD-Southside) to non selective public four-year universities (Metropolitan State College-Chavez, University of Colorado Denver-Southside) to more selective state and land-grant universities (University of Colorado Boulder-Chavez, Colorado State University-Chavez) to more selective and very selective private four-year universities (University of Denver-Southside, Regis University-Southside). The majority of these colleges and universities are located within 10 miles of Southside (66%) and Chavez (50%) and can, on average, be reached in less than an hour by public transportation (See Table 3).

**Table 3: Colleges and Universities in the Denver Metro Area**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College or University</th>
<th>Type of College</th>
<th>Barron’s Ranking</th>
<th>Miles from Southside High School</th>
<th>Miles from Chavez High School</th>
<th>Minutes to travel from Southside to college by bus</th>
<th>Minutes to travel from Chavez to college by bus</th>
<th>Partnering High School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colorado School of Mines</td>
<td>4 year, private</td>
<td>MC</td>
<td>&lt;20</td>
<td>&lt;30</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>Chavez</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Colorado Boulder</td>
<td>4 year, public</td>
<td>VC</td>
<td>&lt;30</td>
<td>&lt;30</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>Chavez</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado State University</td>
<td>4 year, public</td>
<td>VC</td>
<td>&gt;60</td>
<td>&gt;60</td>
<td>not accessible</td>
<td>not accessible</td>
<td>Chavez</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Denver</td>
<td>4 year, private</td>
<td>VC</td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
<td>&lt;20</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>Southside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado Christian University</td>
<td>4 year, private</td>
<td>VC</td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
<td>&lt;20</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>Chavez</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regis University</td>
<td>4 year, private</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
<td>&lt;20</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>Southside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Colorado Denver</td>
<td>4 year, public</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Southside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnson and Wales University</td>
<td>4 year, private</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>&lt;20</td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Southside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metropolitan State University</td>
<td>4 year, public</td>
<td>LC</td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Chavez</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community College of Aurora</td>
<td>2 year, public</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>&lt;20</td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>Chavez</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Front Range Community College</td>
<td>2 year, public</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>&lt;20</td>
<td>&lt;20</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>Chavez</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community College of Denver</td>
<td>2 year, public</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Southside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arapahoe Community College</td>
<td>2 year, public</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
<td>&lt;30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>Chavez</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Rocks Community College</td>
<td>2 year, public</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
<td>&lt;30</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>Southside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily Griffith Technical College</td>
<td>2 year, public</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Southside</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The similarities in academic performance and demographic backgrounds coupled with differences in cultural and physical contexts constitute my rationale for choosing Southside and Chavez for my study of how low-resource high schools take up college readiness policies.

**Student Selection**

At each school, Dr. Eisenhart’s original NSF study selected roughly twelve high achieving “focal” students (half girls, half boys) from volunteers among students in the top 20% of their freshman class in math and science based on 9th grade GPA and their math and science scores on the Colorado Student Assessment Program. At each school, a high school counselor provided Dr. Eisenhart’s team with a list of 20-30 students who were in the top math quintile of their class by the end of ninth grade and had indicated an interest in pursuing math or science in college. Counselors were asked to specifically consider students of color and students from lower-income families. Students identified by the counselors were introduced to this project and asked to complete an application if they were interested in participating (Eisenhart et al., 2015; Weis et al., 2015).

While I wanted to include as many of the original focal students in my study as possible, I also wanted to make sure my sample was as robust as it could be. In the original study, students were supposed to be interviewed five times: once per semester beginning Spring of sophomore year and ending Spring of senior year. In reviewing the five student interview protocols (see *Data Collection* and Appendix B for a full list of questions), I realized that there were questions embedded in all of the interviews that potentially elicited information about the college-going resources that a student could access through network ties with family, community members, peers, and high school and college staff. In order to make sure I got as robust a picture as I could of the high school trajectory and college-going resources for each student, I selected
the students who had completed at least four out of five of the student interviews, including one each from sophomore, junior, and senior year. Because the interview conducted during the Spring semester of senior year asked students about their immediate plans post-high school, I felt it was important to select students who had completed this interview in particular. Of all the students who participated in the NSF study, 9 out of 13 students at Chavez and 10 out of 11 students at Southside completed at least four of the five interviews. Table 4 shows demographic and academic characteristics of the focal students included in my dissertation compared to their peers in their high school and their district.

Table 4: Academic and Demographic Characteristic of Sample Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% Proficient and Advanced Math CSAP 9th Grade</th>
<th>% Proficient and Advanced Reading CSAP 9th grade</th>
<th>ACT Composite Score 11th grade</th>
<th>% Graduated high school 12th grade</th>
<th>% FRL (taken from CDE 9th grade census)</th>
<th>% Latino (taken from CDE 9th grade census)</th>
<th>% Male (taken from CDE 9th grade census)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Southside</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chavez</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because my dissertation focuses on the impact of college readiness policies on high achieving, low-income students, I wanted to make sure my focal students included this population. Indeed, a greater percentage of my focal students scored higher on the state standardized tests and ACT, graduated high school, qualified for free or reduced lunch, and identified as Latino, when compared to their high school peers.

However, it is important to note differences among the high achieving focal students from Southside and Chavez that could ultimately influence my findings and conclusions. First, a disproportionate number of my focal students were male at Southside and, at Chavez, a disproportionate number of my focal students were female. Second, 90% of the focal students at
Southside scored proficient or advanced on the ninth grade math CSAP compared to just 40% of Chavez focal students. Third, there is a strong correlation between CSAP and ACT scores (Lefly, 2011), and so it is not surprising that two years later, Southside focal students had a higher ACT average than Chavez focal students (23 and 18 respectively). These differences – particularly in academics – have implications for my findings and conclusions because students must meet particular benchmarks to gain admission into four-year colleges and universities and to pass out of remedial education courses in community colleges. With higher test scores, focal students from Southside might be more likely to meet those particular benchmarks, which then influences their postsecondary options.

**High School and College Staff Selection**

Several high school and college staff members were interviewed over the course of the three-year NSF project. At the beginning of the project, Dr. Eisenhart, in consultation with each school principal, selected a counselor to be the main contact for the research project. Each year, a member of the research team asked these counselors to provide names of high school math and science teachers, principals, and college-linking program staff who knew at least some of the focal students and who might be interested in participating in the study; these high school staff members were interviewed once per year. I created a list of college and university contacts and partnerships when they surfaced in student and counselor interviews and contacted key personnel involved in these high school-college partnerships after finding their information on program websites.

**Data Collection**

The data used in this dissertation consists of two sources. Several kinds of school documents were collected during the course of this study including published counseling
materials such as high school graduation requirements and post-secondary planning guides. I used the post-secondary planning guides to investigate the ways in which Southside and Chavez help students think about post high school plans. The information from these school documents was included in data displays (see Data Analysis section for more detailed information).

Interviews were conducted from 2010-2013 with the focal students, parents, teachers, counselors, principals, and college staff. I present a data collection matrix that outlines the quantity and timeline of when interviews were conducted in Table 5.

**Table 5: Data Collection Matrix**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviews:</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Parent</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Counselor</th>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>CLP/College</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010-2011</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-2012</td>
<td>40°</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2*</td>
<td>2*</td>
<td>2*</td>
<td>4*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-2013</td>
<td>40°</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2*</td>
<td>2*</td>
<td>2*</td>
<td>5*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-2014</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Graduate Research Assistants interviewed the students twice per year (once each semester).
* I conducted these interviews.

Under the original NSF study design, graduate research assistants interviewed the focal students once in the spring of their sophomore year and once each semester of junior and senior year (roughly 20 interviews per semester for the two high schools in this study). Graduate research assistants also interviewed parents once per year, most often in the spring semester (roughly 20 interviews per year). I interviewed a high school counselor, a math or science teacher, and the principal (or the principal’s designee) once per year, most often in early February (I conducted roughly 12 interviews during years two and three, another researcher conducted the interviews during the first year of the study). I also interviewed various college linking program leaders in the spring of the second year of the study as part of a qualitative methods course (4 interviews in year two), various college recruiters in the spring of the third year of the study (5 interviews in year three), and program directors or coordinators of high school-college partnerships in June 2014 (5 interviews in year four). All interviews lasted roughly one hour and took place either at the high school, at the college, in a local coffee shop (some student interviews), or in the family.
home (some students and most parent interviews). Although a standard interview protocol was followed for each interview, the interviews were semi-structured to allow interviewers to pursue topics of interest raised by interviewees. Before participating in this study, every participant was asked to sign an IRB informed-consent waiver. As a member of the NSF research team, I conducted and transcribed the interviews with the high school staff and college recruiters. Outside of the NSF research project, I conducted and transcribed the interviews with college program staff.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis took place in three iterative stages: coding, completing data displays, and writing analytic memos. I present a data analysis matrix that outlines the data sources and analysis methods for each research question in Table 6 (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999).
Table 6: Data Analysis Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question:</th>
<th>Data Sources:</th>
<th>Analysis Methods:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research Question 1:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| What forms of college-going capital do low-resource high schools make available through their college readiness initiatives for their high achieving, low-income students? | high school staff, student, and parent interviews; graduation requirement documents | (1) **Descriptive cross case display #1:** high school college counseling policies and practices  
(2) **Descriptive cross case display #2:** school-wide initiatives, coordinating entity, target students, target grades, selection process, description of initiative  
(3) **Descriptive cross case display #3:** college linking programs, and high school-college partnerships and the target students, target grades, selection process, program description |
| How do these various college readiness policies influence high achieving, low-income students’ thinking about college? | student and parent interviews; course catalogues and graduation requirement documents | (1) **Descriptive cross case display #4:** student academic and demographic characteristics, graduation and CO HEAR requirements  
(2) **Descriptive cross case display #5:** student college and major trajectories |
| **Research Question 2:** | | |
| What sources of college-going capital do high achieving, low-income students actually access via school-wide college readiness initiatives? | student interviews | (1) **College-Going Resources Trajectory Form:** includes examples of all forms of college-going capital accessed and activated by each student from 10th grade through 12th grade interviews  
(2) **Descriptive cross case display #6:** cross tabulation of sources of school sponsored college-going capital and students, indicates access and activation of capital |
| How does access to these in-school college-going resources help high achieving students navigate school-wide college readiness policies? | student interviews | (1) **College-Going Resources Trajectory Form** |
| **Research Question 3:** | | |
| What forms of college-going capital do high achieving, low-income students have access to outside of school (via family, peers, & community)? | student and parent interviews; staff interviews | (1) **College-Going Resources Trajectory Form**  
(2) **Descriptive cross case display #7:** examples of non-dominant and dominant forms of college-going capital accessed by students outside of school |
| Of all the college-going capital available to high achieving, low-income students, which sources do they choose to access and activate? | student interviews | (1) **College-Going Resources Trajectory Form** |
| How does access to and activation of out-of-school college-going capital help these students navigate school-wide college readiness initiatives? | student interviews | (1) **College-Going Resources Trajectory Form** |

**Coding**

I used deductive and inductive coding to organize my data once I entered interview transcripts with students, counselors, teachers, principals, and college staff into a qualitative data
analysis program (AtlasTI). Stake (1995) urges researchers to use both deductive and inductive coding because he argues that it is just as important to start with “pre-established” codes as it is to look for new codes when going through the data (p.79). Miles and Huberman (1994) refer to these “pre-established” codes as a “start list” of deductive codes (Appendix B) that come from the researcher’s conceptual framework. I included both descriptive and interpretive codes on this list; these codes covered the “main decisions as to what to look for, thus the coding categories, and the potential correspondences” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 58; Stake, 1995). Broadly speaking, I defined four such “coding categories” in my study:

1. School-wide college readiness initiatives and practices
2. College-going capital made available by schools via initiatives and programs
3. Student access to college-going capital in and out of school
4. Student activation of these resources.

In particular, I looked for comments about the perceived roles of schools, teachers, counselors, parents, and peers in helping students prepare for college, the presence of college-high school partnerships and other college-linking programs, specific examples of college-going capital made available in these programs, and the ways in which students activated (or not) the capital available to them. In the parent interviews, I also looked for responses to college-related opportunities their students had in high school, relationships with the high school staff, and opinions about their student’s high school achievement and college plans.

Additionally, I included several “affective” and “process” codes suggested by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) that helped me capture the more subjective experiences and perceptions of the students, families, and school staff in my project. For example, I used emotion coding to label the “emotions recalled and/or experienced by the participant or inferred
by the researcher about the participant” related to schooling and the college process (p. 75).

Although I began with a short start-list of emotion codes (frustration, excitement), I found that many others came about in vivo (such as confusion, confidence). I found a few other affective codes including values (i.e. importance of college, importance of staying close to family) and evaluations (i.e. my school prepared me well for college, my school did not help me with the college process) (p. 76). Process codes were particularly valuable in capturing participant actions and included such gerunds as “asking” and “helping.” Similar to the emotion codes, I relied heavily on my data to expand the list of value, evaluation, and process codes in my coding scheme (as illustrated in Chapter 4, important codes that came about in my data included “waiting” and “taking action”).

After I coded a few initial interviews (for three students, a high school counselor, a college staff member, and a parent), I adapted my initial short list of start codes by creating and adding new codes that appeared in these data that I had not previously considered. As I saw themes appear in these initial interview transcripts, I revised my coding scheme to include emerging patterns related to college readiness policies and practices, the presence of non-dominant and dominant forms of college-going capital, how Southside and Chavez acknowledged and built upon (or not) the capital brought by students and their families, and the types of resources that students accessed and activated (or not) to access college. Including these higher-level codes that captured emerging patterns was important because this type of code provides a “‘backstage’ of motives” for participants’ feelings, experiences, and actions (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 57). A copy of my final code book can be found in Appendix C.

As I coded the interviews for the focal students, I drafted two supporting documents for each student as a way to begin to make sense of the emerging patterns and themes. First, I
created a College-Going Resources Trajectory Form for each student (an example Form can be found in Appendix E). This Form indicated each source of college-going capital that the student referenced for each year of the study (sophomore, junior, and senior years). Examples of the type of resources accessed by the student included: dominant forms of social capital (i.e. how to complete college and scholarship applications), dominant forms of cultural capital (i.e. how to distinguish between various types of colleges and universities) and other forms of capital brought by the students’ families and communities (i.e. aspects of Yosso’s community cultural wealth such as: aspirational, linguistic, navigational, familial, or cultural capital). I noted the person or program (concurrent enrollment course, summer program at a particular college, mother, sibling, etc.) that was associated with the resource, and if the student activated that resource. Lastly, when possible, I noted reactions by institutional agents (such as high school staff) to the students’ activation of capital. This information allowed me to begin to understand the types of college-going capital that high achieving, low-income students both accessed and activated via network ties to family and friends, school, college linking programs, and high school-college partnerships. I also wrote analytic memos (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014) after coding the data for every few participants as a way to synthesize the data and bring to light additional emerging patterns and themes. These emerging patterns and themes “serve[d] as the basis for more expanded and final reports” (p. 96) as I incorporated them into my coding scheme applied to all interviews.

**Data Displays**

I designed and employed data displays (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014) to help draw valid conclusions in regards to how low-resource high schools, in the context of preparing all students to be “college-ready”, negotiate the relationships and
tensions between the college-going capital historically considered necessary for success in accessing college and the capital developed and used by underrepresented students and their communities. Miles and Huberman argue that data displays allow the researcher to draw and verify valid conclusions because “the display is arranged coherently to permit careful comparisons, detection of differences, noting of patterns and themes, seeing trends, and so on” (1994, p. 92). For each research question, I created several data displays as a way to arrange and understand my data.

I created three data displays to answer my first research question: What forms of college-going capital do low-resource high schools make available in their college readiness initiatives for their high achieving, low-income students? Data Display #1 helped me to understand the organization and college counseling efforts at Southside and Chavez High Schools in 2010-2013. The data in this display provided information about the number of seniors advised by high school counselors, counseling responsibilities related to college, forms of college-going capital available to students through the school, and the number of college linking programs and college-high school partnerships, and number of students using them (Data Display #1 can be found in Appendix D).

High schools navigate the need for all students to be college-ready through coordinating a myriad of school-wide college counseling strategies, counseling center initiatives, and college linking programs including high school-college partnerships. For example, Hill (2008) suggests that a high school might utilize one of three school-wide college counseling strategies: brokering, clearinghouse, and traditional. Indeed, Chavez High School appeared to illustrate the traditional counseling strategy by relying on classroom and grade level information sessions to provide students with college information and offering few opportunities for students to receive
individual college counseling. In contrast, Southside High School appeared to illustrate the brokering counseling strategy by offering individual college counseling to high achieving low-income students through multiple sources in addition to creating a strong school-wide college-going culture (Ohle & Eisenhart, 2014). Within each school context, however, regardless of the school-wide counseling strategy used, high achieving low-income students could be exposed to very different forms of college-going resources. So, I created Data Displays #2 and #3 to better reveal the various sources of college-going capital at Southside and Chavez. Data Display #2 included all school-wide college readiness initiatives mentioned by high school staff. For each of these policies, I described who in the school coordinated the policy, whom the policy served (which students and grades), the selection process (if any), and a description of the policy. Data Display #3 was constructed similarly to Display #2: it listed all of the college-linking programs (including high school-college partnerships) and for each of these programs, I sketched out the selection process (target students, target grades, admissions requirements) and a brief program description. Versions of Data Display #2 and #3 can be found in Chapters 4 and 5.

Hoxby and Avery (2012) suggest that high achieving, low-income students are less likely than their more affluent peers to apply to the most selective colleges and universities for which they qualify. Because I believe that the way in which low-resource high schools enact college readiness policies can support or hinder the college application process for high achieving low-income students, I created a fourth data display to investigate how college readiness policies at Southside and Chavez High Schools influenced the types of colleges to which the focal students applied. The following items were included in Data Display #4: academic and demographic characteristics and the CCHE Admission Eligibility Index Score (ACT and GPA) for each student. Data Display #5 highlighted the college and major trajectories for each focal student.
over five semesters. Elements from Data Display #4 and #5 were combined into tables that can be found in Chapters 4 and 5.

In order to answer my second research question: What sources of college-going capital do high achieving, low-income students actually access via school-wide college readiness initiatives? I relied on two data displays. Because I wanted to know how students accessed and activated the college-going capital that they had formal access to, I turned to the College-Going Resources Trajectory Forms I had created while coding the student data. These forms allowed me to understand the various forms of college-going capital that each focal student actually accessed over time. In order to synthesize the wealth of information available in the college-going resources trajectory forms, I created Data Display #6, which was a simple cross tabulation of sources of school sponsored college-going capital by students. Simple check marks indicated if the student accessed (or not) that particular resource. Data Display #6 can be found in Chapters 4 and 5.

In order to answer my third and final research question—What forms of college-going capital do high achieving, low-income students have access to outside of school (via family, peers, & community)? Of all the college-going capital available to high achieving, low-income students, which sources do they choose to access and activate?—I turned to the College-Going Resources Trajectory Forms again as well as developed Data Display #7: examples of college-going capital accessed by students outside of school. These forms of capital ranged from moral (Cooper, 1994), aspirational, linguistic, navigational, communal, and familial capital (Yosso, 2005) Versions of Data Display #7 can be found throughout Chapter 6.

AERA Standards
As I conducted the analysis and wrote my dissertation, I wanted to make sure that I conducted rigorous work that was of high quality. I ensured the rigor of my work in part by following the published American Educational Research Association guidelines for reporting social science research (2006). In particular, AERA suggests that all research be transparent and warranted. The first three chapters of my dissertation – the introduction, the literature review and conceptual framework, and methodology – provide a transparent report on the research problem, how other researchers have investigated similar topics, and how this dissertation will add something new to the literature. In composing these chapters, I attempted to make explicit the “logic of inquiry” and how I went about the research process (AERA, 2006, p. 33). My detailed discussions of the conceptual framework and methodology that I used in my dissertation demonstrate the methods I undertook to investigate the implications of federal and state college readiness policies on low-resource high schools and their high achieving, low-income students. The methods chapter clearly lays out my research agenda, how the data were collected and how I organized and analyzed the data such that I am able to provide adequate evidence to justify my results and conclusions in the following chapters.

In addition to adhering to these Standards for Reporting on Empirical Social Science Research in AERA Publications (2006), I have worked to ensure that my work is valid and reliable. First, I attempted to make sure that others could look at the data and come to similar conclusions by coding my data in a systematic way, writing analytic memos for each student, and creating various data displays. The words of the students, parents, and school staff support each of the findings in the later chapters of this dissertation. Second, I participated in a dissertation-writing group over the course of the past year. Many of the graduate students who worked as research assistants on Dr. Eisenhart’s study in the past were also part of this writing
group. I was able to share my findings and emerging themes with peers (and Dr. Eisenhart) who knew the students and who interviewed them and their parents, and received feedback to make sure that what I was interpreting was similar to what they heard when they talked with the students. Third, I looked for disconfirming evidence following Maxwell’s (2012) standard for validity—to answer the question, how could I be wrong? Specifically, he suggests that validity involves

Identifying the plausible alternatives to the proposed explanation, interpretation, or conclusion, deciding what data exist or could be obtained that would count as evidence for or against this conclusion or the plausible alternatives, and then collecting or examining these data to determine the plausibility of these possible conclusions (p. 131).

Although the data was collected several years ago, as I went about coding and analyzing my data, I continuously thought about plausible alternatives to my conclusions and reviewed the interview transcripts and school documents for data to determine the plausibility of my conclusions. Because I worked in an iterative process (in which I coded some interviews, created college-going resources trajectory forms, built up data displays, wrote memos with initial findings), I was able to go back to these various sources to cross-check my arguments and start again if I found too many ideas of “how could I be wrong.” This process helped me to make sure my results were valid.

I also hope that the results in my dissertation can be generalized to other low-resource school settings. I believe this is possible because, as Eisenhart (2009) asserts, while there are several forms of generalization upon which qualitative research can capitalize, “the most important means, theoretical generalization, is of far greater importance to education research and practice than many educational researchers realize” (Eisenhart, 2009, p. 51). Theoretical generalization occurs when the conclusions from a study are generalized to a theoretical debate rather than simply applied to another school or context. My work accomplishes the aims of
theoretical generalization in three ways. First, while pressure is being exerted to improve “college readiness” across the US, there are currently few federal and state guidelines for implementation and very little empirical research to demonstrate how college readiness is being actualized for high achieving, low-income students (Militello et al., 2011). By investigating the cases of Chavez (Chapter 4) and Southside (Chapter 5), I have begun to illustrate the impact of school-wide college readiness policies on students’ college-going trajectories. Second, few researchers have looked at the ways in which high schools might simultaneously take up theories of community cultural wealth and dominant forms of social and cultural capital to support college readiness endeavors for high achieving low-income students. By combining aspects of these theories into a new construct, college-going capital, my analyses provided a fuller picture when looking at the college-going process for these students. Third, I did not just look at the resources that high achieving, low-income students access in the college process, but rather, in Chapter 6, I paid specific attention to how and why students activated some but not other resources in this process. Therefore, my study lends itself well to theoretical generalization, as I chose to investigate an aspect of college readiness research that was under-theorized, despite the mounting pressure to implement such policies in low-resource high schools.
CHAPTER 4

THE CASE OF CHAVEZ HIGH SCHOOL:
CAREER READINESS IN 9TH-10TH GRADE AND COLLEGE READINESS IN 11TH-12TH GRADE

In the following three chapters, I investigate the cases of Chavez and Southside High Schools in order to better understand the ways in which low-resource urban high schools, in the context of preparing all students to be “college-ready,” negotiate the relationships and tensions between the social capital historically considered necessary for success in accessing college (Bourdieu, 1986) and the capital developed and used by underrepresented students and their communities (Yosso, 2005). In Chapter 4, I present the case of Chavez, a high school that focuses its postsecondary readiness policies on first preparing students for careers in 9th and 10th grade and then shifts to address college preparation in 11th and 12th grade. In Chapter 5, I investigate the case of Southside High School, a high school that focuses its postsecondary readiness policies on college preparation for all students from 9th to 12th grade. I answer the following research questions in these two chapters: (1) what forms of college-going capital do low-resource high schools make available through their college readiness initiatives for their high achieving, low-income students? and (2) which of these resources do high achieving, low-income students actually access? In looking at the case of Chavez, I found that while the school
made available some college-going capital to all students via school-wide initiatives, if the focal students did not take initiative, they had a hard time accessing that capital. I explore the concepts of “agency” and “initiative” as they relate to college-going capital in Chapter 4. In looking at the case of Southside, I found that the focal students were able to access college-going capital made available by the school even without the “agency” and “initiative” required of their peers at Chavez. While Southside made an effort to create a school-wide college going culture that fostered social network ties between students and institutional agents, facilitating access to college-going capital, these network ties were often tenuous and easily breakable. So, I explore characteristics of social network ties as they relate to college-going capital in Chapter 5.

While these two chapters help us better understand the ways in which schools implement college readiness initiatives and their impact on high achieving, low-income students, they do not address two important issues. First, I believe that in addition to accessing college-going capital through their schools, low-income, high achieving students also access some forms of capital from their homes and their communities that they can use in navigating the college process. Second, the value inherent in both dominant and non-dominant forms of college-going capital lies not just in access to resources but also in the activation of these resources (Lareau, 2000). If resources aren’t activated once a student has accessed them, then the student cannot benefit from these resources (Lareau, 2000; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Monkman, Ronald, & Theraene, 2005; Simon 2007). So, in Chapter 6, I explore the cases of several focal students in order to answer the following research question: in what ways did the high achieving, low-income focal students access and activate college-going capital available to them both in and outside of school?
Chavez and Southside took very different institutional approaches to college counseling, which influenced the development (or not) of social capital among their students. For example, Chavez implemented initiatives that allowed counselors to give information to large groups of students at the same time while Southside implemented initiatives that connected the focal students to institutional agents in the high school and on college campuses. Against the backdrop of these institutional college and career readiness initiatives, each focal student at Chavez and Southside was uniquely positioned in a social network comprised of various individual connections. For example, at Chavez, Alice had college-related connections with her mother, grandfather, friends, AVID teacher, college professors, and counselor while Elena only had connections with her mother and a teacher her junior year. Some social networks afforded some students access to college-going capital more than others, which in turn, impacted—in part—their college going trajectories.

**Offering College-Going Capital in Times of Reduced Funding and Increased Pressures**

In times of reduced funding and increased pressures to get students to graduate, high schools often have few resources to spend on college and career counseling. It’s not surprising, then, that many schools turn to ‘mass’ rather than individualized counseling strategies. However, a number of researchers argue that disseminating information about college and careers without personalizing the information to individual students is not an effective way of providing college counseling (Hill, 2008; Tierney & Auerbach, 2004;). Researchers suggest that counselors might personalize the college-going process for students and their families by helping students investigate colleges, complete applications, and write college essays; in doing so, students’ chances of enrolling in four-year colleges and universities often increase (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Horn, 1997; McDonough, 2005). The case of Chavez offers additional complexities to
these perspectives: it demonstrates the ways in which disseminating information about college and careers in large-group and impersonal settings was actually quite useful for some high achieving, low-income focal students as long as the students also had access to individual connections that helped them navigate the college-going process. Importantly, these individual connections at Chavez consisted not only of school staff such as the high school counselor, but also program staff including staff at local colleges and universities and non-profit organizations. In other words, the counselors were not burdened as the sole sources of college-going capital for some students—the resources came from multiple directions.

In this chapter, I demonstrate the ways in which one group of focal students appeared to benefit from school-wide, large-group college counseling policies (i.e. visiting with colleges during college fairs, getting pamphlets from counselors, teachers, and mailings, etc.). My analysis of student interviews showed that perhaps it was because these students also had multiple connections with other individuals that they were able to make meaning of the information they received in large-group settings. Recognizing that not all focal students had the same experience, I then turn my investigation to a group of focal students who appeared to receive little or no benefit from the school-wide policies and initiatives. These students believed that the school did not help them learn about nor access college. Unlike the first group of focal students, these students did not participate in specific programs, which resulted in fewer, if any, personal connections to school staff. The comparison between these two groups leads me to ultimately argue that the biggest difference between these groups of students was that one group had a sense of agency while the other group waited for advice from their school. Without the sense of agency and the support of their school, the second group of students had a hard time navigating the college-going process.
I expand on this argument and provide evidence for my analysis in the following sections. I begin by describing the high school and the two groups of focal students at Chavez. Then I describe the impersonal, school-wide college readiness policies and initiatives and demonstrate how they impacted the high achieving low-income focal students. I then illustrate the specific programs that provided “individualized support” and explore how the two groups of focal students participated in these programs at different intensities. I then suggest a reason for why things worked the way they did at Chavez: because Chavez staff took the perspective that students ought to seek out help on their own, some focal students, even though they were high achieving, motivated, and wanted to go to college, had a hard time navigating the college readiness policies at Chavez and achieving their college goals. Finally, I explain why supplementing large group college readiness policies and initiatives with individual connections matters and provide some examples of how Chavez could have easily provided more individualized connections within their school-wide policies and initiatives.

The Chavez School Context

Chavez High School serves a majority minority population and has been under pressure to improve academic achievement and graduation rates for the past several years. In 2009, more than 70% of students at Chavez were eligible for free and reduced lunch and over 80% of the students identified as Latino. Less than 10% of the 9th grade students in 2010 scored proficient or advanced on the math state standardized test (CSAP) and less than 35% scored proficient or advanced on the reading CSAP. In 2011, the high school juniors at Chavez took the ACT and scored, on average, 15 out of a possible 36. Roughly two thirds of the students graduated high school in 2013. Chavez has remained under the State’s watchful eye for the past several years due to little change in these accountability measures. When the focal students attended Chavez,
from 2009 to 2013, Chavez was listed as a “Priority Improvement” school under Colorado’s school performance framework. In other words, Chavez was operating under improvement plans that, if certain accountability measures were not met, would result in “turnaround” status – i.e., more drastic change including leadership turnover, school structure changes, or the possibility of being shutdown. Because the school was under extreme pressure to meet accountability measures such as high school graduation rates and standardized test scores, high school counselors – each with case loads greater than 400 students—spent most of their time on class scheduling (for 9th-11th graders) and monitoring student progress toward high school graduation (for 12th graders) and little time on college counseling.

Perhaps because the counseling program focused on meeting accountability measures, staff at Chavez implemented a college readiness strategy that focused on preparing students for careers in ninth and tenth grade and for college in eleventh and twelfth grade. For Chavez staff, promoting both career and college readiness fell under the umbrella of workforce readiness: “The ultimate goal [of the school] is workforce readiness so that [the students] can choose, do they want to go to the workforce, a two year college, a four year college, where do they want to go and [then we] make sure every student has the education to be able to go and do whatever it is they choose (principal year two).” Although the principal alluded to the future plans of his students of attending college, the fact that the “ultimate goal” was “workforce readiness” suggests that Chavez staff believed that going to college was secondary to going into the workforce.

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4 It is also possible that Chavez developed and implemented a college readiness agenda that focused first on career readiness and on college readiness second because of the student composition of the school and the fact that very few students graduated and went on to college. It could be that the staff took a deficit perspective and just assumed that students wouldn’t go to college because of previous college-going rates (I address this in Chapter 6). It would clearly be helpful to know more about Chavez staff thinking on setting up their college readiness agenda in this way, but because I discovered this pattern after the interviews were complete, there was not an opportunity to specifically ask the high school staff *why* their college readiness agenda focused on career readiness first and college second.
The Chavez Focal Student Context: the Lone Rangers vs. the Connected Ones

Although the focal students at Chavez were all selected from the top quintile of their 9th grade class, as early as 9th grade, the focal students fell into two categories: those who were considered high achievers and those who were considered the highest achievers of all. The high achieving focal students –whom I will refer to as “The Lone Rangers” –consisted of Diego, Elena, Nancy, and Nicole. The highest achievers of all focal students –whom I will refer to as “The Connected Ones” –consisted of Alma, Alice, Cathy, Eduardo, Nora, and Quinn. Table 7 highlights the differences in academic achievement and college enrollment patterns among the Lone Rangers and the Connected Ones.

Table 7: Academic Performances of Chavez Focal Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CSAP Math 9th</th>
<th>CSAP Reading 9th</th>
<th>9th grade GPA</th>
<th>ACT 11th grade</th>
<th>12th grade GPA</th>
<th>CCHE Index with high</th>
<th>12th grade percentile</th>
<th>12th grade</th>
<th>Intended Enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Lone Rangers</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole</td>
<td>PP</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2.769</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy</td>
<td>PP</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.796</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>Metro State</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diego</td>
<td>PP</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>Front Range CC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elena</td>
<td>PP</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2.429</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>Front Range CC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ave:</td>
<td>PP</td>
<td>PP</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Connected Ones</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>Metro State</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>CSU</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quinn</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>CSU</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nora</td>
<td>PP</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>UC Denver</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eduardo</td>
<td>PP</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>Front Range CC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cathy</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>Pueblo CC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ave:</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Green cells indicate highest GPA and test scores while red cells indicate lowest GPA and test scores among the focal students.

\(^5\) GPA= unweighted; CCHE Index was determined by 11th grade ACT composite score and 12th grade unweighted GPA; 12 grade percentile was calculated from 12 grade class rank; 12th grade intended major and intended enrollment information was provided by focal students during senior spring interview; Barron’s ranking was determined by 2013 Barron’s Profile of America’s Best Colleges.
As this table shows, there was quite a significant difference between the Lone Rangers and the Connected Ones—all were chosen for the study because they were considered high achievers, yet the Lone Rangers clearly had lower test scores and GPAs than the Connected Ones even back in 9th grade. The Lone Rangers averaged “partially proficient” on their 9th grade math and reading CSAP scores and had a much lower average 9th grade cumulative GPA of 3.14. By 12th grade, the Lone Rangers averaged a 92 on the CCHE Index score (above the required 76 to get into Metro State, close to the required 93 to get into CU Denver, but well below the required score to get into CSU (101) or CU Boulder (103). In contrast, the Connected Ones averaged “proficient” on their 9th grade math and reading CSAP scores and had an average 9th grade cumulative GPA of 3.74. By 12th grade, the Connected Ones averaged a 106 on the CCHE Index score, above the required score to get into CSU (101) and CU Boulder (103). On average, the Connected Ones graduated in the top 10 percent of their class. It is important to note these differences in academic performance between these two groups because academic achievement possibly impacted the network ties and resources that students had access to (i.e. Metro Excel supported students with a GPA of 2.5 or above; students needed to pass the ACCUPLACER placement exam to participate in concurrent enrollment).

The results that follow are especially interesting because the experiences of these two groups of students in navigating the college application process differed so drastically and seem to correlate with students’ access to key relationships to institutional agents and subsequent activation of resources available through these relationships. I suggest the Lone Rangers, who were situated within small and homogeneous social networks, felt ignored by Chavez staff and believed they had to navigate the college application process alone. In contrast, I show that the Connected Ones, who were situated in larger and more varied social networks than their peers,
encountered few problems as they navigated the college application process. Moreover, one of the biggest differences between the Lone Rangers and the Connected Ones was the sense of college-going agency held by the Connected Ones.

**School-Wide College Readiness Initiatives**

By focusing on career readiness early and college readiness later, the high school staff at Chavez appeared to implement Hill’s (2008) “traditional” college counseling strategy in which schools, through grade-level and school-wide presentations, offer some information to students considering career options post high school and some information to students considering college. Indeed, at Chavez, college-related information was distributed to students most often through grade-level presentations and school-wide initiatives. Chavez implemented eight school-wide college counseling initiatives during the course of the focal students’ high school careers. Besides the Adopt-A-Senior program and ACCESS study hall, the responsibilities of coordinating the college-readiness initiatives at Chavez fell on the shoulders of the already overburdened high school counselors. Table 8 highlights these policies and which students they targeted and what opportunities they offered. I describe the college-going capital available in each policy in the following sections as I investigate the forms of capital that the focal students accessed as they navigated the college going process.
Table 8: School-Wide College Readiness Initiatives at Chavez

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Targeted grades</th>
<th>Coordinated by whom:</th>
<th>Selection process</th>
<th>Description of program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alliance; Colorado State University</td>
<td>all</td>
<td>high school counselors and program staff</td>
<td>voluntary</td>
<td>college visits, workshops at high school, scholarships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Fair</td>
<td>all</td>
<td>school staff; counseling center voluntary</td>
<td></td>
<td>local colleges and companies come to Chavez for a day-long college fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT prep</td>
<td>juniors</td>
<td>school staff; counseling center voluntary</td>
<td></td>
<td>1-2 day ACT prep course; occurred during TCAP testing week when juniors didn't have to be at school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College visits</td>
<td>juniors</td>
<td>school staff; counseling center voluntary</td>
<td></td>
<td>college visit to CSU; occurred during TCAP testing week when juniors did not have to be at school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom presentations</td>
<td>juniors and seniors</td>
<td>school staff; counseling center mandatory</td>
<td></td>
<td>classroom presentations related to graduation and college admission requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College application requirement</td>
<td>seniors</td>
<td>school staff; principal's initiative mandatory</td>
<td></td>
<td>all seniors were required to apply to three community colleges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACCESS study hall</td>
<td>seniors</td>
<td>school staff; counseling center mandatory</td>
<td></td>
<td>study hall with a focus on college readiness activities; ACT prep, college apps, financial aid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopt a Senior</td>
<td>seniors</td>
<td>school staff; counseling center voluntary</td>
<td></td>
<td>student had an opportunity to work with institutional agent; grades; graduation requirements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While all eight of these school-wide initiatives were available to all students in particular grades, only two initiatives gave freshmen and sophomores an opportunity to learn about college: the Alliance with Colorado State University (the University set up a dorm room in a classroom for incoming freshmen to see during their high school orientation) and the school-wide college fair (local colleges and universities came for an afternoon and all students had the opportunity to visit). Three of these school-wide initiatives were available to high school juniors: during the week when other grades were taking state-standardized tests, juniors were given the opportunity to take a two-day course at Chavez to prepare for the ACT and to visit Colorado State University. During the school year, juniors were also likely to attend classroom presentations by high school counselors. Four of these school-wide initiatives were available to high school seniors: in

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addition to more classroom presentations by high school counselors, seniors had the opportunity to participate in the Adopt-A-Senior program (school staff would pledge to help individual seniors graduate by “checking in” with them in the hallways), and ACCESS (a college-focused “study hall”), and were required to apply to three community colleges. Thus, college programming at Chavez came late in the students’ high school careers, especially considering the student population whose parents were unlikely to have much college-going capital.

It is important to note that only three of these school-wide initiatives were mandatory (ACCESS, classroom presentations, and the requirement to apply to three community college). In other words, although the five other policies were intended to be available to all students, in reality, some rather than all of the focal students appeared to have accessed them. Indeed, the focal students mentioned participating in these various initiatives at different intensities: the Connected Ones mentioned participating in more school-wide college readiness initiatives than the Lone Rangers (see Table 9).

**Table 9: Chavez Focal Student Participation in School-Wide College Readiness Initiatives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Alliance CSU</th>
<th>College Fair</th>
<th>ACT prep</th>
<th>College visits</th>
<th>Presentations</th>
<th>Application req.</th>
<th>ACCESS study hall</th>
<th>Adopt a Senior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connected Ones</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cathy</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eduardo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nora</td>
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<td>Quinn</td>
<td>✔</td>
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<td><strong>Lone Rangers</strong></td>
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<td>Diego</td>
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<td>Elena</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nancy</td>
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<td>Nicole</td>
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Despite the fact that these school-wide initiatives often took place in large group settings and involved the dissemination of information via checklists and school information pamphlets,
several of the Connected Ones reported the benefit of receiving college-going information in this format. For example, the counselors at Chavez gave classroom presentations to all students in which they handed out a checklist for students to make sure they were gathering all the information needed to fill out the FAFSA from their parents. Cathy and Alma used this worksheet; according to Alma, “my counselors gave me a form to fill out just to make sure that I know what all to do” and did not find filling out the FAFSA “difficult.” The Connected Ones also benefited from the school-wide college fair open to all sophomores: when Alice and Quinn attended the fair, they “collected” college “pamphlets.” Although Quinn put the pamphlets in a drawer at home, she “just pulled them out” and “read” the pamphlets when she began to more seriously consider colleges in the spring of Junior year. These students leveraged the resources available in the school-wide college counseling strategies to study for the ACT, to fill out the FAFSA, to visualize a roadmap of what they needed to do senior year, and to learn about colleges through “pamphlets” received at a college fair.

The Connected Ones talked too about the benefits of these school-wide college readiness initiatives. In particular, they believed these initiatives helped them connect with other individuals who could help them navigate the college-going process. For example, Alma mentioned talking with people who visited her high school campus: “I really liked it when the college fair came, I think it was just like, you just talk to the people that come there and they'll just tell you most of the things that you need to know.” Quinn also reported hearing a former Chavez basketball teammate speak when she went to look at CSU with her high school: “whenever we went to CSU, she was part of the like, she was one of the tutors and she told us her experience.” Through individual connections they had with institutional agents, the Connected Ones developed networks that were large and often interwoven—networks which
offered access to multiple, various forms of college-going capital such as completing concrete
tasks, learning about different types of colleges, and experiencing college life by interacting with
current college students and staff.

Like the Connected Ones, the Lone Rangers acknowledged participating in several of
these initiatives: for example, Diego mentioned the ACT prep course, listening to presentations
by his counselor, and the college application requirement. Nicole mentioned those same
initiatives as well as the Alliance Chavez had with CSU, the college fair, and visiting colleges
with her high school. Elena and Nancy mentioned participating in two other school-wide
initiatives: the ACCESS study hall and adopt-a-senior program.

However, unlike the Connected Ones, the Lone Rangers were not satisfied with the level
of counseling they received and generally felt that the school did not help them complete the
logistical aspects of applying to college and for financial aid. For example, Diego said he studied
for the ACT by himself because “the school didn’t do nothing” to prepare him— he said that the
school held just a “half day” workshop a month before the test. Nicole tried to ask the teacher of
her ACCESS study hall class for advice regarding particular majors offered at CU Boulder, but
she reported that he did not “help with nothing.” Even though Elena had connections to a high
school dean through the Adopt-A-Senior initiative, she never applied for financial aid or to four-
year colleges “because no one showed” her how.

Perhaps the differences between these two groups of focal students may be best
summarized by their reactions to the new principal senior year and his policy requiring all
seniors to apply to three community colleges. This principal wanted to create a college-going
culture that would affect the entire school beginning in ninth grade; rather than focusing on
career readiness, he was determined to “have college readiness as the cornerstone of how you get
out of school, we want every kid to be able to go to college as far as going to a four-year school, or a two-year school, or going to a certificate program.” So, to achieve this mission, he created a policy requiring every senior to apply to three community colleges. The school implemented this policy by bringing seniors down to the library with their English class, giving them a presentation on different types of colleges, and helping them complete applications to community colleges during that period. According to the counselor, implementing the policy fell “on the counseling department for sure, you know it’s…I mean obviously the students are the ones who have to do it but we are the ones that are really having to push them [to fill out the applications].”

On one hand, the Lone Rangers appeared to especially appreciate this new principal and his expectation that “everyone is getting to college.” According to the Lone Rangers, unlike their former principals, this principal “spent time in the halls” and “didn’t hide in his office.” Perhaps even more importantly, this was the first time in four years that these focal students felt like an adult at their school “cared about” them. Not only did the Lone Rangers comment that the principal made his expectation “that everyone is getting to college” known to all students, but his policy that seniors apply to three community colleges seemed to have had a profound affect on the Lone Rangers; three of the four focal students intended to enroll in one of the three schools they applied to as part of this policy.

On the other hand, perhaps because the Connected Ones had connections with multiple institutional agents through various other initiatives and programs, they did not appreciate the principal’s policy in the same way as the Lone Rangers. In fact, the Connected Ones were skeptical of this policy because they believed the school implemented it as an attempt to improve the school’s accountability measures (i.e. increasing the percent of students accepted at some
college) rather than supporting students’ individual needs. As Cathy commented, “Yesterday and today, they made us fill out community college applications… it was mandatory for every senior. I agree, but then I disagree. All of the people that want to go to a four-year university, they’re not helping us, they’re helping the people to raise the school’s numbers.” There is a key difference here between the two groups of students: while the Lone Rangers appreciated this policy because they felt like finally someone at their school cared about them, the Connected Ones felt like this policy was not addressing their needs. Fortunately, the Connected Ones had access to other institutional agents at school who helped them make sense of the school-wide college readiness initiatives and navigate around ‘one size fits all’ policies such as the “three school rule” that potentially distracted from their individual needs.

**Individual Connections and Specific College-Linking Programs**

Outside of the eight school-wide college readiness initiatives coordinated by the school, Chavez made college-going capital available to *some* students via access to college linking programs that provided students with individualized connections to college-going resources. These opportunities ranged from taking a class during the school day with AVID, a privately funded nonprofit, to participating in one of many high school-college partnership programs. The following table briefly describes each program, who coordinated the program (high school or program staff), the targeted students, how students were selected to participate, and a brief description of each program.
Table 10: College-Linking Programs at Chavez

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Targeted grades</th>
<th>Coordinated by whom:</th>
<th>Targeted students</th>
<th>Selection process</th>
<th>Description of program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AVID</td>
<td>all</td>
<td>high school counselors and teachers</td>
<td>first generation, B average students</td>
<td>application process</td>
<td>&quot;cohorts&quot; of students researched colleges, worked on study skills and completed application components</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Precollegiate; University of Colorado Denver</td>
<td>all</td>
<td>high school counselors and college program staff</td>
<td>first generation, minimum GPA 2.5, oldest child or child in one parent family</td>
<td>application process</td>
<td>concurrent enrollment courses on college campus, 2 or 5 week summer sessions, Saturday academies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talent Search; Colorado State University</td>
<td>all</td>
<td>college program staff</td>
<td>first generation, low-income</td>
<td>application process</td>
<td>Federally funded TRIO program; counseling regarding colleges and financial aid and campus tours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upward Bound; Colorado State University</td>
<td>all</td>
<td>college program staff</td>
<td>first generation, low-income</td>
<td>application process</td>
<td>Federally funded TRIO program; tutoring, study skills training, opportunities to visit colleges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REESE STEM Research Project, University of Colorado</td>
<td>sophomores, juniors, seniors</td>
<td>high school counselors and college program staff</td>
<td>underrepresented, top quintile of 9th grade class</td>
<td>application process</td>
<td>Research project investigates STEM and college pathways; individual interviews a couple times a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community College of Aurora</td>
<td>juniors and seniors</td>
<td>high school counselors and college program staff</td>
<td>all, minimum GPA and Accuplacer score</td>
<td>passed ACCUPLACER exam</td>
<td>Community College of Aurora; concurrent enrollment courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denver Scholars; University of Colorado Denver</td>
<td>seniors</td>
<td>high school counselors and college program staff</td>
<td>first generation, minimum GPA 3.0, completed algebra and english courses</td>
<td>application process</td>
<td>college classes on college campus, Saturday Academies (about financial aid, college applications, careers, majors)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro Excell; Metropolitan State University</td>
<td>seniors</td>
<td>high school counselors and college program staff</td>
<td>minimum GPA 3.5</td>
<td>3.5 GPA</td>
<td>College and scholarship application support; drop-in mentoring, former high school students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“College classes” helped students understand what college coursework might be like, what type of work they would be expected to do, and how college students act. Programs like AVID helped students write and rewrite college essays, look at more than just three colleges, and figure out financial aid forms in classroom settings where students and teachers worked together year after year. Southside also offered college classes and AVID but some college-linking programs
were unique to Chavez. For example, Metro State staff assisted students in completing college applications and financial aid forms through one-on-one drop-in counseling sessions. Because these staff were former Chavez students, they also helped students “feel more comfortable” about going to college. Similarly, fieldtrips to CSU allowed students to envision living in a dorm and imagine their potential experiences on campus (especially when meeting other former Chavez, now current CSU, students).

Importantly, these college linking programs were only available to select groups of students and often required students to apply and be admitted. Interviews revealed different barriers to participation including knowledge of programs, teacher and counselor support, and size of programs. In other words, if students did not apply to—or even know about—these programs, they were not likely to have access to the college-going capital available through these programs. Furthermore, gaining admission to the TRIO programs (Upward Bound and Talent Search) was based on recommendations: according to the counselor, “it's usually teacher recommendations and our recommendations on who joins the program.” If students weren’t on the radar of school staff, they might not have the opportunity to access these programs or even hear about them. Some programs were very small, for example in Precollegiate, the staff director only accepted “Three kids from each [grade] so a total of twelve students” each year. Although nine of the ten focal students at Chavez mentioned participating in at least one of these personalized college-counseling programs, the Connected Ones participated in many more of these programs than the Lone Rangers (see Table 11).
Table 11: Chavez Focal Student Participation in College Linking Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>College prep class (AVID)</th>
<th>Concurrent Enrollment (CCA)</th>
<th>Application support (MSU)</th>
<th>Research Project (UCB)</th>
<th>College classes and workshops (UCD)</th>
<th>TRIO programs (CSU)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connected Ones</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Alice</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alma</td>
<td></td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cathy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eduardo</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nora</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quinn</td>
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<td><strong>Lone Rangers</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Diego</td>
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<td>Elena</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nancy</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nicole</td>
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</table>

The Connected Ones each reported having connections to at least two specific programs that helped them access college-going capital. In these programs, students learned about college “experiences” and were “guided” through the application process. For example, Alma took a couple of college classes in high school through the partnership with Community College of Aurora and reported that this experience made her feel comfortable in attending Metro State. She also had access to capital through Metro Excel that helped her complete the FAFSA: “it was easy, we just like, from the Metro people, we just went and they guided us.” Similarly, Quinn participated in several college linking programs throughout high school that gave her personalized attention. Throughout high school, she participated in AVID. Further, in her Junior Spring, Quinn went to CSU with a group of other seniors from Chavez during TCAP testing and was really impressed with a current CSU student who sat on a student panel and “talked about her experiences as a college student;” this CSU student had gone to Chavez and played basketball with Quinn. Then, with Talent Search, she went to CSU again and met someone there.
who told her a lot about athletic training. She turned to the teacher of her Goodwill Industries class in the fall of senior year to learn more about the differences between majors and careers in athletic training or sports medicine. As Quinn learned more about which careers she might like to pursue, she began looking for colleges that offered these different programs. Senior Fall, she applied to Metro because they had a program in athletic training and because “they c[a]me every week to help fill out the applications.”

Not only did the Connected Ones participate in multiple specific programs, the program staff connected these students to other programs. For example, at the end of her Junior year, Nora described how her counselor came to talk to her AVID class and how her AVID class went to visit the school-wide college fair together. These multiple points of contact helped the other Connected Ones more easily navigate the college application process.

In contrast, the Lone Rangers participated in very few of these college linking programs such as AVID, Pre-Collegiate, IB, or Concurrent Enrollment, which in turn meant that they had few—if any—connections to individual institutional agents at the high school who could help them access college-going capital. For example, three of the Lone Rangers reported participating in just one high school-college partnership that gave them an opportunity to spend time on college campuses: Nicole took a class taught at the community college while Elena reported that her graduate student interviewer “always took us everywhere, to every college, made sure we went.” Other Lone Rangers worked with an individual to learn about and complete some aspects of their college applications: Nancy worked with a representative from Metro Excel to complete her applications and reported, “they helped me a lot.”

Diego and Elena participated in a class sponsored by Goodwill Industries their senior year where they had the chance to “hear about” college-related issues such as the FAFSA and
college essays. However, they reported that they were not shown “how” to complete these items in this class. Their experiences in the Goodwill Industries class seem at odds with the experience of Quinn, a Connected One, as we saw above. But perhaps Quinn was able to access the college-going capital inherent in that class because she took the initiative—as I mentioned, she “asked” her teacher for advice on college majors where as Diego and Elena seemed to “hear” and to listen. These examples illustrate then, that when, if at all, the Lone Rangers participated in a college linking program, it was often the case that the student participated in just one program for only a short time and did not gain much access to college-going resources through this or that program.

The Difference between Waiting and Taking Action at Chavez Impacted Student Outcomes

In the previous two sections, I described two ways in which the focal students could access college-going capital through their school: via impersonal school-wide policies and initiatives and via specific individualized programs. The Lone Rangers had access to impersonal school-wide policies and initiatives but very little access (if at all) to individual programs; as a result, these students felt that the school didn’t support them in navigating the college process.

In contrast, the Connected Ones accessed college-going capital through multiple avenues: all of these focal students commented on several school-wide initiatives, their relationships with institutional agents, and their experiences in more than one specific program. These students felt the school did a decent job in helping them access college. If all of the focal students were chosen for this study because they were in the top quintile of their freshman class, had standardized test scores above average for their school, and all wanted to pursue college, the question becomes: why did the Connected Ones have more opportunities to access college-going capital and thus have an easier time in navigating the college process than the Lone Rangers?
In this section, I argue that one possible reason for this discrepancy between the Lone Rangers and the Connected Ones was the school’s perspective that students needed to take the initiative if they wanted information about college. For example, a counselor said that if a student came in to talk about the foreign language requirement, “we do talk to them about if you want to go to college, you are going to need to take a foreign language, so in terms of how it relates to their classes and what they are taking, but not a whole lot of [them do that], they haven't gotten information [like:] ‘This is what you need on the ACT.’” This quote suggests that the counselors talked with students about postsecondary plans if and when students visited their office and asked for specific kinds of information. Another time, the counselor referred to students seeking out advice as “motivated”: “I do have freshmen and sophomores that are in here saying I want to apply for scholarships…So there are the motivated ones.” When asked specifically about the focal students and the likelihood of them attending and succeeding in college, the counselor suggested that some of the students came in and asked when they had questions. For example, she said, “[Nancy is good] about coming in and advocating and that kind of thing which I think is a good indication of how they are going to do in college….Nancy I don't know super well but like I said, she has always been good about if she needs something and making sure she is on track and really owning her own education.” Comments such as these seem to suggest that the counselors thought the students should take the initiative. Perhaps though, the students did not know they needed to see out the counselors in order to access this information. This is a particularly troubling thought because if students did not take the initiative, they were often left waiting for the school to provide information—which sometimes they did and other times did not.
Waiting: The Case of Elena

The Lone Rangers were not satisfied with the level of counseling they received; in fact they believed the school didn’t do anything specifically to help them. For example, Nancy reported that by the end of junior year, she still hadn’t received help from the school to learn about colleges: “Um, for the seniors there's like a college application and like talking about college and stuff but for me, not yet, not really.” Comments like, “but for me, not yet, not really” seem to suggest that the Lone Rangers knew the school offered some college-going resources but did not feel as though they could or should go to their teachers and counselors and ask questions or request access to resources such as test prep. Rather, they felt like they had to or should wait for the school staff to give them that information or attempt to access it on their own.

Elena, one of the Lone Rangers, illustrated this sense of “waiting” throughout her time in high school as she tried to navigate the college-going process on her own. Without the support of high school staff, and by just “waiting” for their advice, Elena seemed to always have a fuzzy sense of what her postsecondary options were. Even though Elena had spent time on two different college campuses (she toured CU Denver with her high school sophomore year and visited CU Boulder with the NSF research project before junior year), by the end of junior year she felt she still "need[ed] a couple of months" to better understand the higher education landscape. Going into senior year, she still did not “really know the names” of the colleges that she was interested in possibly attending. The fact that Elena did not “really know the names” of possible colleges is striking in comparison to any of the other focal students at Chavez and at Southside, who for the most part, could point to a specific college or two that they were interested in attending as early as sophomore year. By senior year, Elena reported learning the
most about colleges because she "kinda just surfed the net" and from what she had heard from her teachers: “They told me [Front Range Community College] was cheaper."

Throughout high school, not only did Elena rely on her school to show her different postsecondary options and how to apply to college and financial aid, but she “waited” for them to do so. This sense of “waiting” was exemplified in almost all of her interviews throughout high school. For example, when the interviewer asked Elena during her junior year, “As far as like people at school, you don't have anybody that you can talk to as far as like, ‘Oh, what do I need to do next?’ or you know…” Elena responded, “No, cuz I didn't even know we had counselors.” And although she was concerned about paying for college, she had “not talked to anyone” about financial aid options by the end of junior year. Going into senior year, Elena never knew what she had scored on the ACT because she could not access her score online due to some “glitch” that had occurred at the school when she was taking the exam. She was “not sure who to ask” about her score, so she never found out. When it came time to apply to colleges, Elena again waited for her school to take the lead. For example, she waited to apply to CU Boulder because “right now [in December of senior year], the school only gave us the list of two year schools. I am waiting for more.” She only applied to community college when “they made me fill out papers.” At the end of senior year, she had applied to and been accepted at Front Range Community College. Again, she waited: "[FRCC] is supposed to call me" about when she should to come in for orientation. Rather than seeking out a resource to help her access her ACT score or a resource to help her apply to four-year colleges, actions that many of the other focal students across Chavez and Southside would have taken, Elena waited.

And so, Elena felt she had to attack the college application process alone. When asked who helped her complete the college and financial aid applications, Elena responded, “[No one],
it was always just my dream to go to college.” Yet, on her own, Elena had a hard time in accessing college. For example, Elena had been interested in CU Boulder ever since she visited the campus through this research project, yet she never applied to CU Boulder because she “didn’t [have a chance] to talk to the researcher” about how to apply. Similarly, she had indicated an interest in CU Denver after visiting the college campus with her high school and wanted to apply there during her senior year. She waited for the school to give her four-year applications, but they never came, “right now they are just giving me [applications for] two-year [colleges].” Because no one showed Elena how to complete the applications for CU Boulder or CU Denver, she applied to neither. Furthermore, when it came to applying for financial aid, Elena never completed the FAFSA because she “never knew how to do that.” By not applying for federal aid, Elena was kept from receiving financial support that could have helped reduce the cost of college. In fact, one year after high school graduation, the research project followed up with the focal students and learned that Elena never actually enrolled in the community college she applied to because “she didn’t figure out how to get money to pay for it.” Ultimately, “waiting” led to her not applying to the college she wanted to (that would position her better for a desired career in veterinary medicine) or for financial aid (that would allow her to go to college in the first place). Perhaps even more concerning without a larger social network supporting Elena and the other Lone Rangers, it appeared that the school-wide college counseling initiatives implemented by Chavez were not enough to support these relatively high achieving students in navigating the college application process.

Without a sense of agency in accessing resources through high school staff, the other Lone Rangers, like Elena, attempted to navigate the process on their own. For example, Diego completed the FAFSA on his own because no one at school showed him how to do it: “I just read
everything, and just filled in everything. That’s pretty much it.” Junior year, when Nancy took it upon herself to learn about college by Googling schools in Colorado, “it came up with a list of different colleges and I would keep going to different ones” because she felt that the school was not helping her choose among them. These examples all illustrate how—even with access to the resources available in the school-wide college readiness initiatives such as test prep and college searches—the Lone Rangers overwhelmingly felt like there was “no one” at school to help them navigate the college application process. “I just read everything” or “I would keep going” suggest that students took it upon themselves to seek out college-going resources after realizing their school would not be doing more to help them.

While the Lone Rangers navigated the college-application process alone, they realized that not all students had to do the same; in fact, in the eyes of the Lone Rangers, Chavez appeared to help only the “smarter” students get to college. Collectively, the Lone Rangers made many comments about how the school only seemed to help the highest achieving students. For example, by the time she was a senior, Elena had only visited two colleges (CU Boulder with this research project and CU Denver with her high school). In contrast, she knew several students who had visited many more schools because they were in the IB program. Elena reported a teacher telling her and her classmates, “You have to be in the higher classes and everything,” in order to go on more college-oriented fieldtrips. Nancy also knew about some of these college-oriented opportunities and had hoped to participate in a college program junior or senior year to help her learn more about getting into college; specifically, she wanted to “take like any program there is like about college.” Yet, by junior year, the only college event she knew about and had participated in was a college fair and by senior year, the school had not helped her “very much” with college. Rather, Nancy suggested, “The counselor only helps the
really smart kids.” Diego echoed Nancy’s feeling of exclusion, commenting, “The school didn’t help with nothing. They only help those with a GPA of 3.5+, and I have a 2.8.” Comments like these suggest that the Lone Rangers did not believe they were entitled to some of the college-going capital made available by the school. Rather, the Lone Rangers looked to their school for guidance in navigating the college-going process and waited for direction. When that direction never came, rather than seeking out support, the Lone Rangers attempted to navigate the process on their own—to few successes.

**Taking Initiative: The Case of Alice**

Unlike the Lone Rangers who often felt they were at the whim of Chavez to help them navigate the college process and access college-going capital, the Connected Ones felt supported by the school and seemed to have a sense of agency in seeking out help when they needed it. All of the Connected Ones reported having strong connections with their counselors: “My counselor is going to call me down to complete applications,” and “I ask her ‘can you do the fee waiver…how can I do this…what colleges…do I need recommendation letter…do I need an essay?’.” While these comments both indicate a similar sense of connection between the Connected Ones and their counselors, they also reveal different roles. On one hand, “my counselor is going to call me down” suggests that the counselor took the initiative in talking to Alma, while “I ask her” suggests that Cathy took the initiative to seek out advice. In any case, all of the Connected Ones reported connecting with their counselor multiple times throughout high school.

In addition to seeking out advice from their counselors, the Connected Ones connected with teachers and program staff to learn more about college and major options. For example, Quinn spent time on various college campuses and learned about several possible majors through
conversations with campus staff and students. She returned to Chavez and asked a teacher about the differences between majors and careers in athletic training or sports medicine. Ultimately, she applied to Metro because she had learned they have a program in athletic training. Unlike the Lone Rangers who seemed to feel as though they could not ask questions or make requests about help and other resources, these examples demonstrate the ways in which the Connected Ones felt like they could ask questions, request help, and access resources from teachers and program staff.

Characteristic of the other Connected Ones, Alice often sought out her counselor and teachers for college-related advice throughout high school; in doing so, she built strong network ties to multiple sources of college-going capital. For example, the interviewer asked Alice in the fall of her junior year if she was on track to meet college admissions requirements for CSU. According to Alice, “I’ve been talking about it with my counselor…and she says I’m on track.” Also in Junior year, Alice was concerned about taking a foreign language—she had done research on CSU’s website and believed “I don't really think it's a requirement, [but] it would help you out.” But just in case, “I'm going to be talking to my counselor to make sure that that one thing won't keep me away.” And senior year, Alice’s counselor actually made an appointment for Alice to come to her office and complete the CSU application together: “I'm going to apply pretty soon. I'm, my counselors are setting up an application date, to where I could go down there [and apply].” Although Alice missed the appointment because she was home sick, she continued by saying that her counselor would make another appointment for her. Senior year, Alice reported that her teachers had really helped her access college, saying that they had “Really been there for me.” Recalling Elena’s sense of isolation as she attempted to navigate the college-going process alone, Alice’s case study stands in marked contrast: early on
in high school, Alice knew who her counselor was and sought her out multiple times to gather new information and to clarify any questions. Alice also had access to other sources of college-going capital through her participation in multiple specific programs. Lastly, Alice had the support and encouragement of a whole network of institutional agents at her school as she navigated the college-going process.

Not only did the Connected Ones seek out school staff for advice related to future plans, but their sense of agency\(^6\) allowed them to feel comfortable opting in and out of the various specific programs when they were not getting what they needed. Take Alice for example, who felt she could navigate her social network and leverage ties when she felt they were useful and cut them when they were hurting her. What I mean by that is after junior year, Alice decided to quit AVID because, according to her, "the teacher who was supposed to do the senior year thing did my junior year. And she wasn't giving me the good grades I was deserving. She was telling me that I couldn't do the work when my college teachers were giving me A's." Alice was frustrated that she was doing well in her college-level coursework and that same work ethic wasn't being rewarded by her AVID teacher. She felt that she was not getting enough out of AVID compared to the college classes she was taking so she decided to break the tie that connected her to AVID. As another example, Quinn had been in AVID throughout high school but arrived on campus to find she was not initially scheduled for AVID senior year. She felt that AVID was going to help her get to college so she advocated for herself and asked to be put back

\(^6\) In my dissertation, I use the term “agency” to describe a sort of entitlement that some of the focal students felt towards their college-going trajectories. For example, Alice quit AVID because she didn’t like the fact that her teacher wasn’t giving her the grades she felt she deserved. The Connected Ones, who generally had this sense of “agency” or “entitlement” sought out counselors to answer specific questions regarding the college application process. Other students, like the Lone Rangers, didn’t have that same sense. In this manner, I believe I am using the term “agency” with a somewhat different meaning that is used in philosophy in which agency might mean the ability of human beings to act independently and to make their own free choices within the constraints of social structures.
into AVID senior year. In contrast to Alice who opted out of AVID and to Alma who advocated for herself to be put back into AVID senior year, Nancy, one of the Lone Rangers, knew of the special “college programs” but never reported doing anything about it when she was not put into a program at any point in high school. Indeed, while the Connected Ones, like the Lone Rangers, looked to their school for guidance in navigating the college-going process, I found a drastic difference in the approach taken by this group of students. Early on, the Connected Ones sought out support and advice from multiple individuals at school—including counselors, teachers, and program staff. In doing so, they had access to larger and more varied social networks that offered various forms of college-going capital than did the Lone Rangers.

**Leveraging Existing College Readiness Initiatives to Better Support High Achieving Students**

Analyzing the case of Chavez has shown how one low-resource high school in the Denver area implemented a postsecondary agenda that focused on preparing students for the workforce first and for college second. The Chavez focal students, all of whom were interested in attending college, had access to some forms of college-going capital via eight school-wide college readiness initiatives offered in large group settings. The cases of the Lone Rangers and the Connected Ones demonstrate that these initiatives were in fact valuable—at least to the students situated in larger social networks that provided them access to additional and more specific sources of college-going capital. Indeed, the Connected Ones had access to even more college going capital via their participation in individualized college-linking programs. However, the high school staff pointed out that these various college-linking programs and college partnerships were often small and exclusive to just a few students each year. The staff also indicated that the school was under pressure to meet accountability measures such as to improve high school graduation rates and test scores, which significantly limited the amount of time they
could spend on college counseling. The Connected Ones also had a sense of agency that allowed them to seek out help from their overburdened counselors as they navigated the college-going process. What about the students who didn’t have that same sense of agency or the opportunity to participate in college linking programs but still wanted to access college? What could Chavez have done differently to better support high achieving, low-income students? In analyzing my data, I found several “missed” opportunities in which the school could have enhanced their college readiness initiatives and easily connected the Lone Rangers to other institutional agents without using many additional resources.

First, Chavez could have been more intentional with their “Adopt-a-Senior” initiative by ensuring that individual connections between high school staff and their adopted seniors included conversations about college. Through these conversations, high school staff could learn if students were struggling with the college-going process and if so, help connect them to individuals who might be able to help. The Adopt-A-Senior initiative connected an interested high school senior with a high school staff member who would “adopt” them for senior year. The staff member was expected to informally check in with the student on a weekly basis and ensure that they were on track to graduate. Although mentioned by several staff members, Elena was the only student who mentioned this program: the dean “adopted” Elena and he was “always on her case.” Yet, even with this individual connection to an institutional agent, Elena never completed the FAFSA because “[she] never knew how to do that” and never applied to CU Boulder “because no one showed” her how.

The Adopt-a-Senior initiative could have been used as a way to create network connections between students and institutional agents in order to help the students access college-going capital. Take for example, one of the biology teachers who reported that she
adopted Eduardo--a Connected One--and would “see him in the halls.” She reported talking to him multiple times fall semester of senior year, “making sure he is applying to various colleges.” The fact that she talked to Eduardo “in the halls” between class suggests that the Adopt-A-Senior initiative did not take much time on the part of the teacher—yet it allowed Eduardo to build a network tie to an institutional agent that helped him access college-going capital. These relationships could also be used to expand the social network of the students to other institutional agents. For example, Elena’s “dean parent,” as she called him, could have connected her to the counselor, or to the Metro Excel program staff whom Alma and Quinn indicated helped them complete the FAFSA, or to the CU Boulder representative whom Alice indicated helped her complete an application to CU Boulder. Here, when the whole school staff participated, Chavez seemed able provide more students access to college-going capital without placing any more burdens on the counseling staff.

Second, Chavez could have been more intentional with their ACCESS study hall initiative by ensuring that classroom teachers knew where to send students when they had questions about the college-going process. High school staff implemented ACCESS, a study hall class assigned to every senior, in the 2012-13 school year. The objective of this study hall was to provide students the opportunity to get information about college and financial aid opportunities and requirements in a smaller, classroom setting. Teachers of all subjects and grades taught these classes. Although several staff members mentioned ACCESS, Nicole was the only student who mentioned this class: she was having trouble finding a particular major at CU Boulder and asked her ACCESS teacher for help. Unfortunately, she reported that he “doesn’t help with nothing” and said things like “I’ve never gone to school for that so I wouldn’t even know where to start [looking for that major].”
Here, just like the Adopt-a-Senior initiative, the school could have used the ACCESS class as a way to build network ties between students and staff and programs. Teachers like Nicole’s might have felt unprepared to answer questions about colleges and financial aid or that they were taking away from the counselors’ roles. Yet, if teachers simply knew where they could send students with specific college-related questions, then the counseling center could leverage the whole teaching staff to help ensure students had access to college-going capital. As with the Adopt-A-Senior initiative, the school staff could have worked together to create a web of knowledge and connect their students to multiple, various sources. For example, after realizing that Nicole was interested in attending CU Boulder, the ACCESS teacher could have helped connect her with the counselor to get personalized attention looking for this major, or, if he had a list of college visits, he could have made sure she attended the college fair (other student mentioned being able to talk to schools about majors). Instead, because he did not help Nicole, he acted as a gatekeeper rather than a connector. Ultimately, Nicole became frustrated and chose to not enroll in any college after high school.

Even if Chavez had recognized these missed opportunities, would they have revised these programs to provide access to college-going capital via individual connections to more students? As I have shown, Chavez took an approach to postsecondary readiness that promoted workforce readiness first and college second. Even the Connected Ones, who reported that specific counselors and teachers “help” and “care for me,” felt that Chavez in general held low expectations of their students. For example, Alice reported:

There was one science class - I don't remember the teacher - but we went in there the first day. And he said, ‘Look around. Two thirds of you aren't going to graduate. That's the statistic for your school.’ And then he went on teaching. He didn't tell us, ‘And you guys should change that.’ He just automatically went on with teaching. Like, this is what's going to happen to you guys.
Faced with these low expectations and without many significant network ties to institutional agents, it is no wonder that the Lone Rangers had a hard time navigating the college-going process. What would the college trajectories of the high-achieving, college-oriented focal students look like if the school promoted a more positive college-readiness agenda beginning in ninth grade? If the school implemented college readiness initiatives that fostered social network ties between students and the high school staff? In the following chapter, I investigate the case of Southside, a low-resource high school that attempts to make college-going capital available to students in all grades in a variety of settings: individual conversations, classroom discussions, and grade-level college visits. In looking at Southside, I wanted to see if taking a different college readiness approach might make college-going capital more available to all of the focal students, even the ones who seemed to have less agency than their peers.
CHAPTER 5

THE CASE OF SOUTHSIDE HIGH SCHOOL:
CREATING A SCHOOL-WIDE COLLEGE-GOING CULTURE THAT FOCUSES ON
INDIVIDUAL CONNECTIONS

As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, when faced with few resources and accountability measures to meet, high schools may implement college readiness initiatives that address the “masses” rather than provide individual counseling support. However, research has shown that when school leadership, teachers, parents, and peers join high school counselors in creating a college-going culture that encourages all students to pursue academically rigorous coursework and to consider college, students are more likely to achieve their college aspirations (Corwin & Tierney, 2007; Martinez & Klopott, 2003; McClafferty et al., 2002; Roderick et al., 2008). Bloom (2008) argues that “building college-going cultural capital around the landscape of higher education is necessarily a social and relational activity that requires interpersonal contact with a wide range of actors over time” (p. 4). Students are much more likely to understand – and successfully navigate – the college landscape if they have opportunities to meet current college students, interact with college faculty, and spend time on a variety of actual college campuses (Hill, 2011; Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2008; Luna De La Rosa & Tierney, 2006; Martinez & Klopott, 2003; McClafferty et al., 2002).
While these researchers suggest that creating a school-wide college-going culture with interpersonal relationships among students and institutional agents can assist students in accessing necessary college-going capital, the current body of research lacks an understanding of how these ties are formed and their impact (if any) on students’ success. In this chapter, I build on this current body of research by arguing that the breadth (number and variety of network ties) of the focal students’ social networks was more important than the depth (strength of network ties). It appears that the focal students who had the largest number of network ties that offered them the greatest variety of college-going capital (knowledge of the college landscape and skills to complete applications) had an easier time navigating the college-going process than students who had fewer ties—even when those ties were quite strong.

I expand on this argument and provide evidence for my analysis in the following sections. I begin by describing the high school and focal student context at Southside. Because Southside staff took the perspective that it was the school’s responsibility to provide access to college-going capital for all students, all of the focal students, even the ones who exhibited less agency, had an easier time navigating the college readiness initiatives at Southside and developed a better sense of their “options” than many of the students at Chavez. Why might this be the case? I argue that the ways in which the school-wide college readiness initiatives and specific college linking programs fostered individual connections between institutional agents and the focal students in part facilitated the college-going process for these focal students. I provide evidence for this argument in the following section. However, even with greater access to college-going capital at Southside, we find that many of the network ties between focal students and institutional agents appeared tenuous—and without a variety of ties to turn to, some Southside students also had a hard time navigating the college-going process. I demonstrate the effects of
these tenuous ties by highlighting the case of Alamar. I conclude the chapter by providing examples of ways in which Southside could have strengthened and expanded the social networks of their students by leveraging peer relationships among students.

The Southside School Context

Southside High School serves a majority minority population and has been under pressure to improve academic achievement and graduation rates for the past several years. In 2009, more than 90% of students at Southside were eligible for free and reduced lunch and 90% of the students identified as Latino. Less than one tenth of the 9th grade students in 2010 scored proficient or advanced on the math state standardized test (CSAP) and less than one third scored proficient or advanced on the reading CSAP. In 2011, the high school juniors at Southside took the ACT and scored on average 16 out of a possible 36. Roughly two thirds of the students graduated high school in 2013 (see Table 2 in Chapter 3). Even though Southside was under pressure to meet accountability measures such as to raise high school graduation rates and standardized test scores, high school counselors—with case loads of 400+ students each—made a concerted effort to cultivate a college-going culture at Southside that offered all students access to multiple sources of college-going capital every year of high school.

The Southside Focal Student Context

Although the focal students at Southside were selected from the top quintile of their 9th grade class, they varied in their academic performance. Alamar and Irma had some of the lowest standardized test scores in ninth grade among the focal students while Kelly, Rafael, and Jacian had some of the highest scores. But by senior year, Irma had climbed to the fourth percentile while Jacian was ranked in the 35 percentile of his class (See Table 12).
Table 12: Academic Performances of Southside Focal Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CSAP Math 9th</th>
<th>CSAP Reading 9th</th>
<th>9th grade GPA</th>
<th>ACT 11th grade</th>
<th>12th grade GPA</th>
<th>CCHE Index high school rank %</th>
<th>12th grade percentile</th>
<th>12th grade Intended Enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alamar</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>PP</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irma</td>
<td>PP</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bayon</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>Arapahoe CC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>UC-Denver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacian</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2.809</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>Red Rocks CC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julian</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>UC-Boulder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorena</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>UC-Denver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rafael</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>Red Rocks CC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ave:</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Green cells indicate highest GPA and test scores while red cells indicate lowest GPA and test scores among the focal students.

As this table shows, the majority of the focal students at Southside scored proficient or advanced on the 9th grade standardized tests and more than half had GPAs greater than 4.0 in 9th grade. By senior year, high school GPAs dropped somewhat, but the students on average graduated in the top 20% of their class. All of the focal students at Southside graduated with a CCHE Index score above the 93 required to get into CU Denver and all but two had a CCHE Index score above the 103 required to get into CU Boulder.

School-Wide College Readiness Initiatives at Southside

According to Hill (2008), schools that engage a “brokering” college-counseling strategy not only offer substantial college-going information but also show a strong organizational effort to help students and families access this information. On a broad level, the counseling center at Southside coordinated the daily activities that were part of Southside’s school-wide college-going culture that helped students learn about the higher education landscape. For example, each classroom had a nameplate that included the name of the teacher and the name of the college.

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7 GPA= unweighted; CCHE Index was determined by 11th grade ACT composite score and 12th grade unweighted GPA; 12 grade percentile was calculated from 12 grade class rank; 12th grade intended major and intended enrollment information was provided by focal students during senior spring interview; Barron’s ranking was determined by 2013 Barron’s Profile of America’s Best Colleges.
attended by the teacher. The counselors hung “Think College” banners throughout the building and coordinated the announcements on the electronic bulletin board outside that congratulated individual seniors on their college acceptances. The school also hosted “College Friday,” “where we encourage[d] students [and teachers] to wear their college gear….” These school-wide activities provided students with multiple opportunities to hear about the different colleges attended by their teachers and of interest to their peers.

Although the counselors spent most of their time scheduling students and monitoring seniors’ progress to graduation, counselors at Southside also wanted to ensure that each student received some form of college counseling through grade-level and classroom-level presentations and individual attention throughout high school. So, Southside staff implemented eight school-wide college counseling initiatives during the course of the focal students’ high school careers; these initiatives made college-going capital available to all students (see Table 2). These initiatives offered students a chance to gain a better understanding of the higher education landscape (i.e. colleges and universities, full time and part time status, and majors) and as well as help with the logistics of studying for the ACT, completing applications, and filing the FAFSA through network ties to teachers and counselors. Table 13 highlights these initiatives, which students they targeted, and what opportunities they offered.
Table 13: School-Wide College Readiness Initiatives at Southside

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Targeted grades</th>
<th>Coordinated by whom:</th>
<th>Selection process</th>
<th>Description of program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course selection, conversations with teachers</td>
<td>all</td>
<td>school staff:</td>
<td>mandatory</td>
<td>meet individually with teachers when choosing next years' classes; teachers talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postsecondary planning meetings</td>
<td>seniors</td>
<td>school staff:</td>
<td>mandatory</td>
<td>every senior was required to meet with their counselor several times during senior year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Center: drop in college counseling</td>
<td>seniors</td>
<td>counseling center and</td>
<td>voluntary</td>
<td>opportunity to visit the Future Center, a district-funded, drop-in college counseling center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College visits</td>
<td>all</td>
<td>school staff:</td>
<td>voluntary</td>
<td>School coordinated college campus visits to DU, CU Boulder, CSU Pueblo, ACC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College fairs</td>
<td>all</td>
<td>school staff:</td>
<td>voluntary</td>
<td>local colleges came to Southside for a day-long college fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT prep</td>
<td>juniors</td>
<td>school staff:</td>
<td>voluntary</td>
<td>school hosted an ACT prep course for Juniors in the winter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAFSA completion night</td>
<td>seniors</td>
<td>school staff:</td>
<td>voluntary</td>
<td>school hosted a FAFSA completion night for students and parents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These eight initiatives can be categorized into three ‘buckets.’ The first category of initiatives gave students the opportunity to talk one-on-one with high school staff: teachers talked with students about future courses, counselors met with students to talk about postsecondary plans, and the drop-in college counselor (also known as a college coach in the literature) helped students complete scholarship and college applications. The second category of college
readiness initiatives allowed students to interact with college staff: every year students had the opportunity to visit a different college campus and to attend college fairs at Southside. The third category of college readiness initiatives took place in larger groups but still gave students individual attention: ACT prep courses, FAFSA completion nights, and counseling presentations.

All eight of these school-wide initiatives were available to all students, and three were available to students beginning their freshman year of high school. The counseling center attempted to concentrate their outreach to students who were not in any specific college-linking programs to make sure each student got “some form of [college-going] support.” However, not all eight college readiness initiatives at Southside required students to participate. In other words, while the school believed they made some college-going capital available through these school-wide policies and initiatives, some students might not have ever accessed these policies and initiatives because they chose not to participate. Furthermore, other students might not even have known about these efforts (i.e. they were absent during a college visit or the college fair or they did not hear the announcement about the ACT prep course)—and without knowing this college-going capital was available to them, these students would not be able to access it. Nonetheless, the data show that every single focal student at Southside participated in at least one school-wide initiative from each of the three buckets. Thus, even though the initiatives were voluntary, the focal students knew about these programs and participated in them (Table 14).
As I investigated each of these initiatives, it was not entirely clear how the network ties were formed and how they led to the development of college-going capital. Did some network ties lead to greater amounts of college-going capital than others? If so, what were the characteristics of “stronger” network ties? How often did meetings take place? Where did meetings take place (i.e. on the high school vs. college campus)? Were the interactions personalized or in group settings? As I analyzed the data, I realized that the network ties developed through each of these school-wide initiatives had distinct characteristics. For example, students spent time every day for at least one semester with their teachers. While they might not have seen their counselor more than once a semester, they were assigned to the same counselor for four years throughout high school. In other instances, students might have spent a couple of hours one time on a college campus, or they might have become intimately familiar with a college campus as they returned for college classes semester after semester. As I investigate these various ties in the following section, it is worth asking how each type of network tie led the focal students to access valuable forms of college-going capital.

### Time Spent with High School Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Course selection w/ teachers</th>
<th>Drop-in College Counseling</th>
<th>Postsecondary planning meetings</th>
<th>College Visits</th>
<th>College Fairs</th>
<th>ACT Prep</th>
<th>FAFSA completion night</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alamar</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irma</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bayon</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacian</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julian</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorena</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rafael</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 14: Southside Focal Student Participation in School-Wide College Readiness Initiatives
Central to Southside’s counseling strategies, staff focused on working with students individually to plan for college. In the following examples, I illustrate how high school staff had individual conversations with each of the focal students. Teachers and counselors gave students advice on types of majors and colleges to consider while the college counselor helped students find and complete specific college and scholarship applications. While these institutional agents met with students at different frequencies, I found that the network ties between the focal students and high school staff were valuable for different reasons. For example, teachers met with students individually to select courses for the following year. In these conversations, teachers introduced students to specific college majors and different types of colleges based on the students’ academic and career interests. For example, Alamar reported, “since I'm good at math [my teachers said] it would...be good for me to be an engineer.” Similarly, Julian’s interest in studying astrophysics was supported by teachers: “Ms. Rhodes says Boulder would be a good school to go to if I want to work for NASA.” The language that Alamar and Julian used is particularly telling of Southside’s strategy to employ individual recommendations: their teachers often appeared to make recommendations because “I’m good at math” and “I want to work for NASA.”

Because students were required to meet with their counselors once per year to complete postsecondary plans, counselors also had the opportunity to get to know students. They often tailored their advice to individual students. For example, Lorena worked with the counselor to enroll in college level courses (during high school) and reported that the counselor helped her “a lot because she knows my interests, so all of the time [if] she gets [relevant] information, she just goes to me or I go to her.” Julian reported that his counselor called him down to her office to show him Naviance, a computer program. . . about colleges and stuff. She showed me, like you
can pick any college…and it’ll show you the students that applied from Southside and the ones that got accepted.” This personal interaction seems especially important because the college the counselor chose to look at with Julian was one of the most selective, four-year institutions in the state.

The college counselor at the Future Center was specifically trained in helping students apply to colleges and for scholarships, and many of the focal students reported working with her towards the end of high school. Going into senior year, Kelly knew she had the Future Center as a resource: “there they will help you out to like whatever college you want to get into, they will help you fill out the application and scholarships and things like that.” Several of the focal students reported that the Future Center “knows each one of us as individuals,” which helped them navigate the college process. For example, according to Rafael, "she gets you a personalized stack of scholarship applications.. Quotes such as “she knows us as individuals” and accessing “personalized” applications indicate that like the ties the focal students had with their teachers and their counselor, the network tie between the students and the college counselor hinged on individual and personalized relationships. Although the students only talked to their counselor a couple of times a year and only met with the college counselor beginning their senior year, all three of these types of network ties helped students access college-going capital.

Interestingly, some students felt like they had to take action in order to access network ties with the college counselor and the regular counselor. For example, Lorena reported “They do have a Future Center, but it's mostly us that have to put ourselves out there and do what we need to do.” She also said, “They don't even like you to talk to the counselor that much. You have to find her.” So, Lorena took action and took the initiative to “check in with” her counselor, “I try to check in with her every month to see what's new, what we could do together.” What
happened though, when students did not put themselves “out there” or “take the initiative?” Irma also reported that her counselor was busy, “She's always very busy, actually.” And while the counseling center gave students “an appointment and they call us,” Irma reported that she hadn’t “requested it yet.” This theme of agency appeared in the previous chapter. However, there is a distinction between the outcomes of the focal students at Chavez and Southside that I believe has to do partly with the college-going culture created at Southside. The Lone Rangers at Chavez had a hard time accessing the college-going capital available through school-wide college readiness initiatives partly because they did not take the initiative. This could have happened to Irma at Southside except for the fact that Southside’s initiatives made sure there were multiple times a year when a teacher or a counselor was reaching out to each student to plan future courses or update postsecondary plans.

Indeed, the institutional agents at Southside sought out each focal student, ensuring that even those who didn’t take the initiative to make appointments with their teachers and counselors had connections to adults. Many of the focal students reported being “called down” to their grade-level counselor and the Future Center counselor throughout high school. For example, Alamar reported getting a lot of help from the college counseling center his senior year:

“There’s this one teacher that stays there the whole day, just calling students in to help them out with scholarships and signing up for college and stuff… Between those two weeks, I might be going to the Future Center because they’re starting to call me a lot of times.” Furthermore, these institutional agents connected the students to other adults—broadening the social networks of the students. For example, Alamar reported that his counselor made sure he connected with the counselor at Future Center: "My [school] counselor basically checks my credits and just tells me to keep going to the Future Center." Because students were required to meet with the counselor
to talk about their postsecondary plans, as in the case of Alamar, the counselor could ensure that they were meeting with the college center’s counselor.

**Individual Connections with College Staff**

Besides the connections the focal students had to high school staff, the focal students had multiple opportunities throughout high school to connect with college personnel and learn about different colleges through the annual college visits and on-campus college fairs at Southside. Southside partnered with four different universities and colleges so that each student had the opportunity to visit four college campuses by the time they were seniors and applying to college. These universities and colleges ranged from two-year community colleges to four-year non-selective universities to the state’s flagship research university.

By visiting multiple campuses, the focal students could see themselves “fitting” in at some schools but not others. For example, Jacian mentioned touring CSU Pueblo (a land-grant state university), Colorado School of Mines (a selective public engineering college), and University of Colorado Boulder (the state’s flagship research university) through Southside’s coordinated college visits. Jacian was a quiet student and interested in majoring in Engineering. After visiting Boulder and Mines, he told the researcher, “well Boulder has a lot of people…School of Minds is kind of lonely.” Jacian preferred to go to “[a school] that is lonely and calm” so that he wouldn’t get as “distracted or something.” Several other students talked in similar terms about preferring to go to one school versus another because of a particular characteristic they noticed when they visited campus. Kelly visited the University of Denver several times and reported, “with the trip to [the University of Denver] I kind of thought ‘this would be a good school for me’.” Comments like these across the focal students provide a stark contrast to the comment I heard from Elena, one of the Lone Rangers, in the previous chapter.
While Elena still did not “really know the names” of the colleges that she was interested in possibly attending by senior year, the focal students at Southside could easily point to several colleges by name and describe what they liked and didn’t like about that particular campus.

By hosting an annual college fair in the high school gymnasium, the high school gave students the opportunity to form multiple network ties with staff from many colleges in a single afternoon. As Irma recalled, “lots of people from universities came to give us brochures and things like that.” Besides Irma, Rafael also mentioned the college fair. He was particularly excited about the college fair because he wanted to talk to the admissions representatives for Colorado School of Mines, “I literally ran over to the School of Mines table.” Ever since he learned about Colorado School of Mines, Rafael was passionately invested in attending. He spent time outside of school learning about Mines, visiting Mines every chance he could get with his school, and talking about the school with his teachers and counselor. It’s no wonder then, when he learned the School of Mines would be attending the college fair, that he would want to talk to them. In a sense, he was building his network of ties that could help him have a chance of being admitted. But in general, the other focal students at Southside were less likely to talk about their college fair than several of the other school-wide college readiness policies at their school. This is particularly interesting because many of the students at Chavez reported benefiting from their school-wide college fairs. Perhaps this is because the focal students at Southside had greater access to individual connections and richer experiences on a variety of college campuses, so to them, the network ties available through the college fair were not seen as a very important or valuable source of college-going capital.

ACT and FASFA Workshops
Southside coordinated a few other school-wide initiatives that took place in larger group settings—and yet, even those these initiatives had an individual component about them. These initiatives included an ACT prep course on Saturdays in the winter before the ACT was administered in the Spring of Junior year and a FAFSA completion night to which students and parents were invited. Several students participated in the ACT prep course (or planned to attend when interviewed in the fall of Junior year). For example, Kelly took this course and reported that after receiving a 27 on a practice ACT administered during the course and receiving encouragement from her teachers, she began considering some schools out of state. Two students reported attending the FAFSA night held by Southside staff. According to Lorena, “my high school had this like parent-student night where they would help us with the FAFSA. And they would sit down with us and help us fill it out and it was really easy because they walked us through it.” Even in these one-time larger group settings, Southside attempted to cultivate a school-wide college going culture that centered on individual connections: the school staff worked with the focal students on an individual level—they encouraged Kelly and “sat down” with Lorena.

**Specific College-Linking Programs**

In addition to these school-wide college readiness initiatives, Southside staff collaborated with the staff of specific college programs, college professors, program coordinators, and admissions representatives, building out the social networks of some students, granting them more opportunities to access college-going capital. The college linking programs include ones that are fully or partially federally funded: GEAR UP, TRIO, and AVID. The other seven programs were partnerships between the high school and local colleges and universities that involved Saturday workshops, concurrent enrollment courses, and residential weeklong
programs. By partnering with these outside organizations, Southside offered some focal students formal access to college-going capital regarding understanding what college was like and the logistical steps needed to access college such as preparing for the ACT, completing college and financial aid applications and FAFSA forms, writing personal statements, and ultimately, sending in the necessary paperwork to enroll in a college (See Table 15).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Targeted Grades:</th>
<th>Coordinated by whom:</th>
<th>Targeted students</th>
<th>Selection process</th>
<th>Description of program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AVID</td>
<td>all</td>
<td>counselors and middle school staff</td>
<td>first generation, B average students</td>
<td>application process</td>
<td>&quot;cohorts&quot;, groups of students and teacher, stayed together every year, researched colleges, worked on study skills and completed application components</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEAR UP/TRIO</td>
<td>all</td>
<td>Gear UP staff asked for counselor recommendations</td>
<td>first generation</td>
<td>application process</td>
<td>participants worked with a &quot;college advisor&quot;, studied for ACT, researched colleges, worked on financial aid; students received scholarship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CU Succeed; University of Colorado Denver (taught on high school campus)</td>
<td>all</td>
<td>school staff: (teachers and counselors) signed students up for courses</td>
<td>required to meet course pre-requisites</td>
<td>obtained permission from school staff</td>
<td>concurrent enrollment courses on high school campus, taught by high school teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Precollegiate; University of Colorado Denver (taught on college campus)</td>
<td>all</td>
<td>college staff asked for counselor recommendations; students completed application process</td>
<td>first generation, minimum GPA 2.5, oldest child or child in one parent family</td>
<td>application process</td>
<td>concurrent enrollment courses on college campus, 2 or 5 week summer sessions, Saturday academies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REESE STEM Research Project, University of Colorado Boulder</td>
<td>sophomores, juniors, seniors</td>
<td>counselor and program staff</td>
<td>underrepresented, top quintile of 9th grade class</td>
<td>application process</td>
<td>Research project investigates STEM and college pathways; individual interviews a couple times a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer Link; Denver University</td>
<td>rising juniors</td>
<td>college staff recruited students via application process (essay and recommendation)</td>
<td>students required to meet certain GPA and admission requirements</td>
<td>application process</td>
<td>residential week long &quot;introduction to college life&quot; program in the summer; students took a &quot;college class&quot;, toured campus, played games and did activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers in Partnership; Denver University</td>
<td>juniors and seniors</td>
<td>college staff recruited students via an application process</td>
<td>student required to be member of &quot;partner high school&quot;; &amp; &quot;top of the class&quot;</td>
<td>application process</td>
<td>Participants attended workshops during school year, college students worked with high school students to complete applications, financial aid, fafsa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Summit; Regis University</td>
<td>rising seniors</td>
<td>college staff recruited students via application process; staff reached out to students by facebook</td>
<td>student required to be member of &quot;partner high school&quot;; &amp; &quot;top of the class&quot;</td>
<td>application process</td>
<td>One week residential program students individually &quot;coached&quot; through the college process to find appropriate, selective schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concurrent enrollment; Community College of Denver</td>
<td>seniors</td>
<td>students who might need remediation in college</td>
<td>pass ACCUPLACER exam</td>
<td>application process</td>
<td>Concurrent Enrollment, classes on college campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denver Scholars; University of Colorado Denver</td>
<td>seniors</td>
<td>college staff asked for counselor recommendations; students selected by application process</td>
<td>first generation, minimum GPA 3.0, completed algebra and composition English courses</td>
<td>application process</td>
<td>Concurrent enrollment classes on college campus and Saturday Academies (covers topics like financial aid, college applications, careers and majors)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As illustrated in Chapter 5, several of these specific college-linking programs (such as college classes, AVID, Precollegiate) were also offered at Chavez. Unlike the focal students at Chavez—where the Connected Ones participated in a couple of specific programs and the Lone Rangers in even fewer programs—the majority of the focal students at Southside reported participating in several college-linking programs (see Table 16).

Table 16: Southside Focal Student Participation in College-Linking Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Concurrent Enrollment (UCD, CCD)</th>
<th>AVID</th>
<th>College Summit, Regis</th>
<th>Summer Link/VIP, DU</th>
<th>GEAR UP/TRIO</th>
<th>Precollegiate, UCD</th>
<th>Denver Scholars, UCD</th>
<th>STEM research project (UCB)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alamar</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Irma</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bayon</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
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<td>✔</td>
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<tr>
<td>Andrew</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jacian</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julian</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorena</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rafael</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
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</table>

For example, all but two focal students at Southside participated in concurrent enrollment and all but four participated in AVID and GEAR UP. Some focal students also participated in summer residential programs through Regis University and University of Denver, while still others participated in workshop-type programs through University of Colorado Denver. A couple of students also mentioned accessing college-going capital through this NSF research program. Interestingly, two focal students at Southside, Alamar and Irma, reported participating in no specific college-linking programs. It’s important to consider why they did not have access to these programs and the implications of their smaller social networks. To better understand these issues, I first illustrate the ways in which participating in these specific programs developed network ties between students and institutional agents, and the forms of college-going capital these network ties allowed them to access.
**High School-College Partnerships**

Several college partnerships gave students the opportunity to take college classes, allowing them not only to acquire college credits, but perhaps more importantly, to learn more about the higher education landscape through network ties with college professors and college students. Here, I saw an interesting type of network tie formation especially in the college classes taking place on college campuses. While many of the school-wide initiatives cultivated network ties between the student and an institutional agent through individual and personalized conversations, the network ties cultivated through taking college classes provided students college-going capital in the “general you” sense. What I mean by that: college professors and current college students would talk about the college experience in a classroom setting. For example, Kelly told the researchers how her college professor would prepare her for college classes: “Since it's a college class, he's always saying, ‘This is what a college class is like’, and, like today, we were reading a text in class and he was reading it off of a paper, and we hadn't taken it out until he asked a question. He was like, ‘in college you guys should have your text out when the teacher starts talking about it’." Kelly’s network tie to that professor helped her learn what it meant to be a “professional” college student. Watching her classmates who were already in college, Lorena realized there would be years of studying involved before she could “do real science”: “I see the people that are majoring in bio and chemistry…everybody’s just studying and doing work, and I just want to go out there and discover new things, and discover new plants, and study them. And a lot of people don’t seem to be doing that, and that’s what I would like to do.” In this second example, Lorena’s network tie allowed her to mirror current college student behavior where she realized there are several steps between high school and careers—in fact, she became discouraged that it would be years before she could be “out there and discover[ing] new
things.” Neither of these network ties was “individual” in the sense that an institutional agent was talking directly with Kelly or Lorena, yet both these focal students reported accessing valuable college-going capital.

Two other college partnerships at Southside afforded some focal students the opportunity to participate in residential programs at selective, private four-year institutions in the summer before junior and senior year. In addition to completing specific college application task such as completing “our personal essays,” Kelly, Jacian, Julian, and Rafael had the unique opportunity to spend time sleeping in a dorm room, eating in a dining hall, and navigating college life for a week. While these experiences undoubtedly gave students access to experiential college-going capital, perhaps what is most striking about these college partnerships was the network ties the focal students developed with “college coaches” who encouraged them to consider attending selective four-year colleges out of state. For example, Julian began senior year with a list of four-year colleges he hoped to apply to: “…Johns Hopkins and that’s in Maryland and then Boston University in Massachusetts and then Alaska University in Fairbanks and then I don't know. I’ll apply to CU Boulder, like CCD here, and just those.” He planned to apply to these specific schools because of the network tie he developed with a “college coach”: “We had a personal college coach and they would ask us what we wanted to do and based on our GPA and our ACT and everything, they made a list of colleges and then we went through them [together]…."

Recalling Julian’s individual conversation with his high school counselor about looking at the engineering school in Colorado, I noticed that this list was decidedly different because many of the schools on this list were out of state. While these focal students only connected with these college coaches during the week-long college partnership program, by the time these students began their senior year of high school, they already had a strong idea of what college they would
apply to and what their college application needed to look like in order to be a competitive applicant. Interestingly, the three focal students who participated in these programs in the summer had some of the highest GPAs and ACT scores of the focal students.

**Programs Supported Partially or Fully with Federal Dollars**

Participating in private and federally funded programs like AVID and GEAR UP, students had support in writing and rewriting college essays, looking at a variety of colleges, and figuring out financial aid forms in classroom settings where students and teachers worked together year after year. The students who participated in AVID appeared to have developed strong network ties with program staff. Lorena reported learning about different majors from talking to her AVID tutor: “he was talking to me about all these different careers…then I brought up psychology and he said that it was a really cool subject…and I like studying the human brain, the human behavior and stuff and it brings science back into it…so, I think it would be a cool major for me”. Kelly’s AVID teacher heavily influenced her decision to apply to and enroll in a very selective private four-year college because of the teacher’s own experiences at a private school. Both of these examples suggest that students participating in AVID had opportunities to have personal conversations with high school staff. And based on their own college-going capital (Lorena’s teacher talked about what he knew about psychology and Kelly’s teacher recommended a college similar to the one she had attended), the teachers were able to offer college-going capital to their students. In contrast, the students who participated in GEAR UP did not seem to have strong network ties to program staff. Rather, Andrew and Bayon (the two focal students who participated in GEAR UP) talked mostly about a 10,000-dollar scholarship they would be receiving by participating in GEAR UP. Interestingly though, Andrew briefly

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8 Participating students in GEAR UP were eligible to receive $2500 per year for four years if they enrolled in a two- or four- year college. In fact, this is the reason why Andrew signed up for GEAR UP in the first place.
mentioned the connections he had to Gear Up staff at the end of senior year: "I even have the [phone] numbers, the [business] cards of the, whatchamacallit, the head of the organization, they're in my wallet." Although he didn’t report using that business card, it seemed as though he had a safety net in that network tie; he knew he could call someone if he had trouble in college.

**Making College-Going Capital Available to All Students**

As at Chavez, participation in these specific college-linking programs was limited—suggesting that only some focal students could access the college-going capital available in these programs. Every one of these programs targeted a specific population—requiring students be first generation college in some, requiring students to have minimum GPAs and test scores in others, and, according to a few of the focal students, requiring students to be at the “top of the class” in others. For many of these programs, students were selected through an admissions process, suggesting that students first had to know the program existed, then apply, and be accepted in order to access the college-going capital available through some of these specific programs. Indeed, while all focal students participated in the school-wide college readiness initiatives, two focal students did not participate in any of the specific college-linking programs (see Table 16). This is particularly troubling because the focal students who did participate in the college-linking programs reported how beneficial these programs were in helping them navigate the college-going process. Why might Alamar and Irma, two high achieving students at Southside, not participate in any specific college linking programs in high school? Analyses of the data suggest that barriers to these programs were related to the development (or lack there of) of social network ties.

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9 Alamar and Irma were undocumented. Their status could have affected their participation in the college-linking programs at Southside. However, Rafael was also undocumented, and he reported participating in five different college-linking programs during his time in school. Thus, there are other barriers to consider.
The data suggest that students often got connected to specific college linking programs like AVID and GEAR UP in middle school and continued their participation through high school. For example, Andrew talked about getting involved in AVID in middle school: “Well [my teachers and counselor] just placed me in it 'cause they said – well they saw my CSAP scores and whatever. They were pretty good so they wanted me to better myself in the future.” Andrew also joined GEAR UP in middle school after hearing a presentation: “They had came to my middle school…and they were just talking about, like, a little scholarship that supports you through college…you have to sign up for it. I signed up.” He continued in GEAR UP and AVID throughout high school and was able to access college-going capital that helped him complete college applications and receive a scholarship for college.

The data also indicate that once the focal students developed a network tie with one specific program at Southside, it was likely that they would become connected to other programs, ever increasing their social network. For example, through the interviews, I learned that students who participated in the first summer residential program were connected to the second summer residential program because the program leaders tapped the same people. According to Julian, “It was just pretty random because… I did Summer Link at DU, which is also another program where you stay for five days and then out of one of the counselors that was there, we were friended on Facebook and then he just asked if I wanted to go [to the summer program at Regis] and it was a week before the program was gonna start.” Kelly also reported finding out about the summer residential program at Regis in the same way because she had participated in the summer residential program the year before at DU. These examples suggest that access to these specific college linking programs and high school-college partnerships was potentially unequal. Once a student got connected to one program, they were suddenly connected to others. While
this snow-ball effect appeared to help Julian and Kelly—their social networks grew larger and more varied—it could possibly be harmful to other students who were left out of the growing social network of college-going resources. With access to college-going capital available through the school-wide college readiness initiatives only (since he did not participate in any specific college-linking programs), what did Alamar’s college-going trajectory look like?

**The Case of Alamar**

Alamar was a quiet, studious student at Southside. He was interested in science and hoped to pursue engineering at a four-year college in Colorado. He was accepted at and almost enrolled at Metro State University. However, because he was undocumented, he was still waiting on his deferred action paperwork and did not have enough money for tuition, he was not able to enroll in Metro for the fall after high school. Like all of the other focal students at Southside, Alamar had access to the school-wide college readiness initiatives implemented by Southside; however, unlike many of the other focal students at Southside, outside of these initiatives, he had a very small social network comprised of a single tie to an institutional agent (his cross-country coach) that could offer him access to additional college-going capital. His case study suggests that even the strongest network ties to institutional agents at Southside were somewhat tenuous and, without a variety of ties to rely on, the focal students could have a hard time navigating the college-going process.

Early in Alamar’s high school career, he had success in establishing strong network ties with his teachers and accessing college-going capital through them. For example, Alamar first learned about engineering his freshman year because his math teacher was a former engineer. Then, throughout high school, he was repeatedly told that he would make a good engineer, “since I'm good at math [they said] it would…be good for me to be an engineer.” In order to be
a competitive college applicant for engineering programs, his teachers told him to “get in harder classes so that colleges could look at me and then I can go to college.” His teachers also helped him look for specific colleges: senior year, his math teacher “told me that engineering and architecture are almost the same thing [and] she’s just helping me look up colleges that are good at that subject.” These individual conversations suggest that Alamar’s teachers believed in him and his abilities: not only did they tell him he would make a good engineer, but they suggested he take harder classes to be a strong candidate for college and then they even helped him look for specific colleges\(^\text{10}\).

In addition to these individual conversations, Alamar also had the opportunity to visit a variety of college campuses throughout high school via another school-wide initiative. In doing so, he could see for himself how colleges varied. According to his sophomore year interview, “we went to DU and this year we are going to CSU Pueblo. I like DU better, because I like the campus, it is better, the classes seem to be better….Next year we plan to go to CU Boulder.” Alamar also spent time on the CU Boulder campus because of his interest in running: “I’ve been there a lot..like this summer we have a running camp up there…we stay in the dorms.” Access to this type of college-going resource helped Alamar think about where he might like to attend college. So, when the interviewer asked Alamar where he wanted to apply senior year, he had an idea of what type of college experience he might like:

Well, I was thinking about staying in the city, just because I wanna be home, but I was also thinking there’s too many distractions around the city that goes on, so I might be wanting…to go outside and have fun, but if you’re outside of the city, it’s more isolated and you could study better and then people will know each other better because there’s less people.

Alamar believed that if he went to school further away, he might “study better” and know his

\(^{10}\) By law, school personnel were not allowed to ask students about their immigration status; thus, Alamar’s teachers may not have known that he was undocumented.
classmates “better.” This quote suggests that Alamar saw college as a serious endeavor—he did not want to party but rather study and get to know his classmates on a deeper level. It also suggests that he had a keen sense of what different types of college campus experiences could offer him. Indeed, he mentioned being interested in applying to several schools that were outside of the city—Adams, Western, and CSU Pueblo—and just one school located in the heart of downtown Denver, Metro.

Outside of these school-wide initiatives, Alamar had access to one other connection that provided him access to college-going capital: his cross-country coach. In fact, his coach was the one who inspired Alamar to consider attending college in the first place: “[My coach] told me that I had talent in running and that if I train really hard, that I would be really good and that I’d get scholarships, so I just started thinking about college.” The coach had a reputation for helping high school seniors with their college applications: “after practice, they talk about it forever…they help them out with scholarships and everything.” Regarding the process of completing the applications, Alamar said, "my coach would talk to me about that, that's how I knew about it, and, yeah he just taught me about it." Quotes like “my coach told me” and “he just taught me about it” highlight the individualized attention Alamar received from his coach.

However, by the end of senior year, Alamar was disappointed that he didn’t get more money for college and thought maybe it was because his coach left before senior year:

As a sophomore, you know I had that coach and he's that one that used to help me a lot [about] college, because he has a lot of friends that he knew from college and stuff, and since he left I, I, really didn't have that much help, so it was harder for me to get scholarships and then he was a really good running coach so I would've been better this year, I would've got better scholarships, so, I didn't run faster, well I did but not as much.

The content (“he’s the one that used to help me a lot”) and the tone (“I would’ve been better this year, I would’ve got better scholarships”) highlight just how much Alamar relied on the network
tie between him and his coach to access college-going capital\textsuperscript{11}. Even though Alamar had “started [going] to the Future Center to sign up for scholarships” his senior year, this quote suggests that Alamar felt as though he had a hard time navigating the college process because the one strong connection he had to an institutional agent (his coach) was severed his senior year.

In school, Alamar had connections to a few individuals and took advantage of several of the school-wide college readiness initiatives. Through individual conversations, his teachers and coaches helped him think of himself as a potential college student, one who might major in engineering, and one who might make his way through college on a track scholarship. Even though his undocumented status impeded his college plans, he left high school with a plan for the following year: in addition to working and saving money for college, he reported, “I might go to, back to Southside to see if they can help me out, in the Future Center. They help, they've been helping my cousin out. Because she waited a year also, and she went again to Southside.” Yet, beyond his connections to institutional agents that helped him learn about college, Alamar needed access to resources that could help him complete specific, necessary tasks that would lead to college enrollment. While many of the specific college-linking programs provided participating students with resources to complete those tasks, Alamar could not access that capital because he did not participate in those programs. Alamar’s case suggests that even among the school-wide college-going culture developed by Southside, the capital some focal students had access to was rather tenuous: while some of the focal students at Southside benefited from strong connections with individuals at their schools, if they relied on only one tie, they faced difficulties if that tie was severed for some reason.

\textsuperscript{11} It is not clear in the data what scholarships Alamar was talking about and if these scholarships were available to undocumented students (like Alamar) in the first place.
Leveraging Connections Among Peers to Better Support High-Achieving Students

So, what could Southside have done differently in cultivating a school-wide college-going culture in order to better support all high achieving, low-income students? In analyzing my data, I found a “missed” opportunity in which the school could have easily connected the focal students to other institutional agents without using many additional resources.

Several of the focal students at Southside reported getting connected to the multiple specific programs that offered college-going capital through teachers, counselors, and applications. However, some students who were not initially connected to these programs through institutional agents still found their way into these programs via connections to their peers, thus allowing them access to college-going capital. For example, Jacian learned about the Engineering Club his sophomore year through some of his friends. He joined this club and had access to college-going capital otherwise unavailable to him: “I remember hearing about it and we went one day. And that day that we went, we went to the School of Mines.” Participating in the Engineering Club was the first time Jacian had an opportunity to visit Colorado School of Mines and he would later activate this capital by applying to Mines as a hopeful engineering student.

As a second example, several of the focal students reported participating in College Summit at Regis College during the summer before their senior year. Kelly and Julian reported finding out about this program through the program staff who had coordinated the summer program the year before at University of Denver—of which Kelly and Julian had participated. Bayon had not participated in either of these summer experiences, but it turns out that Regis’ program continued into senior year and Bayon had the opportunity to join this program then through his connection to friends. He said that this experience helped him “be college ready.”
According to him, “So the college summit program was pretty much teaching a small, selective group of students how to be college ready and how to be peer leaders amongst their peers and show them the way how to get stuff done.” It is likely that Bayon would not have had access to this capital if his friends had not asked him to join them.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter and the previous chapter, I have illustrated the various forms of college-going capital that Chavez and Southside purported making available to their high achieving, low-income students as well as the forms of capital accessed by the focal students. Unlike Chavez, Southside attempted to create a school-wide college going culture. Notably, school staff focused on developing network ties between students and institutional agents, offering the students an opportunity to expand their social network to include many varieties of college-going capital. Individual conversations with teachers and counselors gave students the opportunities to learn about different majors, careers, and colleges. Coordinating visits to college campuses helped students visualize themselves as college students. By hosting an annual college fair in the high school gymnasium, the high school gave students the opportunity to form multiple network ties with staff from many colleges in a single afternoon. Other initiatives including college counseling appointments at the Future Center and ACT prep courses and FASFA completion nights as well as the many individual college-linking programs provided the focal students sources of college-going capital that allowed them to complete the specific aspects of college and financial aid applications.

In both chapters, I also suggested that there were several reasons why some students had smaller social networks than others: they didn’t join college-linking programs in middle school, they didn’t initially meet admission requirements, they were passed over by school staff. Yet,
the stories in this chapter of Jacian and Bayon suggest that peers were instrumental in helping some of the focal students access college-going capital in school that they might otherwise not have. What if Southside leveraged those peer connections? In fact, what if Southside leveraged familial and communal connections that their students have to college-going capital outside of school? In the following chapter, I investigate the types of college-going capital the focal students had access to outside of school to see how that component of the focal students’ social networks might have influenced their college-going trajectories.
The previous two chapters demonstrated some of the ways in which students navigate the college-going process by accessing college-going capital available through their high schools. However, to look solely at the college-going resources available to students via school-wide college readiness initiatives and college-linking programs would be suggesting a deficit view of non-dominant students and parents by emphasizing the “necessary” resources that these individuals lack (Dika & Singh, 2002). In fact, I believe just the opposite: schools need to acknowledge the capital that students and families bring into the school and incorporate that capital into college readiness policies. One way researchers can support school staff in the effort to move away from taking a deficit perspective is to illustrate the various forms of capital students can and do bring from home. It makes sense that, in order to acknowledge the capital students bring from home, school staff first need to know what forms of capital they are looking for. So, in this chapter, I draw on Yosso’s (2005) theory of community cultural wealth to further investigate the forms of college-going capital high achieving, low-income students access from
non-dominant communities when navigating the college going process. Besides Luna and Martinez’ (2013) study, I am not aware of any other researchers who have taken up community cultural wealth in their investigations of social capital as it relates to college access. I have attempted to address this void in the literature by leveraging and expanding aspects of community cultural wealth in my definition of college-going capital. In doing so, I specifically argue that the families and communities of the high achieving, low-income focal students often contributed to the development of college-going capital in interesting and unexpected ways.

Furthermore, the previous two chapters helped us to understand what types of college-going capital were made available to the focal students and which of those resources the focal students actually accessed. Yet, the value inherent in college-going capital lies not just in access to resources but also in the activation of these resources (Lareau, 2000) – something that Bourdieu, Coleman, and Yosso fail to fully acknowledge. Therefore, I analyze the case of Bayon to better understand the ways in which students might choose to activate certain sources of capital (from school or from their community) over others. I wanted to know what his social network looked like—what particular sources of college-going capital did he have access to and of those, which did he choose to activate? In what ways did institutional agents and structures respond to his acts of activation? Ultimately, I believe that Bayon’s access to and activation of capital and the ways in which Southside responded to his actions impacted—in part—his abilities to successfully navigate the college-going process.

I begin this chapter by describing the deficit perspective that both schools took in regards to the level of college-going capital brought by families of the focal students. I then provide evidence that suggests they were quite wrong in their assumptions by highlighting the various sources of college-going capital available to the students outside of school. In order to analyze
and categorize the ways the students accessed these capital resources, I first define the types of capital available to the students outside of school and then illustrate the ways in which various students accessed and activated these forms of capital. Next, I interrogate the ways in which Southside responded to the capital brought by families and communities in the case of Bayon. I conclude this chapter by suggesting how, by including parents in their school-wide college readiness initiatives, Southside and Chavez could have strengthened the social networks of the high achieving, low-income focal students.

**Staff’s Deficit Perspective of Students and Families**

Regardless of who I talked to at Chavez, staff reported various explanations for how and why their parents lacked cultural capital. Early on in the study, counselors at Chavez dismissed the idea that parents could contribute to the college-going process: “I think for a lot of kids the school is a huge support for them… a lot of their parents didn’t actually graduate or graduated but didn’t go to college or went to college and didn’t graduate college so… they don’t know anything about the process.” Staff also reported that parents did not know what college meant; for example, one counselor commented, “they don’t know what college actually means, so [we have to go and do] family nights and promoting what this can do for your family, what this can do for your kid.” Even then, she argued that the “kids have to take responsibility” and sign themselves up for concurrent enrollment classes or bring their parents in for a FAFSA night. Counselors also suggested that even though the students were interested in attending college, somewhere that aspiration “gets lost:”

90% [of the students] say they want to go to college, but we only have 20% or so who go so somewhere it gets lost, somewhere they have this desire, they want to go, they know they should go, other things keep them from going--family, need for work, culturally sometimes education isn’t perceived as important.
I think the language this counselor chose to use to talk about the college-going patterns of her students is particularly interesting. She used words such as “they want to go” and “they have this desire” which to me suggest that students had aspirational capital—yet she seemed to dismiss this form of capital when she prefaced these comments with “somewhere.” Additionally, when she talked about the reasons why students didn’t go to college, she only pointed to reasons outside of school—family, work, cultural differences; she never mentioned any number of institutional barriers that might have prohibited students from actualizing their college goals.

Teachers echoed these sentiments regarding students’ and parents’ lack of aspirational and moral capital as well. They particularly felt as though students lacked support from their families. For example, the Chavez biology teacher believed that,

It would be great if they just had support from home even if…their parents didn’t graduate from high school; [just] saying “We know that you can do this. You need to go to school. Um we know that you can be successful,” things like that.

Comments such as “culturally sometimes education isn’t perceived as important” or “it would be great if they just had support from home” suggest that high school staff at Chavez really did not see parents as offering any sources of college-going capital to their students.

Even though fewer Southside parents ever attended college and fewer had any real sense of the US educational system (being recent immigrants) than the parents at Chavez, the high school staff at Southside seemed to know that their families very much wanted their children to go to college. The staff believed parents provided considerable motivational, aspirational and familial support (given their circumstances) to their students. For example, when the interviewer asked the high school counselor why she believed the focal students would likely excel in college, the counselor responded it was because the parents valued a college education for their children:
Counselor: So I am going to say that they are all great, all great candidates for college, none of them, every one of them excels more than I ever did in high school. They are just incredible kids.

Interviewer: What do you think contributes to their success or them doing well in their classes?
Counselor: Motivation, or a frame of reference that allows them to understand why college is important.

Interviewer: Where do you think they get this?
Counselor: Parents. 100% [from the parents;] if the parent doesn't buy in, then the child doesn't think that they need to.

Southside staff believed that the “motivation” and “frame of reference” for understanding the value of college—two key components in accessing college—came from the parents.

Southside staff not only acknowledged that parents provided students with important forms of college-going capital, they also worked to include parents in their school community, attempting to further widen and strengthen the social networks of college-going capital available to their students. For example, in 2005, the school administration hired a designated staff member to act as the liaison between the parents, the community, and the school staff as a way to better understand the desires and needs of the parent community. According to the principal, “What we found out early on was…first of all they wanted more communication to the house. They wanted people that spoke Spanish and that were friendly to them when they walked in the building.” From that point on, Southside made a concerted effort to hire bilingual staff and to publish materials in Spanish and English. In regards to college, school staff invited parents to participate in college visits and to attend numerous parent nights devoted to college applications and FAFSA. Additionally, the counselors made sure that, “all of the messages we send… home [are] related to college and college readiness and what they have to do…and how colleges work”.

These documents were prepared in both Spanish and English, making them accessible to many families.
Sources of Non-Institutional Capital

Notwithstanding the examples of aspirational and moral capital mentioned by the Southside staff, high school staff at both schools took a limited view of the college-going capital resources brought by students. Yet, contrary to the schools’ belief that the focal students had to rely mostly on the school to provide specific college-going capital, the interview data are rich with examples of ways in which family members, peers, and community members offered the focal students access to college-going capital outside of school.

Yosso\(^{12}\) argues that network ties to individuals other than institutional agents such as family members (familial capital) and peers\(^{13}\) and community members (communal capital) are important forms of capital that students leverage in college-going processes because these sources can help students access valuable college-going resources (Yosso, 2005). One particular resource students can access through network ties with their parents is moral capital (parents instill a sense of obligation in their children to attend college (Cooper, 1994)). Students can access two other useful resources through network ties to either family or community: linguistic capital (intellectual and social skills attained through communicating in more than one language) and navigational capital (skills of maneuvering through social institutions) (Yosso, 2005, pp. 79-82). Finally, Yosso (2005) suggests that aspirational capital (the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers) is another valuable resource.

In this chapter, I suggest that aspirational capital is a resource that comes from the students

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12 In her theory of community cultural wealth, Yosso suggests there are several forms of capital that individuals can leverage. Some forms are described as networks (i.e. familial) while others are described as skills (i.e. navigational capital, linguistic capital). So, I have adapted her theory of community cultural wealth to look at sources of capital (familial and communal) and types of resources that students can access via network ties to the two sources of capital (linguistic, navigation, aspirational).

13 While school peers spent a great deal of time with the focal students in school, they were not institutional agents nor were they gatekeepers to college-going capital available through the schools’ college readiness agendas and specific college-linking programs. Therefore, I include my investigation into the resources of college-going capital available to the focal students through their network ties to peers in this chapter.
themselves (though it certainly is also fostered by connections to family, friends, and community). Table 17 indicates which of these sources and types of capital each focal student reported drawing upon.

**Table 17: Sources and Types of Non-Institutional College-Going Capital**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of Capital</th>
<th>Types of Capital</th>
<th>Familial</th>
<th>Communal</th>
<th>Moral</th>
<th>Navigational</th>
<th>Linguistic</th>
<th>Aspirational</th>
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All of the focal students reported having connections to family members (familial capital) and many of the students reported having connections to peers and other members of their communities (communal capital). While all of the focal students mentioned drawing on moral and aspirational capital, few students reported drawing on linguistic and navigational capital. Considering that the majority of the focal students grew up in multilingual homes, why would these resources be less prevalent among the student interviews? Also interesting is that one student (Rafael) reported the presence of many resources via his social network (moral,
aspirational, linguistic, and navigational capital) while a quarter of the focal students (Irma, Kelly, Julian, and Quinn) reported the presence of just a few capital resources.

As I analyzed the data, I realized that the types of capital available through the sources of college-going capital (familial, communal, and self) were not universal; rather, the types of resources available through each source of capital could be broken down even further. I believe that breaking down each of these sources and types of capital into concrete buckets could be useful for high school staff and policymakers to see and acknowledge the capital that high achieving, low-income students can bring with them to school. In order to better understand the types of capital the focal students had access to outside of school, in the following sections, I analyze the patterns within each source of capital: familial, communal, and self.

**Familial Capital**

Yosso (2005) suggests that familial capital “refers to those cultural knowledges nurtured among familia” (p 79). She goes on to say that “familia” is not just the immediate family, but cousins, aunts, uncles, and grandparents. In analyzing my data, I found five resources that the focal students could access through network ties to family: (1) familiarity, (2) advisory, (3) practical, (4) logistical, and (5) Cooper’s (1994) moral capital (see Figure 3).
Familial Capital: Familiarity

Diego would help his uncle fix cars; he wanted to do that in the future and own his own shop (Diego, Chavez).

"[My dad’s friend] is teaching me to work on cars and he works for himself and all that" (Eduardo, Chavez).

"There was this one book that my dad had and it was just architecture. I would look through it and everything just looked so cool...I guess that got me to liking architecture and engineering" (Jacian, Southside).

Familial Capital: Advisory

"My mom doesn’t want me to go to something lower than a University she thinks it’s... not what you should be doing" (Andrew, Southside).

"We went to Metro last year, and DU last year too; they give me an opinion on what they think is right" (Lorena, Southside).

Familial Capital: Logistical

"Well I’m asking my cousin and my brother and sister for help ’cause they are attending schools at the moment" (Bayon, Southside).

"[My older sister knows the deadlines...[she] is going to help me... sign up for like FAFSA and look for scholarships and everything “ (Nicole, Chavez).

"My mom’s gonna help me look for [scholarships]”, she also helped with resume and essay (Alice, Chavez).

Older sister helped her study for the ACT, gave her packets of info about scholarships, told her about college (Nancy, Chavez).

Familial Capital: Practical

Mom drove him and his friend to the light rail station so they could get down to CCD to take the math class there (Jacian, Southside).

Mom set up a reading room at home for Rafael with air conditioning (Rafael, Southside).

"If I’m studying, my mom will ask if I’m hungry, or if I want her to make me food. They show a lot of interest in my work, which means a lot to me” (Lorena, Southside).

Familial Capital: Moral

"They’ve always wanted me to go to college" (Julian, Southside).

"My dad really encourages me. He’s the proud one, and the one I want to make proud” (Lorena, Southside).

"[My parents] are always pushing me [to think about college]" (Nancy, Chavez).

"Basically, we came here to Denver for my education, so I felt that ever since I got here, that was my goal, to go to school” (Eduardo, Chavez).

Figure 3: Familial Capital
One of the first resources associated with network ties to their parents that students gave evidence of was what I am calling *familiarity capital*. When asked why they were interested in a particular career or majoring in a specific subject, many of the focal students pointed to a *familiarity* with that career that came about at a point earlier in their lives when their parents introduced them to that topic. For example, Eduardo reported sophomore year that his dad’s friend introduced Eduardo to the auto mechanic career: “[his] friend is teaching me to work on cars and he works for himself and all that.” Eduardo later activated this access to college-going capital by choosing to research the auto-mechanic career for an assignment in AVID, a college-prep class at school, and later, by choosing to enroll at Front Range Community College in their auto mechanic program.

While the previous two chapters suggested that the focal students relied heavily on information they received from teachers and school staff to navigate the college-going process, some students alluded to the presence of *advisory capital* associated with network ties to their parents and siblings. I am calling this particular resource advisory capital because of the explicit opinions parents gave their children about which colleges they ought to consider. For example, Andrew had considered at one point following a “close friend” and his “girlfriend” to the Community College of Denver, he ultimately applied to the University of Colorado Denver in part because his mom “doesn't want me to go to something lower than a University; she thinks it's, I don't know, it's not what you should be doing.” Similarly, while Lorena thought about attending a community college first and then transferring to a four year college because her teachers said that would be “cheaper,” she ultimately decided to apply to and enroll at the University of Colorado Denver as well: “but now that me and my dad kinda talked about it and
he decided he was gonna really really help me with college and everything, so I might as well just go straight to CU Denver.”

Interviews with focal students seemed to suggest that *logistical capital* was another resource potentially available to them via network connections to their families. I am calling this resource logistical capital because students appeared to use this resource to navigate the actual process of applying to college and for scholarships. Many of the focal students reported looking to their older siblings for guidance because their siblings had navigated the process before and could offer advice and support. For example, Nicole’s older sister knew “the deadlines” for submitting the FAFSA and looking for scholarships. Nancy and Alma received help from their older sisters in the form of study material “packets” for the ACT. Few students reported receiving this same technical support from their parents, but Alice relied on her mother quite heavily for help typing her resume and essay.

Many of the focal students gave evidence of yet another resource available to them through ties to their families—*practical capital*. In this case, practical capital refers to the ways in which students appeared to leverage this resource in order to access and succeed in various college-linking programs at school. For example, Jacian took several college classes while he was in high school—some of which took place on the college campus in Denver. But, in order to access the college-going capital inherent in these courses, Jacian had to get to class. The fall of senior year, Jacian reported his mom would drive him and his friend to the train station so they could get down to CCD to take a college-level math class there. While his mom didn’t directly provide him access to dominant forms of college-going capital (concurrent enrollment course on UC Denver’s campus), she did help him access and activate that capital by providing transportation. As another example, like many of the students at Southside, Lorena took college
classes. Her parents helped her excel in these classes by ensuring she had time and space to do her homework. “If I’m studying, my mom will ask if I’m hungry, or if I want her to make me food. They show a lot of interest in my work, which means a lot to me.” When Lorena got into a specific college linking program her senior year, her father told her she did not need to get a part time job after all; he wanted her to be able to go to the Saturday workshops of the college program. Although it’s quite possible the students could have accessed institutional capital without these practical resources and support of their families in this way, driving Jacian to the train station and ensuring Lorena didn’t need to work allowed these students to more easily access and activate the college-going capital available through school.

In several different interviews, students frequently alluded to potential forms of moral capital (Cooper et al., 1994) associated with network ties to their parents. Broadly speaking, Cooper defines moral capital as parents instilling a sense of obligation in their children to attend college. In analyzing my data however, I found that there are even more specific sub-resources within this one resource: (1) long-term conviction, (2) desire, (3) encouragement, and (4) pressure (see Figure 4).
**Moral Capital: (long-term) Conviction**

"Mom wants me to go to college" (Quinn, Chavez)

"They've always wanted me to go to college" (Julian, Southside)

"Basically I thought about [college] from early on. It was thanks to my dad, that's through sixth, seventh grade I was at home with my dad" (Bayon, Southside)

"Since 5th grade, [my mom] said to apply to college, don't stay home" (Diego, Chavez)

"[My parent] put it in my mind really young that [college] was the only option" (Cathy, Chavez)

**Moral Capital: Desire**

"[My mom] wants me to go further in life than anybody in my family" (Rafael, Southside)

"[My parents] wanted us to have better lives and I guess they always wanted us to go to college since we moved here" (Jacial, Southside)

"[My dad says,] 'you're going to be the first to graduate [from high school] and go to college‘" (Elena, Chavez)

"Basically, we came here to Denver for my education, so I felt that ever since I got here, that was my goal, to go to school" (Eduardo, Chavez)

**Moral Capital: Pressure**

"[My parents] are always pushing me [to think about college]" (Nancy, Chavez)

"[My mom] didn't make me go to college but she put it in my head that 'I'm going to college' for sure" (Andrew, Southside)

"I know I'm going [to college]...it's never been a choice, it's like, you're going" (Nicole, Chavez)

"My grandpa... was basically pushing me to actually become a vet...and I told him... no matter what I would not stop pushing to become a vet" (Alice, Chavez)

**Moral Capital: Encouragement**

"[My parents] are my motivation [for going to college]" (Alma, Chavez)

"[My parents] always encourage us to keep applying and registering because they want us to go to college" (Alamar, Southside)

"[My parents] will encourage me...I will tell them what I am doing and they will encourage me to keep going" (Kelly, Southside)

"My dad really encourages me. He's the proud one, and the one I want to make proud" (Lorena, Southside)

"[My parents] support me with whatever I want to do, they're happy" (Nora, Chavez)

**Figure 4: Moral Capital**
At the most basic level, Quinn’s quote “Mom wants me to go to college” illustrates the moral capital available to all of the focal students through their connections to parents. Beyond that, however, several students suggested that their parents instilled in them a moral value of going to college from an early age (long-term conviction): “Basically I thought about [college] from early on. It was thanks to my dad, that’s through sixth, seventh grade when I was home with my dad” (Bayon) or “Since fifth grade, [my mom] said to apply to college, don’t stay home” (Diego). Many students also reported hearing their parents talk about college as a way to get a better job, a better life than they had (desire): “[my parents] wanted us to have better lives” (Jacian) and “[my mom] wants me to go further than anybody else in my family” (Rafael). Eduardo’s quote, “basically, we came here to Denver for my education, so I felt that ever since I got here, that was my goal, to go to school” suggests a sense of urgency and seriousness—he saw his family move to Colorado as a way for him to get a better education—and he activated that capital by graduating high school and going on to college.

While the focal students’ words suggest that all of their parents instilled a sense of moral obligation in their children to go to college, some parents appeared to do so by “encouraging” their students while others put “pressure” on their students. For example, Kelly reported, “[My parents] will encourage me…I will tell them what I am doing and they will encourage me to keep going”. Nora also suggested that her parents “support [her] with whatever [she] want[s] to do”. In contrast, Nancy and Andrew used language that suggests greater pressure to consider college: “[my parents] are always pushing me [to think about college]” and “[my mom] didn’t make me go to college but she put it in my head that ‘I’m going to college’ for sure.”

As I reported earlier, Chavez’ staff took a deficit perspective towards their parents: “It would be great if [the students] just had support from home even if [it’s parents] saying we know
that you can [navigate the college-going process]. You need to go to [college].” Yet, in light of these multiple examples of resources students alluded to having through connections to their parents, the perspective of Chavez staff is particularly frustrating. The previous examples illustrate not one—but five—resources that parents might offer their children: (1) familiarity, (2) advisory, (3) practical, (4) logistical, and (5) Cooper’s (1994) moral capital. If schools knew to look for these various resources that students might access outside of school via familial capital, would they be as likely to dismiss their parents’ contributions to the college-going process?

**Communal Capital**

In addition to familial capital (network ties to various family members), the focal students appeared to have access to communal capital (network ties to peers and community members) that offered them college-going resources. Yosso (2005) believes that individuals can access capital through connections with peers and other community members that can “provide both instrumental and emotional support to navigate through society’s institutions” (p. 79). In analyzing my data, I found that connections between the focal students and their peers and between the focal students and community members allowed the focal students to access the same four types of resources available to them through familial capital: (1) familiarity, (2) advisory, (3) practical, and (4) logistical (see Figure 5). However, as my data revealed, there were particular intricacies that differentiated these resources available through communal ties from the resources available through familial ties.
### Communal Capital: Familiarity

Her friends went to Metro, her sister went to metro, she wants to go to metro too (Alma, Chavez)

"I'm just going go to [CU Denver with my friends] and we'll work together at businesses" (Andrew, Southside)

"I like [DU] because... because I know someone that's gone there and they showed me around" (Lorena, Southside)

Wants to go to FRCC "cause um I actually have a friend that, started going there" (Eduardo, Chavez)

### Communal Capital: Advisory

"[A friend] told me not to [wait], that it was better to start and to go bit by bit." (Irma, Southside)

"My friend helped me learn the most about college; he told me not to settle, [and how I could] get to Mines" (Rafael, Southside)

"Heard [RRCC] is really good...and...it's easier to transfer to like one of the Universities, like the School of Mines" (Jecian, Southside)

Vetinarians told her CSU was a good vet school and that she needed to do well in math and science (Alice, Chavez)

### Communal Capital: Practical

He said his classmates went with the school to look at CSU “they told me I should go with them next week” (Alamar, Southside)

"Beginning of this year... my friends told me I should join, I [joined College Summit and put on a college fair]” (Bayon, Southside)

### Communal Capital: Logistical

Her friend (with an older brother in college)"knows the process" and could help Cathy with essays and application process (Cathy, Chavez)

Diego helped friends complete the FAFSA "they only talked to me for help" (Diego, Chavez)

Two of her friends were in Talent Search, a high school-college partnership, she "learned [about college and how to apply] from them" (Nancy, Chavez)

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**Figure 5: Communal Capital**

Just as some of the focal students appeared to chose to pursue particular careers based on their **familiarity** with that particular trade via connections to family members, some of the focal students alluded to the idea that they made particular college choices based on their familiarity...
with a certain college campus through network ties to friends. For example, several students suggested that they selected a particular college or university because they “knew someone” who went there: Eduardo wanted to go to FRCC “cause I actually have a friend that started going there” and Andrew wanted to follow his friends to CU Denver. Lorena, one of the few focal students who applied to selective, residential, four-year universities, felt comfortable about going to one of those schools because she knew someone who had gone to that same college and “showed [her] around.”

Just as some of the focal students alluded to the presence of advisory capital associated with network ties to their parents and siblings, some students mentioned the presence of advisory capital associated through their connections to peers. Yet, in analyzing the data, it appeared to me that the advisory capital associated with communal capital was much more strategic in nature than that associated with familial capital. For example, Irma considered taking time off between high school and college to earn money for college tuition. Her friend told her however, “[do not wait], that it was better to start [college right after high school] and go bit by bit.” As another example, throughout high school, Rafael had his heart set on attending Colorado School of Mines. However, when he was not accepted there, his friend told him to attend Red Rocks Community College instead because this community college had a special agreement with Mines: students who successfully completed two years in engineering prerequisites could automatically transfer to Mines with junior standing. Not only was this a way to get to Mines, but it would be cheaper in the long run. Rafael intended to enroll at RRCC because, as his friend said, “you really want to go to Mines, don't settle for something else, take the path that gets you there.”
The focal students also gave evidence of *practical capital* available to them through ties to their peers. Just as the practical capital available through familial ties helped students access college-linking programs at school, students seemed to suggest that ties to their peers also helped them learn about and access specific programs at school. For example, several of the focal students at Southside reported participating in College Summit at Regis College during the summer before their senior year. Kelly and Julian initially found out about this program through the program staff who had coordinated their summer program the year before at University of Denver. Even though Bayon had not participated in either of these summer experiences he thought about joining Regis’ program that continued into senior year through his connection to friends—“my friends suggested that I join.” He did join, and according to Bayon, “The College Summit program was pretty much teaching a small, selective group of students how to be college ready and how to be peer leaders amongst their peers and show them the way how to get stuff done.” It is likely that Bayon would not have had access to this capital if his friends had not asked him to join them in the College Summit Program.

Lastly, several focal students gave evidence of *logistical resources* that allowed them to more easily navigate the college application process that were available to them via connections to peers. For example, Nancy relied on her friends who were in Talent Search, a college-linking program at Chavez, to learn about college and how to complete her applications. Similarly, Cathy reported getting help with her essays and her applications through her friend because her friend’s older brother was in college and “knows the process.” What is interesting about Cathy’s example is a possible intersection between communal and familial capital: Cathy got help from her friend (communal) who previously had gotten help from her brother (familial).
These examples illustrate the various ways in which peers were instrumental in the college-going process for many of the focal students. Several of the Lone Rangers and the Connected Ones at Chavez reported more easily accessing college because of ties they had to their friends. The Lone Rangers, who had the fewest network ties to specific institutional agents, reported having connections to peers who helped them become familiar with college campuses and helped them complete various logistical aspects of the college application process. Even at Southside, where the focal students were more likely to have connections to institutional agents, the focal students reported accessing college-going capital through the practical resources available to them through network ties to peers. They were able to join specific college-linking programs they previously weren’t recruited for and they received strategic advice on how to get to the colleges they wanted to attend. Even amidst this evidence, neither of the schools acknowledged the meaningful ways in which students could help one another access college. Even if this might be because the school staffs took these peer relationships for granted, it is important to appreciate the many ways in which high achieving low-income students can and do leverage communal capital to access college.

**Navigational and Linguistic Capital**

In the previous two sections, I demonstrated the various references that the focal students made to two sources of college-going capital: familial capital and communal capital. Within each source, there were several resources available to the focal students. I would now like to discuss two more resources of capital that some students provided evidence of: *navigational capital* and *linguistic capital*\(^{14}\) (see Figure 6).

\(^{14}\) In analyzing my data, I realized that students could access these resources through both sources of familial and communal capital. So rather than discussing them twice in the above two sections, I discuss them here.
Approximately a quarter of the focal students across both schools were undocumented and many of these students provided evidence for navigational capital: a resource that appeared to help them maneuver through a college-going process that was initially created without undocumented students in mind. While Eduardo and Alamar reported accessing navigational capital through connections to family members (familial capital) to help them complete applications for Deferred Action, Rafael reported accessing navigational capital through connections to peers (communal capital). He had hoped to attend Colorado School of Mines and wanted to understand how the application process applied to undocumented students. When the interviewer asked if he had talked to the admissions staff about issues of paperwork, Rafael responded:

I was kind of embarrassed like to ask them… but my friend did it for me. She went up [to the CSM admission rep at a college fair] and asked, ‘Okay. So my friend doesn’t have papers, but what does he have to do?’ And he said, ‘Oh, his requirements are the same like GPA and everything. The only difference that he’ll have is that he’ll have to pay out-of-state.’

Figure 6: Navigational and Linguistic Capital

Communal and/or Familial Capital: Navigational

"[My brother and I] already filled out all the applications for paper work and we’re just waiting for the stuff" (Alamar, Southside)

"[My family helped] with the Deferred Action thing. So they’ve been helping me with that" (Eduardo, Chavez)

"I was kind of embarrassed to ask [the admissions staff] but my friend did it for me... So my friend doesn’t have papers, but what does he have to do?" (Rafael, Southside)*

*To be discussed in more detail in the following text.

Communal and/or Familial Capital: Linguistic

"Because my uncle gets mad at people, [I have to sell the cars]" (interested in automechanics and business management) (Diego, Chavez)*

"[My mom] did not know English so I went and translated [my brother’s court proceedings]" (interested in legal studies) (Rafael, Southside)

*To be discussed in more detail in the following text.
Rafael’s comment is striking for a few reasons. First, his “kind of embarrassed” feelings about his status highlights one of the many ways in which navigating the college process was not easy for undocumented students: he might have been worried about being exposed as undocumented even though he wanted to learn about the admissions process to the School of Mines. Second, in saying, “my friend did it for me,” he highlights one of the ways in which students accessed navigational capital—through network ties to peers. In spite of his undocumented status, Rafael activated that capital by eventually completing the application process for Mines.

Even fewer focal students provided evidence of linguistic capital in the data. What is interesting about both examples, however, is that access to linguistic capital in both cases resulted in student interest in particular careers. For example, since the beginning of high school, Diego had been interested in auto mechanics. He began working in his uncle’s auto mechanic repair shop, fixing cars and eventually selling cars. As he discovered he was actually quite good at selling cars, his career interests evolved:

*Interviewer:* What are your current plans for college?

Diego: College? I want to study business management.

*Interviewer:* That’s changed a little bit [from just auto mechanics], not a lot, since the last time we talked. What’s drawn you to that?

Diego: Well, I’ve been noticing myself a little more that I like dealing with people. ‘Cause I don’t get mad easily when I’m selling something or something.

*Interviewer:* So you feel like you’re a people person?

Diego: I actually am a people person. That’s actually my job right now, too.

*Interviewer:* Dealing with towing?

Diego: No, I have to sell the cars ‘cause we buy cars, too, and sometimes we fix them and stuff. So my uncle can’t sell them sometimes ‘cause he gets mad at people, so I have to do it, and then sometimes people can’t believe it ‘cause I’m selling the car.

Because his uncle got “mad at people” when he was selling and Diego did not indicates to me that Diego had a way of communicating with others that was empathetic and productive. Comments like “I actually am a people person” suggest that Diego realized he had this set of communications skills—linguistic capital—that could be beneficial if he pursued business
management. Rafael reported a similar experience. At one point in high school, he briefly considered a career in law. He learned about this profession because he had to translate his brother’s court proceedings from English into Spanish for his mother:

Well, [I’m currently interested in] law because suddenly I have had a lot of experience with it because my brother is not the best person…and if [my mom] had to go to the courts, she did not know English so I went and translated for her [and] got to learn everything about what the lawyer said…I saw how the lawyer would do things and how the judge was and I thought it was a cool job because you get to see how things have different sides and finding out stuff and solving mysteries and stuff and I always thought maybe I would be a detective a lawyer or a judge.

Not only did Rafael have the ability to translate legal proceedings for his mother, but phrases such as “see how things have different sides,” “finding out stuff,” and “solving mysteries” suggest that Rafael had ability and interest in research skills.

Not only did the resources embedded in navigational and linguistic capital appear to help the focal students navigate the college-going process, but they helped them realize they had a set of skills and abilities that would serve them in the future. What is particularly interesting about these resources is the flexibility in their source. Many of the examples suggest that navigational and linguistic capital are accessed through familial capital for the most part, but there are clearly other factors involved and so they can sometimes be accessed through communal capital as well. Given that these two resources could be accessed through network ties to multiple people, why then, did so few students provide evidence of these resources? Could it be that the focal students just did not recognize navigational and linguistic capital as beneficial? Or was the lack of evidence for these resources due to just these few students having access to these forms of capital? Or was it because no interview questions specifically asked about linguistic and navigational capital? This area of capital is one that needs to be pursued further in future research.
Aspirational capital

Like navigational capital and linguistic capital, aspirational capital is another one of Yosso’s capitals that I have chosen to define as a resource rather than a source of capital due to her definition: “the ability [or skills] to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers” (Yosso, 2005, p. 77). But unlike navigational capital and linguistic capital which seem to be available through network ties to family (familial capital) and to peers and community (communal capital), aspirational capital seems to be something that comes from the focal students themselves with influences of moral capital. In analyzing the data, the focal students appeared to provide evidence for three specific forms of aspirational capital: (1) long-term conviction, (2) desire, and (3) perseverance (see Figure 7).
"I've just always wanted to go to college and that's pretty much what I'm doing now" (Julian, Southside)

"Since I can remember [I've thought about going to college] because I always knew I was going to go to college" (Lorena, Southside)

"I always knew I didn't want to...after high school not go to college" (Cathy, Chavez)

"I've always wanted to go to college. I think that's the purpose I came to high school for" (Eduardo, Chavez)

"I don't WANT to go, I KNOW I'm going" (Nicole, Chavez)

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**Aspirational Capital: Desire**

"I don't want the same struggles, I want a high skilled job" (Rafael, Southside)

"Yes, it's like. I HAVE to go to college [to get a better job]" (Nora, Chavez)

Diego wanted to go to college because he "saw how tired dad is when he gets home from work" (Diego, Chavez)

"89%" sure she'd go to college, to "get a higher career" (Quinn, Chavez)

"I want to go to college and do something better than my parents couldn't, just live their dream, just go to college" (Nancy, Chavez)

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**Aspirational Capital: Perseverance**

"I think now, I see more possibility in things... I have the possibility of looking for scholarships or work in order to achieve what I want" (Irma, Chavez)

"I think I'll just keep working hard until I get in" (Alamar, Southside)

"When I actually want to do something, and I care for it, I will try my hardest to achieve it. And if I don’t do it the first time, I'll try it again" (Bayon, Southside)

"Everything [particularly her difficult college classes] is possible if you put your mind to it" (Alma, Chavez)

"I'm the one who has to impress myself [about getting into college]" (Elena, Chavez)

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**Figure 7: Aspirational Capital**

Quotes such as Cathy’s, “I always knew I didn’t want to…after high school not go to college” and Eduardo’s “I’ve always wanted to go to college. I think that’s the purpose I came to high school for” suggest a long-term conviction that these students saw themselves as future college students. Many students attributed their desire to go to college to wanting better jobs than their parents: Nancy wanted to go to college “and do something better than my parents” just as Quinn
wanted to go to college to “get a higher career.” Lastly, students provided evidence of aspirational capital in the form of perseverance: Alma’s quote, “I think now, I see more possibility in things… I have the possibility of looking for scholarships or work in order to achieve what I want” and Alamar’s quote, “I think I’ll just keep working hard until I get in” are particularly striking because both students faced challenges related to documentation status. They both very much wanted to go to college even facing those particular hurdles.

Throughout high school, all of the focal students continued to see college as an end goal for themselves—even when they were faced with low ACT scores, teacher comments suggesting that they wouldn’t make it in college, complications in the college application submission process, and insufficient funding to pay for college. Indeed, in Chapter 4, the Lone Rangers at Chavez reported feeling as though they had to navigate the college-going process on their own because the school staff didn’t help students like them. Even in the face of those adversities, the Lone Rangers provided evidence of various types of aspirational capital that helped them to maintain their goals of attending college.

This previous section provides strong evidence against the schools’ claims that families and communities could not (or would not) contribute college-going capital for their students. All of the focal students alluded to the presence of two sources of college-going capital: familial capital and communal capital. Furthermore, the focal students provided a variety of evidence for resources of college-going capital available through those network ties including moral capital, linguistic capital, navigational capital, and aspirational capital. Within many of these forms of capital my analysis of the data showed multiple sub-forms of capital. For example, within aspirational capital, students described their long-term convictions, motivation for better careers than their parents, and perseverance to continue trying to get to college. While some students
provided evidence for several of these forms of aspirational capital, others pointed to just one or two. Similar patterns could be seen across the various forms of capital students accessed outside of school. Regardless of how many different sources and/or types of capital students provided evidence for, it is clear that every single focal student had access to college-going capital both in and outside of school.

However, even with access to these various sources and/or types of capital, the focal students would not benefit unless they activated the capital (Lareau, 2000; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Monkman, Ronald, & Theraene, 2005; Simon 2007). Moreover, other individuals react to a student’s activation of resources (Lareau, 2000). So it was important to me to heed Lareau’s suggestions and “look at the contexts in which capital is situated, the efforts by individuals to activate their capital, the skill with which they do so, and the institutional response to the activation of resources” (p. 277). At this point, I have highlighted the sources and types of capital that the focal students alluded to accessing in and out of school. What remains to be explored is the ways in which students chose to activate the various types of capital they did have access to. To do so, I look at the case of Bayon, a prospective engineering student from Southside, to understand the ways in which students might activate one source of capital over another and the ways in which institutional agents and structures responded to their activation.

The Case of Bayon

Like several of the focal students at Southside and Chavez, Bayon reported having a large social network—he had access to resources inside and out of school (peers, adults, school policies, college linking programs, family experiences) that he leveraged to access college. He, like the other focal students, activated some resources and then others at various times. What is unique about Bayon’s case are the ways in which he always appeared in conversation with
various network ties and how, regardless of which ties he activated, they always appeared to complement each other.

Bayon began high school interested in pursuing engineering at four-year universities like the Colorado School of Mines or CU Boulder. By the end of high school, his plans shifted slightly. With his low grades and decreasing interest in math, he discussed pursuing an electrician degree at a community college:

I’ve seen what I can and can’t do and I’ve realized I’ve – my mentality of “I already know this, why do I need to know this or practice this?” has held me back from progressing to the point where I’m confident enough to take Calculus I, Calculus II, Calculus III. So I’m conflicted between that, of taking the high road and I say, “Can I really handle it?” or just going for two years and applying like a certificate for electrical, electricitan – ah, mouthful, as an electrician….There we go.

If, after some years as an electrician, he wanted to continue his education, he thought he would pursue a degree in engineering at a four-year school. Bayon appeared quite content with this plan and had the support of his family, his peers, and his teachers. Throughout high school, Bayon suggested leveraging multiple sources of college-going capital that ranged from familial capital to school-wide policies to participating in several specific programs. At different times, he chose to either activate capital from his family or from his school to navigate the college process. The institutional agents and structures that Bayon faced responded positively to his activation—which in part probably facilitated his ease in accessing college.

Outside of school, Bayon provided evidence for several resources embedded in familial capital including moral capital, familiarity capital, advisory capital, and logistical capital. His parents talked about college from a young age: “Basically I thought about [attending college] from early on. It was thanks to my dad, that’s through sixth, seventh grade I was at home with my dad [and he talked about it].” His parents also offered him support and encouragement as he developed career goals: “my dad and mom love the idea that uh I want to be, that I have stepping
stones to become an engineer, and they, they even say even if you stop at being an electrician, they still support me.” Throughout high school, Bayon activated these resources of moral capital by continuing to pursue his college-going plans even when he realized he might not have the grades nor drive to pursue engineering.

Bayon first learned about engineering from his uncle (familiarity capital embedded in familial capital).

The first time I thought about being an engineer was when I met a mechanic. When I was young I would help my uncle with the house, the car, just go with him and help with whatever. I really enjoyed this so I started to research it and then I found out about mechanical engineering.

His quote, “I really enjoyed [helping] so I started to research it and then I found out about mechanical engineering” suggests that not only did Bayon have access to this specific resource but he activated it to learn more about engineering.

Bayon also turned to network ties with his brother and sister and cousin who appear to have offered him access two other resources available through familial capital: advisory and logistical capital. First, they offered him strategic advice about college admissions. For example, Bayon reported junior year, “I talk with them too, like – “Hey, what I should I do about this? What should I do about this? Would it be a smart idea to go straight into the university? Or go to like a community college and then transfer?” In future conversations with Bayon, his siblings and cousin appeared to be quite influential in developing his plan to attend community college first: “My brother…[is] the one that made me realize engineering is for if I step my A game up [and study harder] and he says, he says CCD has a two-year electrical program or a construction program if I don’t think I can go engineering.” Bayon also saw his cousin transfer from a community college to a four-year school and he liked that idea as a way to save money:
My current plans – I'm liking my cousin’s idea, that I should see if the college that I want to go to can accept transfer credits. Because then I would want to go two years to a community college, get my basic classes out, and then two years at the university. Because that'll save so much money.

These conversations with his siblings and cousins helped him make a plan that would save him money and fit better with his interests in academics.

Bayon also provided evidence for logistical capital (another form of familial capital) when he reported his siblings and cousin helped him to complete college and scholarship applications:

Well I'm asking my cousin and my brother and sister for help too 'cause they are attending schools at the moment….my brother, once again, he’s the one that showed me, “Okay, here’s the CCD website; here’s the Red Rocks; and here’s the courses for this, this, and this.”

According to Bayon, “Last year, my brother [completed the FAFSA] with my sister and they went through hell and back, they messed up, it was tragic and they wrote down everything they shouldn't do and when we did financial aid [for me this year] we did, it was like 'snap' done.”

Bayon activated the college-going capital cultivated from the past experiences of his siblings to facilitate his college-going process.

Bayon also provided evidence for aspirational capital. In the previous section, I suggested there are three sub-types of aspirational capital: long-term conviction, desire for a better job, and perseverance to keep trying. While some focal students provided evidence for just one sub-type of aspirational capital, Bayon referenced two of the three forms. He reported that he had considered attending college from a young age and believed he would do well in college if he persevered: “Because when I actually want to do something, and I care for it, I will try my hardest to achieve it. And if I don’t do it the first time, I’ll try it again and hope for the best.”
There were many resources Bayon accessed at school that complimented the resources his family provided him. At the beginning of high school, his teachers seemed influential in telling him about different majors and colleges:

Most of my teachers talk to me about engineering, and my freshman year teacher Ms. Phelps would always tell us about engineering and how you doing and how it works and what they do. This year my math teacher Mr. Collins brought in an engineer and she showed us what she did.

Not only did Bayon’s teachers tell him about engineering but they brought in engineers and showed him and his classmates “what she did.” These conversations and experiences helped Bayon better understand what it meant to be an engineer.

The school-coordinated college visits helped him understand differences in college campuses. For example, Bayon mentioned that since middle school, his schools coordinated visits to college campuses: “thanks to field trips from the school I have gone to CU Boulder, CSU Pueblo.” These trips helped Bayon and other focal students experience different campuses. According to Bayon, CSU Pueblo “was really out there. It was like, ‘Wow.’ It was so far away. That's why I was like, ‘I don't want to go there.’ It's like no one is there.”

As he progressed through high school, Bayon had access to other sources of college-going capital in school: concurrent enrollment, College Summit, and the district-funded scholarship program which all gave him insight into what college might be like. And at the end of high school, he was able to access the college counseling center which helped him to complete some of the logistical components of getting to college, including applying for scholarships.

Throughout his high school career, Bayon appeared to constantly be in conversation with others. He was listening and gathering advice, he was trying out ideas, he was asking for opinions, and then acting on them. When he attended the school-sponsored college visits, he would activate the college-going capital he had gained from his family and his teachers about
engineering as a major by asking the colleges about majors, “I would always ask, do you specialize in engineering, and most of the time they said yes. Okay, which fields of engineering? And they would be aerospace or civil and there was another one that I couldn't pronounce correctly.” Once his siblings gave him the idea to consider attending community college to get an electrician degree instead of majoring in engineering at a four-year college, he asked his teachers about this new plan. One of his math teachers actually reinforced the idea that he might have a hard time jumping right into an engineering program:

She said, uh, if you was to take the math class now for engineering, you would be wasting money because I might have to take it one, two, even three times again that would be pointless I should just go back from the beginning and re-learn myself to engineering.

Bayon reported that another teacher talked about the possibility of going to community college before university: “My AP US history teacher Mrs. Rhodes, she was giving one of her emotional speeches again, uh, gotta love that woman, she gave an emotional speech…she all began from a community college…[to move up].” Language such as “gotta love that woman,” “emotional speech,” and “she all began from a community college” suggest that Bayon looked up to this teacher and was inspired that she began her teaching career at a community college. It almost seems like he saw her story as evidence—it would be OK if he started out in community college—that he could still achieve his dream of becoming an engineer one day if he wanted. Finally, when Bayon began applying to college, not only did he get help from his siblings, but he turned to the Future Center at school and asked questions like “Can I have some scholarship applications?”

There are two interesting points to these previous examples. First, Bayon was always asking questions which suggests he had a sense of agency when navigating the college-going process. As Chapter 4 illustrated, that sense of agency was particularly important for the
students at Chavez. While Bayon attended Southside, a school that made a greater effort to afford all students access to college-going capital through network ties with institutional agents, he still benefited from this sense of agency. He was able to get so much information about the college-going process from different sources.

Second, he was always confirming ideas he had heard in other places. He learned about engineering first from his uncle and his teachers and then he asked colleges about their engineering programs on his tours. He went to his teachers to find out what they thought about the idea of going to community college and then transferring to a university—an idea he first got from his siblings. He also went to the Future Center to get additional help on college and scholarship applications while he was getting help from his siblings at home. In this sense, it appears as though he was always trying out ideas and leveraging network ties from both home and from school to navigate the college-going process. When he activated the college-going capital he accessed from home at school, the institutional agents responded favorably. They often supported the ideas he brought from home regarding his college-plans and they seemed to fill in any gaps in the information and technical aspects of applying. In Bayon’s case, he had access to a large social network, took initiative in navigating the college-going process, and demonstrated ways in which he activated various resources and reported positive feedback from institutional agents regarding his attempts at activation.

What did the college-going trajectories look like for other students who had smaller social networks, who were less apt to take initiative in the process, who activated fewer sources, or who found themselves butting up against institutional agents when attempting to activate capital? Analyzing the remaining 19 cases in this way would provide even greater insight into the ways in which high achieving, low-income focal students might access and activate college-
going capital and the ways in which institutional agents might respond to that capital. Although analyzing all of the focal student cases with these questions in mind was outside the scope of my dissertation, I did find a few ways in which Southside and Chavez could have better responded to the capital activation of the focal students.

**Leveraging Connections among Families to Better Support High Achieving Students**

In analyzing my data, I found two ways in which Chavez and Southside could have leveraged connections with their families and communities in order to better support high achieving focal students without using many additional resources.

First, rather than taking a deficit perspective and assuming that the focal students and their parents did not bring college-going capital to school, the schools could have recognized, acknowledged, and built upon the various forms of capital students and families did bring. As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Chavez staff reported that their families didn’t bring any college-going capital at all with them to school—rather the staff had to inform the parents why going to college was important. Southside staff was a bit better and recognized the moral capital that their parents offered the students. Yet neither school seemed to recognize capital available to the students through their network ties to peers or their community nor did the schools recognize valuable resources such as linguistic and navigational capital. As I have demonstrated though, the focal students provided evidence of familial capital and communal capital and of the resources embedded in moral, linguistic, navigational, and aspirational capital that could help the students more easily navigate the college-going process.

Even as many of the parents reported turning to the schools to help their students access college, the parents were involved in their children’s college-going processes in their own ways. Take for example, Bayon’s parents. According to Bayon, his parents were “not that involved,
“honestly” in his college-going process. Bayon’s teachers did not remember his parents attending parent-teacher conferences, and Bayon’s counselor did not know who Bayon nor his parents were. However, when I analyzed the interview transcripts of Bayon’s father, I found that he was not as uninformed as his son or school staff imagined him to be. Although he did not graduate from college, Bayon’s father had attended Front Range Community College for one year for “general studies” and had ideas about what types of colleges would be good for his children and how his children might be able to finance their education. He seemed familiar with his older son’s current educational situation: Bayon’s brother had enrolled in a two-year college and had plans to transfer to a four-year college. Bayon’s father indicated that he did not want Bayon to have the same “transfer” experience, because he believed it was wasted time. Bayon, his father thought, should go straight to a four-year college. Bayon’s father also had ideas about how to finance Bayon’s education. For example, he was aware that while Bayon would not be applying to colleges until senior year, Bayon needed to look for a grant, as his older brother was able to get a grant for tuition and books. He also knew of “work study” and believed that his son would be able to work while he attended school. These examples illustrate that Bayon’s father was not as “clueless” about and “uninvolved” in the college-going process as his son and school staff made him out to be.

Furthermore, what is particularly interesting is that Bayon’s father tried to increase his own social network to gain college-going capital that his son could use. For example, he leveraged his connection to the research team member that was interviewing him to ask for help with applying for grants and to learn more about work study. Perhaps if Southside had been more inclusive of parents in their school-wide college-going culture, it is possible that Bayon’s
father could have built network ties with more institutional agents, which in turn could have allowed him to gain college-going capital that Bayon could then have accessed.

Second, Southside and Chavez could have taken more care to respond in a positive manner when their students and parents attempted to activate college-going capital. Take for example, the case of Nicole. One of the Lone Rangers at Chavez, Nicole began her high school career on what looked like a clear track to college: throughout high school, Nicole hoped to become a veterinarian and considered attending a selective four-year college such as CU, CSU, or even a four-year school out of state. She began high school in the IB academy, the most elite track at Chavez, and had some of the highest GPAs and test scores of the focal students. Yet, by senior year, she just barely graduated and had no plans of enrolling in college in the fall. How did Nicole’s path change so drastically over the course of high school? Although her father and sister attempted to activate their own capital to help her, I believe that she ultimately faced too many institutional barriers towards the end of high school that made it difficult for her to remain on track to pursue her college dreams.

Junior year, her father attempted to activated college-going capital by talking to her teacher when Nicole had trouble keeping up with an IB level science class after being transferred into this course mid-semester. Nicole commented that her dad tried to make an appointment with that teacher to talk about the situation,

Nicole: [the teacher was] like, ‘Oh no, I can't do it’.
Interviewer: So, he cancels on your dad.
Nicole: Yeah, he cancels on my dad. And then he rescheduled a meeting, and my dad couldn't go 'cause he had work. [My dad] told [the teacher], ‘I can only go on this day,’ and he scheduled it for another day. My dad's like, ‘I can't get off work again. I got off work, and then I get there, and you're like, 'Oh, I can't.'”

Nicole’s father then tried to get the dean involved, but again ran into difficulties setting up a meeting. He went to the parent teacher conference to talk with the teacher and the dean but
neither staff member was at the conference. According to Nicole, the school gave him “her name and [said] like, ‘oh yea, you can come back’ and my dad's like ‘well, I have work and we have like 3 weeks more of school, what's the point?’” Nicole’s father demonstrated an attempt to activate college-going capital when he went to the school to speak with institutional agents about his daughter’s grades. Yet, remarks such as “oh yeah, you can come back” suggest that the institutional agents did not respond encouragingly to his activation.

Senior year, Nicole attempted to apply to CU Boulder. Her entire application was ready to go, her father sent in a check for the application fee, and all she needed was a copy of her high school transcript. She took the initiative to ask the counselor if he could submit her transcript to CU for her. Yet, she soon learned that he never submitted her transcript with her application. CU Boulder sent her application back, and, according to Nicole,

[CU Boulder was] like 'it's a little late and we want your end of the year transcripts now and a reason of what happened, a letter saying what happened and then we'll tell you if you're approved or not but you can always apply again in the spring; they even sent my money back from the application and everything.... My dad was mad at the school, he was really really mad [about the transcript thing]...then they sent his money back and he was like "oh why did they do this?"...so my dad was upset about it but he knows that, I'll get it done.

By this point, Nicole and her father had fought her biology teacher about her grades and had tried to talk to the high school dean about the teacher only to be turned away by the school each time. So when her father found out he got his deposit back from CU, no wonder a sense of sadness and helplessness were heard in his words, “oh why did they do this?” At this point, he didn’t do anything to advocate for his daughter. What is particularly striking about these two examples is that in both cases Nicole attempted to activate college-going capital: she wanted to make sure she had all of the classes she needed in order to be competitive for CU Boulder, and she wanted to make sure CU Boulder received her completed application. Yet, when she attempted to
activate that capital, not only were her efforts but also her fathers’ were thwarted. The multiple instances in which institutional agents acted against Nicole and her father (perhaps by accident, but even so) compounded each other, making it harder and harder for Nicole to access college. Although Nicole began high school with college aspirations that included four year schools, both in and out of state, she ultimately ended up not enrolling in college at all.

What if Nicole’s teacher had been more understanding of the community in which he worked? What if he realized that Nicole’s father was choosing to lose a day of wages in order to talk to him about Nicole’s progress in school so she could be certain she was on track to gain admission at CU Boulder? What if the school had been more willing to connect her father to the Dean when he went to parent-teacher conferences? What if the counselor had been more forthcoming about not sending in her transcript? She wished she had known she could have sent in the transcript herself—what if the counselor had given her that option? These questions all address the willingness (or lack thereof) of the high school staff to recognize and value the times when their students and parents attempted to activate the college-going capital they had.

This chapter brings to the foreground the many forms of college-going capital that high achieving, low-income students can access outside of school. This is particularly important because, to date, the majority of research on college access and social capital has focused on the forms of capital available to students inside the school building. Furthermore, I attempted to add to the current literature regarding the ways in which high achieving, low-income students might choose to activate various sources of capital when given the option of several sources of capital from which to choose. Taking the time to analyze the case of Bayon was particularly interesting in this respect. Bayon built on the capital he accessed at home by taking those ideas and resources to school and leveraging network ties with institutional agents. His case highlights
many of the ways in which students attempted to access and activate their various sources of college-going capital and the ways in which the institutions responded to their attempts at navigating the college-going process. While his network seemed large compared to some of the other focal students, I am left wondering, what does his network look like in comparison to his high achieving, high-income peers? And while his school offered him a variety of resources to leverage, what would his opportunities have looked like at a higher-resource high school? In the following chapter, I begin to address these inequalities related to college readiness as I discuss what I have learned in writing this dissertation.
CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

My findings indicate that at the school level, teachers, counselors, administrators, and students are all steeped in the language around “college readiness.” Take for example, the principal at Chavez High School who wanted to make college readiness “the cornerstone of how you get out of school” and the counselor at Southside High School who reported that every document sent home to families “related to college readiness.” Even the focal students picked up the language: Bayon described one of the goals of a college-linking program as “pretty much teaching a small, selective group of students how to be college ready and how to be peer leaders amongst their peers and show them the way how to get stuff done.” Nonetheless, Steve Brown, the Honors and AP physics teacher at Southside, voiced legitimate concerns about the line between a valuable phrase and an empty buzzword:

College readiness is kind of a buzzword throughout education. I don’t know if it is beyond Denver, but it, I mean we have a Director of College Readiness in the school. So those words are around, but I am not sure how much it is internalized by students. As a teacher, I don't [really] use the word college readiness because I am kind of stubborn about it, it is just a buzzword.
So then, I am left to wonder, what does “college readiness” actually mean? How is it actualized for high achieving, low-income students? In studying the cases of Southside and Chavez over the past several years, I have come to a few conclusions.

First, limited resources and pressure to prove to the state that their students were “college ready” clearly played a role in the ways that Southside and Chavez implemented “college readiness” agendas. Both schools focused their limited funds on creating school-wide college readiness initiatives as well as offering select groups of students additional opportunities through college-linking programs and high school-college partnerships coordinated at their schools, with the intent that all students gain at least some college knowledge. Southside chose to prepare all students for college beginning in ninth grade by providing all students multiple opportunities to individually connect with institutional agents. Southside was able to accomplish this mission in part through their partnerships with multiple colleges and universities (each student had the opportunity to visit a different college campus every year of high school) and through the district-funded college counseling center. Chavez chose to prepare students for careers first and college second, often providing information in large group settings. Contrary to the literature that suggests distributing college-going information via pamphlets and handouts is not very effective, this strategy actually worked for some of the focal students at Chavez in part because they had also sought out individual connections with institutional agents.

Second, network ties to institutional agents, families, peers, and community members played an important role in the ways that the focal students navigated the college-going process. Some of the focal students at Chavez (the Connected Ones) connected with individual institutional agents at their school (such as the counselor, teachers, coordinators of college-linking programs) while other focal students (the Lone Rangers) reported few connections to
institutional agents. At Southside, the focal students all reported talking with a teacher or a counselor about their postsecondary plans at some point in high school and all but two students participated in several college-linking programs. Outside of school, the focal students across both schools provided evidence of connecting with family members and peers in order to access resources related to the college-going process.

Even still, many of the focal students seemed to have a hard time constructing and maintaining social networks that offered them access to college-going capital. It often felt as though the students were walking through a minefield, attempting to pick up a smattering of tools, skills, and knowledge along the way that might help them navigate the college-going process. I was left wondering if the whole notion of “college readiness” puts students, teachers, and districts in a comfortable position of assuming that college-going will all fall into place for students. Take for example, the case of Chavez: the counseling staff believed they offered students college-going capital through school-wide presentations and yet only really provided one-on-one attention to students who “sought out” help. While that agenda worked for the Connected Ones, the Lone Rangers waited and waited and waited for their school staff to provide them with the knowledge needed to access college—and that knowledge never came. Or take for example, the case of Southside’s Alamar—he had a variety of sources of college-going capital but once his cross country coach left senior year, his college-going trajectory seemed to fall apart. Outside of school, the focal students provided evidence of several sources of college-going capital and resources that helped them navigate the college-going process, but there did not appear to be any strategic approach to building and maintaining college-going social networks. As an example, Bayon provided examples of familial capital outside of school. His parents appeared to provide a great deal of moral capital, his siblings and cousins helped him develop his
postsecondary plans and complete the application process, and he activated several instances of aspirational capital. In school, he had several connections to institutional agents and specific college-linking programs. Bayon even appeared to be in communication with these multiple network ties—confirming advice he received from each source of capital by questioning another source. And yet, there was never any evidence of his various network ties communicating with each other, strategizing about how Bayon might position himself in the college-going process. So, even if “college readiness” has become a buzzword in education, there is still a clear need to coordinate and build upon the social networks of high achieving, low-income focal students so that they too might access college.

High resource high schools are often not bothered by “high-stakes testing and punitive accountability measures such as college readiness measures because the pass rates of students are extremely high” (Barnes & Slate, 2013, p.3). And so, they can afford to spend much greater amounts of time and money on individualized, high-level college counseling for students (Weis et al., 2014). The college readiness agendas at high resource high schools look very different from the agendas set forth by Chavez and Southside. For example, for the high schools in Class Warfare (Weis et al. 2014), “ensuring that students are prepared for selective four-year colleges is clearly ingrained in the very fabric of each institution, and implicitly assumed to be part of one’s preparation for life” (p. 45). School-wide assumptions that not only suggest that students apply to competitive colleges and universities, but also that they are obvious candidates for that type of higher education form the basis of a school’s college readiness agenda—counselors help each individual student to “pick where to go” and to help each student build their “academic and extracurricular portfolio” (p. 40).
Furthermore, outside of school, wealthier students often have an easier time developing and cultivating social networks that offer them access to college-going capital. Oftentimes their parents in collaboration with their schools invest “all available resources into positioning them for the college applications process” (Weis et al., 2014, p. 46). Bloom (2008) suggests that “advantaged students gain familiarity about the landscape of higher education [by developing] networks of people that can provide critical knowledge about applying for college and financial aid” (p. 6). In her ethnographic study comparing the postsecondary experiences of students attending Yale and a nearby non-selective four-year college, Mullen (2010) found that the more advantaged students “drew on a remarkable set of resources, including the collective knowledge of an educated and informed group of family, friends, and school personnel to navigate the college application process as well as their families’ economic resources to cover multiple campus visits, exam-preparation courses, and application fees” (p. 206). Even when high-income students have access to strong, individualized college readiness agendas at their schools, they or their parents see that even this school-wide support is not enough to gain the greatest educational benefits. So, families will hire private college counselors to “provide access to specialized knowledge, coach on tests and essays, ‘hand-hold’ students through the admissions process, keep the admissions process organized and the students on schedule” (McDonough, 2005, p. 26).

This specialized college counseling affords high-income students greater opportunities to successfully apply to and enroll in some of the nation’s most selective colleges and universities (Bozick & Lauff, 2007; Engberg & Wolniak, 2010). Mullen (2010) argues that the differences in resources greatly impact “the degree of constraint” (p. 206) that students face in the postsecondary options available to them. In other words, the more resources a student has, the
more options they have in choosing which college or university to attend. In this sense, it seems as though “college readiness” for high achieving, high-income students and their schools does not mean the same thing as the phrase “college readiness” used at my two focal schools.

**Contributions to the Field**

Because policymakers at the federal and state level have begun holding schools accountable for the college readiness of their students (often with few guidelines) and because little is known about how college readiness is being actualized for low-income, minority students (Militello, Schweid, & Carey, 2011), I was particularly interested in answering the following question in my dissertation: how do low-resource schools implement college readiness policies that include college knowledge components in addition to academic preparation when the schools are under pressure to adopt multiple reforms? When schools face sanctions for not preparing all students for college, can schools also implement college readiness policies that specifically support high achieving, low-income students?

**College Counseling**

Researchers have documented that counselors in low-resource high schools, largely due to time and resource constraints, most often find themselves giving classroom and grade level presentations about college preparation or passing out lists of activities for college-bound students to complete (McDonough, 1997; Perna et al., 2008) rather than individually asking students “what they are wondering or are worried about, or providing experiences in which the students discover answers for themselves” (Bloom, 2008, p. 6). The case of Chavez supports these previous findings: the majority of counseling at Chavez took place in large grade-level and classroom-level presentations. Counselors did meet with students individually but only if the students “came and made an appointment.” Alma, like many of the Connected Ones, reported
making an appointment with her counselor to get help completing college applications senior year. However, Diego, like the other Lone Rangers, commented multiple times throughout high school that the counselors didn't help students like him and that he "][couldn’t] make an appointment with the counselor." Without a sense of opportunity and agency, the Lone Rangers were left with a relationship with counselors that took place in mass settings without the individual attention that the Connected Ones received.

While my case study at Chavez confirms previous findings that counselors often provide students college-going information in large group settings, it unfortunately also reinforces Bloom’s (2008) argument, “building college-going cultural capital around the landscape of higher education is necessarily a social and relational activity that requires interpersonal contact with a wide range of actors over time” (p. 4). To help low-income students access and leverage the interpersonal contacts and knowledge needed to navigate the college process, researchers recently have begun looking at college coach programs (Farmer-Hinton, 2008; Stephen & Rosenbaum, 2011). While these researchers found that college coaches can provide students with individualized information and some network ties, neither study looked at the relationship between the high school counseling center and the college coach program. Specifically, how do high school counselors’ responsibilities change when there is also a college coach program in the school? Is a small group of students served by both types of counseling, or does the presence of a college coach program provide more students access to college counseling?

Encouragingly, in contrast to the case of Chavez, my case study of Southside suggests that not all counseling in low-resource high schools provides students information solely in large group settings. At Southside, the grade-level counselors implemented an initiative senior year that required each student to meet multiple times with their counselor to talk about their progress.
in their classes and their postsecondary plans. Lorena worked with the counselor to enroll in college-level courses while still in high school and felt like the counselor helped her because “she knows my interests.” In addition to the individual attention Southside focal students received from their counselors, the focal students all had the opportunity to meet multiple times with the Future Center counselor—effectively a “college coach” (Southside, but not Chavez, had the benefit of a Future Center funded by a local philanthropy). According to Alamar, “There’s this one teacher that stays there [in the Future Center] the whole day, just calling students in to help them out with scholarships and signing up for college and stuff… I might be going to the Future Center [a lot over the next few weeks] because they’re starting to call me a lot of times.” Counselors used their one-on-one postsecondary planning meetings with seniors to direct the students to the Future Center counselor for help with college and scholarship applications. In other words, the institutional agents at Southside sought out each focal student, ensuring that even those who didn’t take the initiative to make appointments with their teachers and counselors had connections to not one, but several, adults who could provide college counseling in school.

This contrast between Chavez and Southside reveals the vital importance of addressing and expanding resource allocation. Even with pressures to meet specific benchmarks, the counseling staff at Southside could ensure students were receiving individualized college counseling partly because of the additional resources available through the philanthropy-funded college coach program. Chavez, on the other hand, did not have a college coach program; this difference in resources seemed to account for some of the differences in the college readiness agendas of the two schools. Specifically, Chavez just didn’t have the resources to ensure each student received individualized attention regarding their postsecondary plans.

**School-Wide College Readiness Cultures**
Counselors are not the sole providers of college knowledge. Rather, researchers have found that schools can promote college knowledge by creating a college-going culture in which teachers, counselors, and the principal work together to design a clearly communicated mission and vision of college readiness for the entire school (Bloom, 2010; Conley, 2001; Corwin & Tierney, 2007; Neinhusser, 2013; Tierney, 2009). However, not all school-wide college-going cultures are created equally. Hill (2008) identified three distinct college counseling strategies that a school might implement: traditional, clearinghouse, and brokering. While her identification scheme is extremely helpful in categorizing the college-going culture of various schools, her work alone does not show the variation that is possible within a school. To add to the literature around school-wide college-going cultures, I asked, in what ways did Southside and Chavez represent these various strategies? Did focal students within the same school experience different college-going cultures?

On a broad level, Chavez appeared to illustrate Hill’s traditional college counseling strategy because of their focus on career readiness first and college readiness second and their tendency to provide college counseling in large-group settings and through handouts. In contrast, Southside High School appeared to illustrate Hill’s “brokering” strategy because of their mission to provide college counseling to all students beginning in ninth grade; their attempts at ensuring all students had individual contacts with teachers, counselors, and high school staff throughout high school to talk about postsecondary plans; and their desires to include families in the college-going process by including information about college “on everything we send home.” Yet, when I took a closer look at the individual case studies, I found that not all focal students experienced the traditional college counseling strategy at Chavez nor the brokering strategy at Southside. For example, the Connected Ones appeared to experience a brokering—or at least a clearinghouse—
strategy at Chavez. One of the Connected Ones, Quinn, spent time on various college campuses and learned about several possible majors through conversations with campus staff and students. She returned to Chavez and asked a teacher about the differences between majors and careers in athletic training or sports medicine. Ultimately, she applied to Metropolitan State University because she had learned they have a program in athletic training. At Southside, all of the focal students had access to individual connections with teachers and counselors and spent time on a variety of college campuses by the time they were seniors. The majority of the focal students even participated in a variety of college-linking programs. Yet two students, Alamar and Irma, only accessed college-going capital through the school-wide initiatives at Southside. Thus, rather than experiencing the brokering strategy, I would say Alamar and Irma experienced the clearinghouse strategy at Southside. Even if a school appears to illustrate a particular college counseling strategy, these examples demonstrate the variations within a school, even among just the high achieving students. So, although a school might appear to emulate the “brokering” strategy in which the school attempts to make a strong organizational effort to help all students and families access substantial college-going information, there could be students within that school who do not actually experience and benefit from that college counseling strategy. Just because schools are implementing “college readiness” strategies does not mean that all students will gain the college knowledge needed to navigate the college-going process.

Specific College-Linking Programs

The second research problem I addressed in my dissertation was the lack of empirical research regarding the ways in which partnerships between high schools, college service-providing organizations, colleges and universities might impact high achieving, low-income students. To ensure that students still receive some form of college counseling, schools have
begun partnering with specific college linking programs to prepare students to be college ready (Gándara & Bail, 2001; Perna & Swail, 2001; Schultz & Mueller, 2006; Stephan & Rosenbaum, 2013). Researchers have reported that these programs can offer students access to college-going capital through social network ties with peers and high school and college staff (Cates & Schaefle, 2011; Chajeski, Mattern, & Shaw, 2011; Martinez & Klopott, 2003). While these researchers found positive effects of individual college linking programs, students often participate in several, and the overall impact on participating students is not well understood in the current literature. To add to this growing area of research, I asked, in what ways do students’ social networks change and grow when students participate in more than one program or when programs share information and resources with each other?

Not surprisingly, my research confirms the findings of previous researchers: participating in these types of programs allowed students to learn about college “experiences” and to be “guided” through the application process. For example, Alma took a couple of college classes in high school through the partnership with Community College of Aurora and reported that this experience made her feel comfortable in attending Metro State. Kelly, Jacian, Julian, and Rafael had the unique opportunity to spend time sleeping in a dorm room, eating in a dining hall, and navigating college life for a week. While these experiences undoubtedly gave students access to experiential college-going capital, perhaps what is most striking about these college partnerships was the network ties the focal students developed with “college coaches” who expanded the number and kind of colleges students considered. Not only does my research confirm that these programs were valuable sources of college-going capital for high achieving, low-income students, but my research brings novel insight to this body of work in two ways. First, once the focal students got involved in a college-linking program, they were more likely to join other
programs—often because institutional agents coordinating these programs placed students in multiple programs. For example, through the interviews, I learned that Southside students who participated in the first summer residential program were connected to the second summer residential program because the program leaders tapped the same people. According to Julian, “I did Summer Link at the University of Denver, which is also another program where you stay for five days and then out of one of the counselors that was there, we were friended on Facebook and then he just asked if I wanted to go [to the summer program at Regis University] and it was a week before the program was gonna start.” Kelly also reported finding out about the summer residential program at Regis in the same way because she had participated in the summer residential program the year before at DU. These examples suggest that access to college-linking programs and high school-college partnerships was unequal. Specifically, once a student got connected to one program, they were suddenly connected to others. While this snowball effect appeared to help Julian and Kelly—their social networks grew larger and more varied—it could be harmful to other students who never had the opportunity to participate in a college linking program or high school-college partnership in the first place.

Second, due in part to a sense of agency, some students were able to navigate through and among the college-linking programs when they felt they had exhausted resources in one program and wanted to access resources in another. Take Alice, a focal student at Chavez, who, after junior year, decided to quit AVID because, according to her, "the teacher who was supposed to do the [AVID class] senior year thing did [it] my junior year. And she wasn't giving me the good grades I was deserving. She was telling me that I couldn't do the work when my college [course] teachers were giving me A's." Alice was frustrated that she was doing well in her college-level coursework and that same work ethic wasn't being rewarded by her AVID teacher.
She felt that she was not getting enough out of AVID compared to the college classes she was taking so she decided to break the tie that connected her to AVID. As another example, Quinn, also a focal student at Chavez, had been in AVID throughout high school but arrived on campus to find she was not initially scheduled for AVID senior year. She felt that AVID was going to help her get to college so she advocated for herself and asked to be put back into AVID senior year.

While Alice and Quinn were able to navigate among the various college-linking programs partly due to their sense of agency, it was not as simple for other students. Even when students knew about the existence of these programs, if they did not take the initiative to get in or were not noticed by institutional agents, then they did not access these programs. In turn, this meant they had smaller social networks and less access to college-going capital.

Why were some of the focal students able to successfully activate college-going capital in their schools while other students were not? I think one of the key differences that distinguish the Connected Ones from the Lone Rangers (at Chavez) and the focal students at Southside who participated in specific college-linking programs versus Alamar and Irma who did not is the academic background of the students. The Connected Ones generally had higher test scores and GPAs than their peers. The counseling staff also knew the Connected Ones better because the Connected Ones were “good at coming and asking questions”. Perhaps because these students were known to their teachers for their academics and to their counselors, they were more likely to be chosen for other opportunities. Similarly, at Southside, academic performance and familiarity with teachers and counselors made it easier for students to connect to more specific college-linking programs.
Theoretical Implications

My dissertation is grounded in the theories of social and cultural capital historically considered necessary to access college (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988) and the theory of community cultural wealth, or forms of capital developed and used by students who have been historically underrepresented in four-year colleges (Yosso, 2005). I believed that taken alone, none of these theories would allow me to address the complexities of navigating the college-going process. Instead, I chose to combine components of each to create a more dynamic, cohesive theory of social capital, which I termed “college-going capital” in this dissertation. This theory offers a way to overcome the deficit perspective so often applied to low-income students while also understanding that students must be able to navigate a system defined by the dominant class (see Figure 1 below).

![Figure 1: College-Going Capital](image)

In order to better understand the forms of college-going capital students had access to outside of school, I turned to Yosso’s (2005) definition of community cultural wealth. I began by first analyzing my data for examples of two sources of capital: familial capital (network ties to family members) and communal capital (network ties to peers and community members).
Then, I looked for specific resources or types of capital available to the focal students via those network ties including Cooper’s (1994) definition of moral capital and Yosso’s definitions of linguistic capital, navigational capital, and aspirational capital. I also drew on Luna and Martinez’ (2013) investigation of the ways in which students might access Yosso’s forms of capital outside of school to navigate the college-going process. Not surprisingly, I found similar examples in my own data to the ones they highlighted in their work.

Yet, my contribution to our understanding of these forms of capital that students can access outside of school is represented by the ways in which I categorized the broader categories of capital into sub-resources. For example, I found that within familial capital (network ties to family members) and within communal capital (network ties to peers and to community members), the focal students provided evidence for four specific resources of college-going capital: (1) familiarity, (2) advisory, (3) practical, and (4) logistical. The focal students provided evidence for a fifth resource directly related to familial capital: Cooper’s (1994) moral capital. Because moral capital was so prevalent among the student interviews, I categorized this resource into four sub-resources of capital: (1) long-term conviction, (2) desire, (3) encouragement, and (4) pressure. I found that few students referenced linguistic capital and navigational capital, yet when they did, they provided evidence for accessing these resources through either familial capital or communal capital. Finally, I looked for examples of Yosso’s aspirational capital and noticed that the focal students provided evidence for several sub-resources within this resource: (1) long-term conviction, (2) desire, and (3) perseverance. Interestingly, the first two sub-resources of aspirational capital are the same as those that I found in moral capital, which suggests that the aspirational capital coming from the students themselves is indeed very much tied to familial capital.
The focal students generally provided evidence for several of the sub-resources of capital within each source and resource. For example, Bayon provided evidence of two types of aspirational capital: he had considered attending college from a young age (long-term conviction) and he believed he would do well in college if he persevered (perseverance). One particularly interesting observation about these sub-resources of capital is the overlap in resources available to students through their network ties to familial capital and communal capital. In particular, both forms of capital offered the focal students access to perspectives regarding their college and major choices and how best to navigate the college-going process. While Andrew and Lorena’s parents offered them advice on which school they ought to attend, their advice was more general than the advice some of the focal students received from their peers. For example, Rafael’s friend knew Rafael had his heart set on attending the Colorado School of Mines and so he encouraged Rafael to pursue the special transfer program between Red Rocks Community College and School of Mines when Rafael didn’t get into Mines: “[If] you really want to go to Mines, don't settle for something else, take the path that gets you there.” More work needs to be done in this area, but it is clear that peers played an important role in helping the focal students navigate the college-going process. By describing and categorizing the various forms of college-going capital available to students outside of school, I hope that school staff will have an easier time seeing, acknowledging, and building upon the college-going capital that their students can bring with them to navigate the college-going process. In turn, I hope that this understanding facilitates connections, rather than barriers, across all of the key players in students’ social networks, and that it also keeps schools from taking a deficit perspective toward the college-going capital of their high achieving, low-income students.
Although Yosso (2005) would argue that high school students can benefit from attending a high school that acknowledges and builds upon the capital of non-dominant students and their families, the capital available in community cultural wealth is not enough when these families and students are competing against the dominant class who has access to more highly valued and widely available social, cultural, and economic resources in the college process. Thus, the theory of community cultural wealth cannot be used by itself to understand how high achieving, low-income students navigate the college-going process because it ignores the fact that there are structural inequalities in access to dominant forms of capital that are useful for accessing college. For example, Cabrera and la Nasa (2001) propose that students and parents must understand the college admissions process early on so that parents can ensure students are enrolled in algebra and other gatekeeper courses in middle school, which subsequently enable students to enroll in high school courses that are aligned with competitive college admissions. Even if parents support their child’s education by having high aspirations for the student and by working more than one job so that their child can complete his homework, rather than work, in the evenings, without the type of dominant forms of capital suggested by Cabrera and la Nasa, students will have a hard time navigating the college process. Therefore, the dominant theories of social capital as defined by Bourdieu and Coleman must also be taken into account.

So, I began my dissertation by analyzing the forms of college-going capital available to the focal students within their schools. I categorized these “institutional” sources of college-going capital into two categories: school-wide initiatives and individual connections through specific-college linking programs. While the majority of the school-wide initiatives offered at Chavez focused on large group settings with few opportunities for the focal students to connect individually with institutional agents, all of the school-wide initiatives at Southside had an
individual component to them, allowing the Southside focal students to form network ties with
teachers, counselors, and college staff. The focal students at Southside developed network ties
that allowed them to access various resources embedded in college-going capital: information
about college majors, differences among college campuses, and technical advice on completing
college and scholarship applications. By combining aspects of theories of social and cultural
capital historically considered necessary to access college (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988) and
the theory of community cultural wealth, or forms of capital developed and used by students who
have been historically underrepresented in four-year colleges (Yosso, 2005), I have provided a
greater understanding of the ways in which high achieving, low-income students develop their
social networks and the ways in which these students leverage different sources and resources of
college-going capital to navigate the college-going process.

**Implications for Policy and Practice**

My research has several implications for policy and practice. My first recommendation
for policymakers and school staff is to consider the ways in which “college readiness” can be
promoted earlier than the final years of high school. This is particularly important for high
achieving students who have aspirations to attend college but are waiting for their school staff to
take the lead in helping them navigate the college-going process. For example, Elena, one of the
Lone Rangers at Chavez, commented that she was interested in attending college in the first
interview sophomore year. However, by senior year, she still did not “really know the names” of
the colleges that she was interested in attending. In contrast, all of the focal students at
Southside could easily point to several colleges by name and describe what they liked and didn’t
like about different campuses. This was partly because Southside had a future center and
partnered with four different universities and colleges to give each student the opportunity to
visit college campuses by the time they were seniors and applying to college. By visiting multiple campuses, the focal students at Southside could see themselves “fitting in” at some schools but not others. For example, Jacian mentioned touring Colorado State University Pueblo (a land-grant state university), Colorado School of Mines (a selective public engineering college), and University of Colorado Boulder (the state’s flagship research university) through Southside’s coordinated college visits. Kelly visited the University of Denver several times and reported, “with the trip to [the University of Denver] I kind of thought, ‘This would be a good school for me’.”

Policymakers and school staff should also consider the ways in which high achieving, low-income students become connected to specific college-linking programs. As my research demonstrates, focal students often got connected to specific college-linking programs like AVID and GEAR UP in middle school and continued their participation through high school. For example, Andrew talked about getting involved in AVID in middle school: “Well [my teachers and counselor] just placed me in it ’cause they said – well they saw my [state achievement test] scores and whatever. They [the scores] were pretty good so they wanted me to better myself in the future.” Andrew also joined GEAR UP in middle school after hearing a presentation: “They had came to my middle school…and they were just talking about, like, a little scholarship [$10,000!] that supports you through college…you have to sign up for it. I signed up.” He continued in GEAR UP and AVID throughout high school and was able to access college-going capital that helped him complete college applications and receive a scholarship for college.

Understanding that not all students can participate in specific college-linking programs and that many schools have few resources, my second recommendation is that schools evaluate their current college-readiness agendas in order to identify ways in which their school-wide
initiatives could better foster individual connections between students and institutional agents. Specifically, when the entire school staff actively seeks to connect with students, schools can ensure that more students have access to college-going capital without placing an additional burden on the counseling staff. For example, although the school-wide college readiness initiatives at Chavez often took place in large group settings, they did have two initiatives that could more easily facilitate the development of network ties between students and institutional agents. One such initiative, the “Adopt-a-Senior” program, connected each interested high school senior with a high school staff member who would “adopt” them for senior year. Staff members were expected to informally check in with the student on a weekly basis and ensure that they were on track to graduate; in doing so, they had the opportunity to learn if students were struggling with the college-going process and if so, connect the students to individuals who might be able to help. For example, the dean who “adopted” Elena could have connected her to the counselor, or to the Metro Excel program staff whom Alma and Quinn indicated helped them complete the FAFSA, or to the CU Boulder representative whom Alice indicated helped her complete an application to CU Boulder. One of the biology teachers at Chavez participated in the Adopt-A-Senior program and talked to her students “in the halls” to make sure they were “applying to various colleges”. The fact that she talked to students “in the halls” between class suggests that the Adopt-A-Senior initiative did not take much time or effort on the part of the teacher; yet, it allowed her students to build network ties to an institutional agent that helped them access college-going capital. If school-wide college readiness initiatives actively included the entire school staff, then schools could possibly facilitate the expansion of the social network of the students to other institutional agents without placing too much burden on counselors.
My last recommendation for policymakers and school staff is to consider the ways in which they currently respond to high achieving, low-income students and their parents when they attempt to activate college-going capital. Take for example, the case of Nicole, a focal student at Chavez who began her high school career on what looked like a clear track to college: throughout high school, Nicole hoped to become a veterinarian and considered attending a selective four-year college such as CU, CSU, or even a four-year school out of state. She began high school in the IB academy, the most elite track at Chavez, and had some of the highest GPAs and test scores of the focal students. Yet, by senior year, she just barely graduated and had no plans of enrolling in college in the fall.

Throughout high school, Nicole attempted to take action to make sure she had all of the classes she needed in order to be competitive for CU Boulder and that CU Boulder received her completed application. Nicole’s father tried to support her, and when she was having trouble in a biology class, he tried to make an appointment to talk with the teacher; when the teacher missed the meetings, her father tried to talk to the high school dean about the teacher; when she applied to CU Boulder, he tried to help by sending in an enrollment check. Yet, each time that Nicole and her father attempted to activate their capital, their efforts were thwarted. The multiple instances in which institutional agents acted against Nicole and her father (perhaps on accident, but even so) compounded each other, making it harder and harder for Nicole to access college. Although Nicole began high school with college aspirations that included four-year universities both in and out of state, she ultimately ended up not enrolling in college at all.

What if the staff at Chavez had been more understanding of the community in which they worked? What if her teacher had realized that Nicole’s father was choosing to lose a day of wages in order to talk to him about Nicole’s progress in school so she could be certain she was
on track to gain admission at CU Boulder? What if the school had been more willing to connect her father to the Dean when he went to parent-teacher conferences? These questions all address the willingness (or lack thereof) of the high school staff to acknowledge the capital brought by their students and families. If schools take more care to recognize and value moments in which their students and parents attempt to activate the college-going capital they have, I believe that schools can facilitate the development of much stronger social networks of their students, which in turn can facilitate how they navigate the college-going process.

**Challenges and Recommendations for Future Research**

Despite its multiple strengths and contributions to the current literature, my dissertation reveals a couple of challenges, which are important to discuss here. First, in order to place a boundary on the size and scope of my dissertation, I chose to focus on college knowledge, the component of college readiness that is less understood than academic preparation. But, academic preparation also plays a key role in college readiness for a couple of reasons. First, students “continue to be differentially positioned within their schools by virtue of prior academic preparation” (Weis, Cipollone, & Jenkins, 2013). In other words, access to institutional agents and specific college-linking programs depend on one’s prior academic preparation. Second, students must meet particular benchmarks to gain admission into four-year colleges and universities and to pass out of remedial education courses in community colleges. If a student doesn’t have the grades or the test scores, then they will have a hard time getting admitted to some schools no matter how well they understand the higher education landscape. Take, for example, the differences in academic preparation among the focal students at Southside and Chavez. On average, the Southside focal students scored higher on the ACT (23) compared to the focal students at Chavez (18). With higher test scores, focal students from Southside were
more likely to meet CCHE admission cut scores to public institutions in Colorado, which is perhaps one reason why the focal students at Southside generally applied to more selective colleges than their peers at Chavez. Even among the focal students at Chavez, the Connected Ones had higher test scores and GPAs than the Lone Rangers, and the Lone Rangers believed that the school only helped students with higher GPAs. It is clear that academic performance influences postsecondary outcomes and so it must continue to be included in discussions around college readiness.

Therefore, I suggest that a future direction would be to reanalyze the data at hand to better understand the ways in which the schools, communities, and families offered the focal students access to college-going capital as it relates to academic preparation. How and where do students access this capital? If they have multiple network ties that lead them to college-going capital as it relates to academic preparation, which sources do they choose to activate? Do the same sources that offer college-going capital as it relates to college knowledge also offer academic preparation? Or are they different sources? These are important questions that need to be addressed in order to help researchers, schools, and policymakers gain a full understanding of what college readiness means.

My second challenge also related to placing boundaries around the size and scope of my dissertation. In particular, the sheer amount of data meant that I needed to make decisions about where in the college-going process I wanted to place my focus. I was most interested in understanding the ways in which the focal students accessed and activated college-going capital in and out of school in order to navigate the college-going process while in high school. So, I chose to focus on the early stages of the college-going trajectory: learning about colleges and majors, learning about the application process, completing scholarship and application...
components, and making final postsecondary plans. The one stage of the college-going trajectory that I didn’t have the opportunity to study was the process in which students go from being accepted, to enrolling, to stepping onto the college campus in the fall. As I analyzed the data however, I found that this is a key area to understand as it relates to network ties and college-going capital. For example, in their final interviews, many of the students shared their concerns about not knowing what was supposed to happen once they were accepted into college. One student wondered, “how to choose your classes and stuff. I know they're probably gonna help us. They told me that they do it during admissions or something like that. But, I'm still like confused.” Another student wanted to know when orientation would occur: “When are we going to start, ya know? When's everything official?” These student quotes show why exploring the transition between high school and college has become a key need: as Greene and Vedantam (2013) suggest, “high schools often don't see kids as being their responsibility (anymore) and the colleges don't see these kids as being their responsibility yet” (p. 1). Faced with these barriers, and without institutional supports, underrepresented and low-income students might not enroll come fall (Arnold, 2008; Daugherty, 2012).

So, I suggest reanalyzing the current data as well as analyzing the data acquired through follow-up surveys one and two years post high school to better understand how the focal students accessed and activated college-going capital in the transition from high school to college. The current literature provides a good starting point. For example, Castleman and Page (2012) conducted an experimental study in high schools located in Dallas, Philadelphia, and Boston in which high school counselors would offer two to three hours of counseling for graduated seniors intending to enroll in college in the fall. Southside’s school district appeared to offer similar college counseling meetings for students who received district-funded academic scholarships. In
another study, Castleman and Page (2013) invited graduating high school seniors in Minnesota, Dallas, Philadelphia, and Boston to sign up for a program called “Summer Nudging” where they would receive a text or e-mail every couple of weeks asking questions like, “Filled out your financial aid forms? Are you registered for orientation? Get your transcripts in?” (Lerner 2013, p.1). Southside’s senior class was required to complete a high school exit survey that asked students to list the name of the college they planned to attend and their phone number. It would be interesting to analyze the follow-up data to learn if the focal students were indeed contacted about their college plans by someone at Southside or Southside’s district over the summer. It would also be useful to learn how the focal students relied on their network ties to family members and peers to access college-going capital that would help them transition from high school to college.

Lastly, the use of secondhand data (i.e. data collected primarily by others and not for the specific purposes of my research questions), which allowed me to conduct a longitudinal study of the college-going trajectories of high achieving, low-income students, made it difficult to fully understand which forms of college-going capital the focal students chose to access and activate. While I was able to demonstrate the forms of college-going capital available to the focal students through their network ties to institutional agents and their community, it was difficult to capture the full extent to which students accessed that capital. For example, only one student reported accessing capital through the ACCESS college-prep study hall initiative at Chavez even though the counselor reported that all students were placed into an ACCESS class. So, I was left wondering, was Nicole the only focal student who participated in ACCESS? Or was it because the focal students weren’t asked specifically about their participation in each school-wide college readiness initiative? I believe that using this secondhand data provided me with just a snap shot
of the social networks of students because under the original study, students were interviewed once a semester without any specific follow-up questions over time about their connections to peers, family members, or institutional agents that they had previously mentioned as a source of college-going capital. Furthermore, the original interview protocol was not created to ask specific questions that could explore all of the college-going capital network ties a student might have had access to and/or activated. Therefore, I suggest exploring lingering questions about access and activation via the theory of ego-centric social network analysis. I would propose to replicate the current study by conducting a case study of two low-resource high schools with 10 focal students at each over the course of three to four years, with a focus on fully understanding what the social networks of each focal student look like as they relate to college-going capital.

**Final Thoughts**

My dissertation is particularly useful in a time in which the opportunity gap is only widening among high- and low-income students who have college aspirations. While there are many structural forces outside of schooling that influence the low rates at which low-income students enroll in college, the colleges these students choose to attend, and their postsecondary outcomes, I believe that high schools can either improve or corroborate these alarming trends depending on how they enact college readiness initiatives specifically for high achieving, low-income students. In times of reduced funding and pressure to meet state accountability measures, it makes sense that low-resource high schools often have few resources to commit to cultivating the necessary social networks for their students to easily navigate the college process. Yet my findings suggest that high achieving low-income students can benefit if their schools (1) create school-wide college readiness initiatives that facilitate individual connections, (2) ensure that students have multiple opportunities to connect to specific college-linking programs throughout
high school, and (3) recognize and leverage the college-going capital that these students draw on from outside of school. In doing so, high schools can help low-income students cultivate social networks rich in college-going capital and thereby increase these students’ chances of getting into and attending college.
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APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

Student Interview Protocols:
1. Interview 1 (spring of sophomore year):
   a. Do you have any time during the school day (in any of your classes) to talk about your plans for college or a career? If so, how often does this happen? What do you talk about?
   b. How often do you talk to your college guidance counselor? How often do you visit the counseling office for information? Do you get what you need there?
   c. What extracurricular activities were you involved in last year? This year? How do you feel when you are participating in them?
   d. What do you think you will do once you finish with school?
   e. What would you like to do once you finish school?
   f. Who do you talk to about going to college? About what you will do once you finish school? What do you talk about with them?
   g. Does the subject of college attendance or a college major ever come up in school? With friends? With family? Who talks about it, and what do they say?
   h. Have you taken any steps to investigate colleges or college majors? If so, what steps?
   i. How confident are you that you will go to college? What could really help or really get in the way of your going to college?

2. Interview 2 (fall of junior year):
   a. Think of someone you know who is in college.
      i. How is that going for him/her?
      ii. What experiences has he/she had?
      iii. Do you know what he/she is majoring in?
      iv. How is that going?
   b. Think of your 5 closest friends at school.
      i. How many do you think will be going to college?
      ii. What will they major in?
      iii. How much do you and your friends talk about these things?
         1) What do most students do when they graduate from here?
   c. What are your current plans for college?
      i. Where would you like to go?
      ii. What would you like to major in?
   d. Has this changed from the last time we talked?
   e. What are the things that you think colleges look for in an applicant?
      i. Where did you learn about these things?
   f. Have you taken any steps to learn about specific colleges or majors? What have you done?
   g. What next steps do you think you should take to prepare for college? When do you think you will work on this?
   h. Who do you (or do you expect to) turn to for help with college decisions and applications?
      i. [For each:] How do they help you (or how do you expect them to help you)?
i. Have there been any events or activities about college at your high school? What were they?

3. **Interview 3 (spring of junior year):**
   a. Do you think you have taken or scheduled all the courses you need for high school graduation?
   b. Do you think you have taken or scheduled all the courses you need to get into college? [Would be helpful to know which college(s) s/he is considering when answering this question.]
   c. Some questions about kinds of people you know: Think of someone you know who is in college.
   d. What college does he or she attend?
   e. How is that going for him/her?
   f. How often do you talk about college with him/her? What do you talk about?
   g. Do you know what he/she is majoring in?
   h. How is that going?
   i. Think of your 5 closest friends in high school.
      i. How many do you think will be looking for a full-time job after graduating from high school? What kinds of jobs do they want?
      ii. How many will be going to college?
      iii. What colleges do they want to attend?
      iv. What will they major in?
      v. How much do you and your friends talk about plans for future jobs?
      vi. How much do you and your friends talk about plans for college?
   j. What about your college plans?
      i. How much do you want to go to college? Why?
      ii. How sure are you that you will go to college? What makes you sure/unsure? What concerns do you have about going?
      iii. Have you completed the ICAP (Individual Career and Academic Plan)? In what ways did it help you prepare for college or the future?
   k. Some more questions about your college plans [if planning for college; skip this section if student not planning for college]:
   l. What are your current plans for college?
      i. Where would you like to go?
      ii. What would you like to major in?
   m. Have your plans for college or a major changed at all since the last time we talked?
   n. Have you taken the ACT yet?
      i. If already taken, how did it go? Did you prepare in any way for that test? If yes, what did you do?
      ii. If not already taken, have you prepared in any way for that test? If yes, what did you do?
      iii. What score are you hoping for on the ACT?
      iv. Do you know what ACT score is required for the college you want to attend?
   o. Do you know of any other things required by the college you want to attend?
   p. Have you taken or do you plan to take the SAT or any other college placement tests this year?
      i. If yes, which ones?
ii. If no, what do you know about these other tests? Would you like to take them?

q. Do you think you will be a competitive candidate for college? Why or why not? Are there some things you could do to make yourself more competitive?

r. Do you think there is a good match between what you are planning to do in college and what you want to do in a job after college? Why or why not?

s. So far, who or what has helped you the most with your preparations for college? What kind of help have you gotten?

4. Interview 4 (fall of senior year):
   a. What do you think are your school’s expectations for students once they graduate? Do you think you and your peers will meet these expectations? Why or why not?
   b. Picture yourself a year from now. You are 18 or 19. It’s your first year out of high school. Tell me about a day in your life.
      i. What are you doing?
      ii. How are you spending your time?
      iii. Where are you living?
      iv. What is your next step in life?
      v. What kind of college would you like to go to? (name of school, 2-year/4-year, urban/rural, big/small, private/public, commute/residential)
      vi. What would you like to major in?
      vii. Has majoring in science or math ever appealed to you? Why or why not?
      viii. Have your ideas about college or a major changed since last year? If so, how and why?
      ix. When did you first start thinking about college? (Probe: Did you always see yourself as someone who would go to college? Why or why not?)
      x. Why do you want to go to college? What, for you, is the main purpose of college?
      xi. What are the things that you think colleges look for in an applicant?
      xii. How do you think you will compare with other students who will be applying to the same colleges as you?
      xiii. (Refer to list of colleges on cover sheet questionnaire) Why have you chosen these colleges? How did you create this list?
      xiv. What do you think will be the most important factors in choosing the best college for you?
   c. How involved are your parents/guardians in helping you plan for college? What expectations or hopes do they have you? Do they want you to go to college? If so, why? What do they do to help you? What more or less would you like them to do?
   d. How involved have your guidance counselors or teachers been in helping you plan for college? What types of things have they done? How often do you talk with them about college? What more or less would you like them to do?
   e. What are your closest friends planning to do when they graduate from high school?
   f. What do you think about their plans?
   g. Can you update me on what your siblings are doing now?
      i. What do you think about what they are doing now?
      ii. What do your parents/guardians think about what your siblings are doing now?
h. So here is what you said last time we talked (take from Student Interview 3; mention their ambitions, where they said they wanted to go to college, potential major, potential career, etc.). How have you changed? What do you think happened?

5. Interview 5 (spring of senior year):
   a. [start with what are their plans for the future/college?, then reflection to follow]
   b. Now that you have (almost) finished the college application and selection process, what do you wish you had known about any part of the process at the start?
   c. What parts of the college application or selection process did you find particularly difficult or confusing, and why?
   d. Did you have any trouble getting the information and material you needed for the application? If yes, what were the problems?
   e. Did you participate in any kind of program (AVID, Gear Up, Precollegiate or visit the Future Center) through your school?
      i. [if yes] Tell me about this experience.
      ii. How has it helped you with the college process both during and after you applied?
      iii. Was there anyone in particular who helped you?
   f. Which colleges did you end up applying to? Where were you accepted?
   g. Have you made a decision about which college to attend? Which one will it be and why?
   h. What was the most important factor in making your final decision about which college to attend?
   i. Where do you plan to live during college? (On campus? Off campus? With family or friends?)
   j. Overall, how do you feel about starting college in the fall? (scared, excited, worried, etc.) What makes you feel this way?
   k. At this point, what do you plan to study in college? Do you think that might be your major?
   l. How do you plan to pay for college?
   m. Did you or your parents submit a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)? If yes, when did you submit it?
   n. Was the FAFSA difficult to complete? If yes, what was difficult about it?
   o. [optional question for students whom this would apply] Did you apply for deferred action?
   p. How many hours a week do you anticipate working during college?
   q. Do you think college-level classes will be difficult? Why?
   r. *If not planning to go to college immediately after high school:* Have your post-high school plans changed since the last time we spoke? If so, how and why?

Counselors:
1. Year 1:
   a. Tell me about the primary responsibilities of a counselor at this school.
      i. How many students/year do you advise?
      ii. What are the primary resources you draw on to advise students about college attendance?
      iii. How well do you get to know the students?
iv. How does counseling change from year to year as students move from sophomores to seniors?

b. How would you describe the academic climate at this school?

c. How would you describe the social climate?

d. In what ways does this school emphasize college readiness?

e. How would you describe the students you advise this year?

f. Historically, what percentage of students from this school go on to college?

g. Has the percentage changed in recent years? If so, how and why?

h. Approximately what percentage of the students you advise this year do you think will go on to college?

i. What colleges are they likely to attend?

j. What affects likelihood of college enrollment for students from this school?

2. Year 2:

a. Tell me about your primary responsibilities as a counselor this year with the students who are juniors now?

i. How many students are you advising this year? Is this more or less than last year?

ii. How well have you gotten to know the students you are advising now?

iii. How do students go about choosing their courses at this grade level?

b. College Preparation

i. In what ways is the school emphasizing college readiness this year?

ii. In this interview, I am especially interested in preparation for college and the college application process. When do students at this school really begin to think about college?

iii. What percentage of your time goes to college advising this year?

i. How does this differ from last year?

iv. What are the primary resources you use to advise students about college?

v. [If not already mentioned] What online system do you use for the college search and application process? (Naviance, College in Colorado). How are you and the students using the online system this year? What do you think about the systems?

vi. This year, are you holding any special events for students to learn more about college and careers? If so, what are they?

vii. Do you have any special programs such as AVID, a Futures Center, Trio or Precollegiate at your school?

i. [For each program they have] What exactly does _____ (program) do for juniors at this school?

ii. How do you coordinate your college advising work with the work done by these programs?

viii. Which colleges make regular visits to your school to talk with students about applying? How often do they come? How do students respond?

ix. Do you have close contacts with admissions officers at any colleges or universities?

i. If so, at which colleges and how do you use them?

x. How involved in college planning are the parents of the students you advise this year?
i. Do you ever communicate directly with your students’ parents about college planning?

ii. If so, what do you talk with them about?

iii. Do you ever arrange any special programs for parents to learn more about colleges and careers?

iv. If so, what are these programs?

xi. What companies make regular visits to your school to talk with students about jobs? Why are they interested in your students?

c. Now I am going to go through a list of students that we have been working with at this school. Please tell about each one (if you know them) and how you assess their progress through the school. Where do you think each will go to college? How do you think they will do there? Why?

3. Year 3:

a. Tell me about your primary responsibilities as a counselor this year with the students who are seniors now?
   i. How many students are you advising this year? Is this more or less than last year?
   ii. How well have you gotten to know the students you are advising now?
   iii. What percentage of your time will go to college advising this year? How does this differ from last year?
   iv. When do students at this school really begin to think about college?

b. Our focal students:
   i. Now I am going to go through a list of students that we have been working with at this school. Please tell about each one (if you know them) and how you assess their progress through the school. Where do you think each will go to college? How do you think they will do there? Why?

c. College preparation revisited:
   i. How do you conceive of the college-going trajectory (when should students start preparing, when should they do what, what are indicators that students are/are not on track)?
   ii. Walk me through your typical approach to guiding students in getting prepared for and applying to colleges. How does this process get started? Who initiates? What is your role once students have applied to college?
   iii. How do you view your role in helping families and students with various levels of social and cultural capital prepare for and actualize college going trajectories?
   iv. This year, are you holding any special events for seniors to learn more about college and careers? If so, what are they?
   v. Are you doing anything differently with Naviance or College in Colorado this year? How do you feel about these programs?
   vi. Tell me about any special college access or college prep programs such as AVID, a Futures Center, Trio or Precollegiate at your school.
      a. [For each program they have] What exactly does _____ (program) do for seniors at this school?
      b. How do students learn about these programs?
c. Whose responsibility is it to access and take advantage of these programs?
d. How many students participate in these programs?
e. Has the number of programs offered at your school changed over the past five years? Has the number of program participants changed?
f. Who provides and pays for these opportunities?
g. Which program do you think is most beneficial? Why?
vii. Your school provides all of these opportunities for students to learn about and prepare for college. What are some of the greatest challenges you and your school face in helping these kids actually get to college?
viii. Do you think your students are prepared for college? In what ways are they prepared or not?
ix. How knowledgeable do you think your students are about differences among colleges such as college/university types, program offerings, costs, mentoring for minorities or first-generation students, or reputation?
x. How well do your graduation requirements align with admission to and success in Colorado’s college system?
xi. From your experience over the years, how do the students fare in college? Do they finish? Who tends to finish and who doesn’t? Why might this be the case? Do you think it matters what kind of college they go to?

xi. What percent of your students apply to college? What percent enroll in college? What do you think about these numbers?
a. What kind of relationships or connections do you have with college recruitment officers? Which schools do a good job of recruiting your students? What makes them good?
b. How involved in college planning are the parents of the students you advise this year?
c. Do you ever communicate directly with your students’ parents about college planning? If so, what do you talk with them about?
d. Do you ever arrange any special programs for parents to learn more about colleges and careers? If so, what are these programs?

1. School Decision Making
   i. Who makes decisions about how resources are allocated and used in this school? Give a recent example.
   ii. Who makes decisions about reforms to implement in this school? Give a recent example.
   iii. Specifically with regard to advanced [course] offerings, who makes decisions about textbooks, course offerings, course content, teacher assignments, and which students will take Honors, AP, or IB? Give a recent example, as relevant.

Teachers:
1. Year 1
   a. Tell me about this school. What are the strengths and weaknesses of this school?
   b. How would you describe the academic climate at this school?
   c. How would you describe the social climate?
d. In what ways does this school emphasize college readiness?
e. Historically, what percentage of students from this school go on to college?
f. Have these percentage changed in recent years? If so, how and why?
g. What kinds of colleges do students from this school attend?
h. What do you think affects likelihood of college success for students from this school?
i. I am going to go through a list of students that we have been working with at this school. Please tell me whatever you know about each one of these students and how you assess their progress through the school. Where do you think each will go to college? How do you think they will do there? Why?

2. Year 2:
a. In what ways does the school emphasize college readiness?
b. Now, I am going to go through a list of students that we have been working with at this school.
i. Please tell me whatever you know about each one of these students and how you assess their progress this year.
   a. [For each student] How was this student placed in your class this year?
   b. How has s/he done in your course(s) this year?
   c. Have you talked with him/her about college plans?
   d. If so, what have you talked about?
   e. What college might s/he go to? [If not planning on college: What kind of job might s/he get?]
   f. How do you think s/he will do in college/job?
   g. Do you think s/he will pursue math or science major in the future (in college or in a job)? Why or why not?
   h. Have you ever encouraged him/her to pursue a STEM field? What was her/his response?
   i. Based on your experience with these students this year, would you be likely to write a college or job letter of recommendation for any of them? If so, which ones and why?
   j. How involved in college planning are the parents of these [focal] students this year?
k. What do you usually talk about with these parents at parent-teacher conferences?

3. Year 3:
a. In what ways does the school emphasize college readiness?
b. Are there any special programs in place to encourage and help students go to college?
c. How well do your school’s graduation requirements align with Colorado’s college admission standards? In what ways are your 12th grade students prepared or not prepared to succeed in Colorado’s college system?
d. How knowledgeable do you think your students are about differences among colleges such as types of colleges/universities, program offerings, costs, mentoring for minorities or first-generation students, or reputation?
e. Where do most of your students from years past attend college?
f. Specifically with regard to preparations for college during students’ senior year, what does the school do to help them? (Possible prompts: sessions to fill out college
applications, sessions to learn about scholarships, sessions to fill out FAFSAs, one-to-one meetings of counselors and students, one-to-one meetings of counselors and parents, college fairs, other?

g. Your senior students. How were seniors placed in your classes this year?
   i. Now, I am going to go through a list of seniors that we have been working with at this school. Please tell me whatever you know about each one of these students and how you assess their progress this year.
      a. [For each student]
      b. How has s/he done in your course(s) this year?
      c. Have you talked with him/her about college plans?
      d. If so, what have you talked about?
      e. Have they applied to college? If so, where?
      f. What college might s/he go to? [Or what job might s/he get?]
      g. How do you think s/he will do in college/job?
      h. Do you think s/he will pursue math or science in the future (in college or in a job)? Why or why not?
      i. Have you ever encouraged him/her to pursue a STEM field? What was her/his response?
      j. Based on your experience with these students this year, would you be likely to write a college or job letter of recommendation for any of them? If so, which ones and why?
      k. How involved in college planning are the parents of these [focal] students this year?
      l. What do you usually talk about with these parents at parent-teacher conferences?
      m. How involved in encouraging STEM interests are the parents of these [focal] students this year?
      n. What are some of the challenges/barriers do you think your students will face in college? (i.e. paying for college, the workload, distance from family, etc.)

**High School Principals:**

1. **Year 1:**
   a. Tell me about your school. What are the strengths and weaknesses of this school?
   b. How would you describe the academic climate at this school?
   c. How would you describe the social climate?
   d. In what ways does this school emphasize college readiness?
   e. Historically, what percentage of students from this school go on to college?
   f. Has the percentage changed in recent years? If so, how and why?
   g. What kinds of colleges do students from this school attend?
   h. What affects likelihood of college enrollment for students from this school?

2. **Year 2 (new principals this year):**
   a. In what ways does this school emphasize college readiness?
   b. What are some current school needs that, if met, might help you meet your college readiness goals?
c. Does the school have any established relationships with admissions officers from colleges? If yes, please explain.

d. What kinds of colleges do students from this school attend?

e. Historically, what percentage of students from this school graduate from high school?

f. Historically, what percentage of seniors go on to college?

g. As far as you know, has either of these two percentages changed in recent years? If so, how and why?

h. What affects the likelihood of college enrollment for students from this school?

i. At Chavez, can you describe the program with Johns Hopkins: how did it start, how does it work, what are its goals, how do you feel about it?

j. At Southside, it seems that tutorials are new this year. How do they work, why were they added, what are their goals, how do you feel about them?

4. Year 3:

a. College readiness:

i. In what ways does this school emphasize college readiness?

ii. What kinds of relationships does your school have with local admissions counselors?

iii. How do you think your high school graduation requirements prepare students for life after high school? How well do they align with Colorado’s colleges and the workforce? Do you think these requirements are enough to prepare students to enter college or the workforce? In what ways would you change them or not?

iv. What can you tell me about the ICAP? How does your school use the ICAP? How do you think that prepares students for the future?

v. Tell me what you think about the senior class this year? How many of them do you think will go on to college? Is that different than in past years?

b. School Decision Making:

i. Who makes decisions about how resources are allocated and used in this school? Give a recent example.

ii. Who makes decisions about reforms to implement in this school? Give a recent example.

iii. Specifically with regard to advanced [course] offerings, who makes decisions about textbooks, course offerings, course content, teacher assignments, and which students will take Honors, AP, or IB? Give a recent example, as relevant.

iv. Specifically with regard to preparations for college during students’ senior year, what does the school do to help them? (Possible prompts: sessions to fill out college applications, sessions to learn about scholarships, sessions to fill out FAFSAs, one-to-one meetings of counselors and students, one-to-one meetings of counselors and parents, college fairs, other? [CO only]: sessions on using Naviance or College in Colorado?)

v. [chavez] How is the academy structure working this year at Adams City? What changes have been made since last year? What happened to the IB program at the school? What happens to the students who were taking IB? Are there plans to replace IB in some way? What is the plan for Adams City over time? How is this plan being developed?
APPENDIX B: INITIAL START CODES

1. College Readiness Policies and Practices:
   a. Forms of college readiness
      i. Academic preparation (Conley, 2010)
      ii. College knowledge (Roderick, Nagaoka, Coca, 2009)
   b. Types of policies
      i. Federal and State College Readiness Policies
      ii. School level college readiness policies
         1. High school graduation
         2. College admission
         3. Postsecondary planning
      iii. High school assumptions
         1. Negative social capital (Noguera 2008)
         2. Positive assumptions

2. References to Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005)
   a. Aspirational
   b. Linguistic
   c. Navigational
   d. Perseverance
   e. Familial
   f. Social

3. References to Dominant Forms of Social Capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988)
   a. High School Counseling (McDonough, 1997)
   b. School wide college-going culture
      i. Counseling strategies (Hill, 2008)
         1. Traditional
         2. Clearinghouse
         3. Brokering
      c. College linking programs (Gandara & Bail, 2001; Schultz & Mueller, 2006;)
         i. Non Profit Support
         ii. Federal Support
         iii. District Support
         iv. School Support
         v. Community or neighborhood Support
      d. High-School College Partnerships (Allen & Murphy, 2008; Ohle & Eisenhart, 2014)
         i. Level of intensity (Allen and Murphy, 2008)
         ii. Specific Colorado Program
      e. Informal College Talk

   a. Student action
      i. Accessed
      ii. Activated
   b. Institutional agent response
      i. Positive
      ii. Negative
5. Affective Codes (Miles, Huberman, & Saldano, 2014)
   a. Emotions
      i. Frustration
      ii. Confusion
      iii. Excitement
      iv. Confidence
   b. Values
      i. Importance of college
      ii. Importance of staying close to family
      iii. Appreciation of family values
   c. Evaluations
      i. School prepared me well for college
      ii. School did not help me with applications

6. Process Codes (Miles, Huberman, & Saldano, 2014)
   a. Waiting
   b. Asking
   c. Helping
## APPENDIX C: FINAL LIST OF CODES

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<td>3.d.ii.4.a.</td>
<td>University of Denver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.d.ii.4.b.</td>
<td>Regis University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.d.ii.5.</td>
<td>variety of services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.d.ii.5.a.</td>
<td>CSU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.d.ii.6.</td>
<td>other program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.e.</td>
<td>informal college talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.e.i.</td>
<td>teacher talks to class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.e.ii.</td>
<td>teacher talks to student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.e.iii.</td>
<td>counselor talks to student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.e.iv.</td>
<td>CLP talks to student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.e.ix.</td>
<td>family talks to student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.e.v.</td>
<td>other HS staff talks to student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.e.vi.</td>
<td>college staff talks to student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.e.vii.</td>
<td>researcher talks to student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.e.viii.</td>
<td>peers talk to student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.e.x.</td>
<td>neighbors talk to student</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.a.v.2. graduate
4.a.v.2.a. yes
4.a.v.2.b. no
4.a.v.3. experience
4.a.v.3.a. good
4.a.v.3.b. bad
4.a.vi. friends to college
4.a.vi.1. proportion to college
4.a.vi.1.a. more than half
4.a.vi.1.b. less than half
4.a.vi.2. frequency of college talk
4.a.vi.2.a. a lot
4.a.vi.2.b. a little
4.b. resources
4.b.i. action
4.b.i.1. accessed
4.b.i.2. activated
4.b.i.3. not accessed
4.b.i.4. not activated
4.b.ii. type
4.b.ii.1. dominant
4.b.ii.1.a. academic preparation
4.b.ii.1.a.i. coursework
4.b.ii.1.a.i.1. graduation requirement
4.b.ii.1.a.i.2. college admissions requirements
4.b.ii.1.a.i.3. advanced coursework
4.b.ii.1.a.ii. grades
4.b.ii.1.a.iii. study skills
4.b.ii.1.a.iv. testing
4.b.ii.1.a.v. critical thinking problem solving
4.b.ii.1.b. college knowledge
4.b.ii.1.b.2. off campus
4.b.ii.1.b.i. meta
4.b.ii.1.b.1. on college campus
4.b.ii.1.b.1.a. college visits
4.b.ii.1.b.1.b. college types
4.b.ii.1.b.1.c. college courses
4.b.ii.1.b.1.d. timeline for applying
4.b.ii.1.b.1.e. majors
4.b.ii.1.b.1.f. college class on college campus
4.b.ii.1.b.1.i.internet search
4.b.ii.1.b.2. off campus
4.b.ii.1.b.2.a. college fair
4.b.ii.1.b.2.b. workshops
4.b.ii.1.b.2.c. info sessions
4.b.ii.1.b.2.d. college class on high school campus
4.b.ii.1.b.2.d.i. simulation
4.b.ii.1.b.2.e. careers
4.b.ii.1.b.ii. specific
4.b.ii.1.b.ii.1. applications
4.b.ii.1.b.ii.2. scholarship search
4.b.ii.1.b.ii.3. financial aid applications
4.b.ii.1.b.ii.4. essays
4.b.ii.1.b.ii.5. test prep
4.b.ii.1.b.iii. other
4.b.ii.2. community cultural wealth
4.b.ii.2.a. aspirational
4.b.ii.2.b. linguistic
4.b.ii.2.c. navigational
4.b.ii.2.d. appreciation of students culture/skill
4.b.ii.2.e. perseverance
4.b.ii.2.f. familial
4.b.ii.2.g. social
5. student college plans
5.a. college and majors
5.b. knowledge of college
5.b.i. what schools want in applicant
5.b.i.1. community service
5.b.i.2. resume
5.c. taken steps to learn about college
5.c.i. little knowledge of college
5.c.i.1. wish school helped
5.c.i.2. depends on school for info
5.c.i.3. difficulty completing apps
5.d. purpose of college
5.e. future jobs
5.f. most influential
6. actions
6.a. waiting
6.b. preparing
6.c. asking
7. emotions
7.a. positive
7.a.i. excited
7.a.ii. confident
7.a.iii. focus
7.b. negative
7.b.i. regret
7.b.ii. concern
7.b.iii. frustration
## APPENDIX D: DATA DISPLAY #1, COLLEGE COUNSELING EFFORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Southside</th>
<th>Chavez</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong># of students advised</strong></td>
<td>400 (all seniors)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>College counseling responsibilities</strong></td>
<td>470 (25% seniors)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Most of the time, check graduation</td>
<td>-“This year, we made a concentrated effort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>requirements</td>
<td>to go into every senior English class”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-During credit check with individual</td>
<td>-“We call in students who haven’t applied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seniors, ask about post high school plans</td>
<td>to college at semester”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who does college counseling then?</strong></td>
<td>“The Future Center; Melissa does that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>which is great because I don’t have time”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-There is a clear distinction between</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>counseling and F.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>College linking programs (CLP)</strong></td>
<td>CSU summer program for high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>freshmen, Talent Search, Upward Board,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CU and UCD Precollegiate; AVID, IB,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Concurrent Enrollment, Metro Excel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High School-College Partnerships</strong></td>
<td>Very Competitive+ (4 year public-R1, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>year public-land grant), Less Competitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4 year public), Not Ranked (2 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>community colleges x 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>% of seniors in CLP</strong></td>
<td>30% in AVID, 50% in other CLPS and AVID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>besides Future Center; 80% if including AP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and concurrent enrollment; 100% if including</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Future Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Where do students learn about college if</strong></td>
<td>“Maybe a third. If you include Metro Excel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>not in CLP?</strong></td>
<td>and counseling, really 100% of our seniors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>have some sort of program available to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>them”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Kids come in with all different levels of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>motivation”; student must initiate;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>possibly word of mouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>