

The Power of Positioning: The Stories of National Hispanic Scholars' Lives
and Their Mothers' Careful Placement to Enhance
the Likelihood of Academic Success

by

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ABSTRACT

Established in 1983 by the College Board, the National Hispanic Recognition Program annually recognizes approximately 3,300 Hispanic students who scored the highest on the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT). These top-performing high school students are recruited by U.S. universities as National Hispanic Scholars with the offer of scholarships. Few studies have been conducted in the past 20 years about National Hispanic Scholars; and none have investigated the role of the scholars' parents in their children's academic success.

The purpose of this study was to address the gap in the literature by providing a comprehensive view of the scholar-parent relationship across low-income and high-income categories. The focus was on exploring differences and similarities, according to income, between the scholar-parent relationships and the scholars' negotiation of scholarship achievement and their first-year university experience.

The research question was "What are the experiences of low-income and high-income National Hispanic Scholars and the experiences of their parents from the students' childhood academic achievement through their early collegiate maturation?" Topical life history was the research methodology utilized to explore the students' academic progression. Eighteen interviews were conducted, including nine student-parent pairs. The students were asked to include the parent they felt was most influential in their decision to go to college; all students chose

their mother. Interviews were conducted utilizing an interview protocol; however, participants were given opportunities to fully explain their responses.

Drawing from the recorded and transcribed interviews, the researcher developed narratives for each scholar and analyzed data according to existing literature. Five thematic data categories—academic progression, racial identity, scholarship award, early collegiate maturation process, and matriarchal/ child relationship progression—were further analyzed between and across income groups. The study’s major finding was that parents intentionally placed the scholars in schools or facilitated strategic circumstances that would ensure their children’s academic success. Parental navigation of their children’s academic activities—termed “positioning”—was present in the scholars’ lives from their earliest years, and findings indicate the activity contributed to the students’ becoming recipients of the National Hispanic Scholars award.

DEDICATION

My mother's dream for my family is the legacy by which she will always be remembered. My mother's perspective in life and drive for success has influenced the way I view my own ability to succeed. Her *consejos* and her *historia* is what shaped my passion for impacting my people—los Chicanos.

My mother earned her position as a scholar through her grades and her citizenship. However, because of a short-viewed and racist society, she was tracked into a community college where there were no scholarships offered to her and no mentors to encourage her. She worked two jobs with no relief from her situation and, soon, the pressure caused her to quit pursuing her educational dreams. With a family that prioritized family financial obligations above education, my mom had no validation for her learning successes. My mother's failure to complete her education is her deepest regret.

It is because of my love for my mother that I find this injustice inexcusable. With this familial history fueling my passion for pursuing my own career, I have dedicated my life to the crusade of stopping this from happening to others.

Although she did not receive her college degree, my Mother was steadfast in her encouragement of me and my brother in our educational pursuits. My mother has two children, and both of us are doctors. She has the formula for raising successful children. She believed in having absolute faith in her children even when they didn't believe in themselves at times. I am grateful for her incredible resolve and vision for my brother and me.

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There are many people who have contributed to my success, but the most influential people have been my family members. My family has been the foundation from which I have gained emotional, spiritual, and intellectual strength.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES.....	xiii
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background	1
Statement of the Problem	4
Purpose of Study and Research Question	11
Methodology	12
Contributions and Implications	16
Limitations	17
Summary	18
Overview of the Study.....	19
2 LITERATURE REVIEW	20
History of National Merit Scholarship.....	20
National Achievement Scholarship.....	25
National Hispanic Recognition Program	26
Clewell and Joy’s 1988 NHRP Study.....	28
Review of Hispanic High-Achieving Students.....	30
Academic Success	32
Resilient but Vulnerable.....	36
Re-evaluation of “Exceptional”	42
Stories from High Achievers.....	45

CHAPTER	Page
Hispanic Families and Finances	48
Cultural Capital.....	49
Influence of Finances	51
Influence of the Family	59
Student Resiliancy	68
Summary	73
3 METHODOLOGY.....	75
Research Design	78
Researcher Assumptions, Expectations, and Experiences	79
Research Question	82
Data Collection	82
Study Sample and Participants.....	83
Research Site	84
Open-ended Interviews.....	85
Researcher-Participant Rapport	87
Data Analysis	87
Summary	88
4 HIGH-INCOME NATIONAL HISPANIC SCHOLARS	90
Narrative 1: Scholar Angelica and Parent Dorothy	91
Summary and Analysis of Narrative 1	107
Narrative 2: Scholar Gabrielle and Parent Christine	108
Summary and Analysis of Narrative 2.....	123

CHAPTER	Page
Narrative 3: Scholar Leila and Parent Rachel.....	123
Summary and Analysis of Narrative 3.....	138
Narrative 4: Scholar Stephanie and Parent Gloria.....	139
Summary and Analysis of Narrative 4.....	154
High-Income Scholar Analysis: Within Group Themes	154
Academic Progression.....	155
Early Reading.....	155
Gifted Programs	155
Work Ethic.....	156
Knowledge of PSAT	156
Anti-Climatic Reaction to National Hispanic Award	156
Racial Identity.....	157
Negative Peer Reactions.....	157
Scholarship Award	158
Influence of Scholarship Amount on College Choice.....	158
Student Employment.....	158
Early Collegiate Maturation.....	158
First Impression.....	159
Homesickness or Separation Anxiety.....	159
Social Life	160
Academic Adjustment.....	160
Personal Challenges	161

CHAPTER	Page
Matriarchal/Child Relationship Progression.....	161
Divorced Parents and Single Mothers	162
Indirect Messages	162
Direct Messages	162
Positioning	163
Communication	164
Summary of High-Income Findings	165
5 LOW-INCOME NATIONAL HISPANIC SCHOLARS	166
Narrative 5: Scholar Clint and Parent Sophia	166
Summary and Analysis of Narrative 5	180
Narrative 6: Scholar Julie and Parent Colleen	182
Summary and Analysis of Narrative 6	196
Narrative 7: Scholar Marcy and Parent Otilia.....	197
Summary and Analysis of Narrative 7	209
Narrative 8: Scholar Neil and Parent Mira.....	211
Summary and Analysis of Narrative 8	222
Narrative 9: Scholar Phoenix and Parent Lily	223
Summary and Analysis of Narrative 9	241
Low-Income Scholar Analysis: Within Group Themes	243
Academic Progression	243
Early Reading	243
Gifted Programs	244

CHAPTER	Page
Work Ethic.....	245
Influence of Teachers/Counselors	245
Racial Identity.....	245
Negative Peer Reaction	246
Scholarship Award	246
Lifestyle Differences	246
Influence of Scholarship Amount on College Choice.....	248
Student Employment.....	249
Early Collegiate Maturation	249
First Impression.....	249
Homesickness or Separation Anxiety.....	249
Social Life	250
Academic Adjustment.....	251
Personal Challenges	252
Matriarchal/Child Relationship Progression.....	252
Divorced Parents and Single Parents.....	253
Indirect Messages	253
Direct Messages	254
Positioning.....	254
Communication	256
Sexual Orientation.....	257
Summary of Low-Income Findings	258

CHAPTER	Page
Speaking from the “I”	259
Narrative 10: Crystal Ulibarri-Nasio, Autobiography, and Parents Ronald and Rachel Ulibarri.....	259
6 DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY	268
Overview of Chapters Four and Five	269
Discussion of Table 4	271
Discussion of Table 5	274
Academic Progression	275
Racial Identity	276
Scholarship Award.....	278
Early Collegiate Maturation	280
Matriarchial/Child Relationship Progression	282
Power of Positioning.....	283
Connection to Cultural Capital Literature.....	285
Structural Positioning Meets Parental Positioning.....	286
Discussion	287
Implications for Policy	288
College Board.....	288
Recruiting Universities.....	289
High School Counselors.....	290
Entities Educating Parents.....	291

CHAPTER	Page
Implications for Future Research	291
REFERENCES	293
APPENDIX	
A BACHELOR'S DEGREES CONFERRED BY DEGREE- GRANTING INSTITUTIONS BY RACIL/ETHNIC GROUP AND SEX OF STUDENT: SELECTED YEARS, 1976-77 TO 2001-02: PERCENTAGES FOR TOTALS CATEGORY	302
B BACHELOR'S DEGREES CONFERRED BY DEGREE- GRANTING INSTITUTIONS BY RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUP AND SEX OF STUDENT: SELECTED YEARS, 1976-77 TO 2001-02: NUMBERS FOR TOTALS CATEGORY	304
C SCHOLAR RECRUITMENT VERBAL SCRIPT	306
D SCHOLAR PRE-SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE	308
E SCHOLAR INFORMATION LETTER	310
F PARENT INFORMATION LETTER	312
G INTERVIEW PROTOCOL	314
H INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD EXEMPTION	318
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH	320

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Program Descriptions of National Merit Scholarships Based on the PSAT/NMSQT	3
2. Median Household Income in the Past 12 Months by Race and Hispanic Origin: 2006	6
3. Percentage Distribution of Student Enrolled in Degree-Granting Institutions by Race/Ethnicity: Fall 1976-Fall 2004	8
4. Similarities Across Groups	270
5. Differences Across Groups	273

Chapter 1: Introduction

“My mother, grandmother and I drove in our only reliable car for 11 hours to get to Provo, Utah. We had no interview with the scholarship office. We were there to plead my case. After meeting with the scholarship counselor, where I showed him my resume and talked about the dreams I had for myself, he sat back down with us and turned to my mother and grandmother and said, ‘There will be no more blue-collar workers in your family; your daughter got the scholarship.’ We all wept.” (Ulibarrí-Nasio, personal journal entry, August 2000).

Background

The United States began focusing on becoming a world power in the 1950s (Dudley & Chalberg, 2006), at which time Americans turned to technological advancement for the prestige needed to demonstrate strength and power (i.e., the NASA explorations). The country was mesmerized by the idea of producing the best and most innovative technologies as well as producing the most intelligent people in the world (Dudley & Chalberg, 2006). It was during this period that the National Merit Scholarship was established.

The National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC) was founded in 1955 as a non-profit organization with three major goals: “[a] to identify and honor academically talented U.S. high school students, [b] to stimulate increased support for their education, and [c] to provide efficient and effective scholarship program management for organizations that wish to sponsor college undergraduate scholarships” (National Merit Scholarship Corporation [NMSC], 2008a, ¶ 2). The NMSC was created to respond to the nation’s need to remain competitive in a rapidly changing world. The young people selected for this scholarship are “a prime national resource essential to the county’s future” (NMSC, 2007, p. 2). The National Merit Scholarship Corporation, in partnership

with the College Board, created the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test/National Merit Scholar Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) to identify academically talented youth of the United States. Of the average 1.4 million students who take the PSAT/NMSQT exam every year, approximately 50,000 of the highest PSAT/NMSQT Selection Index scores qualify for recognition by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation through the National Merit Scholarship Program (NMSC, 2008d).

About a decade after the establishment of the National Merit Scholarship Corporation and the National Merit Scholarship Program, in response to the growing concern over racial equality, the National Achievement Scholarship (NASP) was created in 1964 to recognize and award outstanding Black American high school students (NMSC, 2008c). The NASP is based on the same criteria established for the National Merit Scholarship Program.

In 1983, the College Board initiated the National Hispanic Recognition Program (NHRP) in response to the continued growth of the Hispanic population across the United States (College Board, 2008). The College Board's establishment of the National Hispanic Recognition Program was separate from its previous collaboration with the National Merit Scholarship Corporation; therefore, National Hispanic Recognition Program recipients did not receive scholarship monies directly from the National Merit Scholarship Corporation (see Table 1). The purpose of NHRP is unique in identifying outstanding Hispanic high school students and sharing information about these academically well prepared students with subscribing colleges and universities. Each year,

approximately 124,000 Hispanic students take the exam, and the highest scoring 3,000 students are selected for recognition. Upon being awarded a scholarship from a participating university, the student is then referred to as a National Hispanic Scholar rather than a National Hispanic Recognition Program finalist.

Table 1

Program Descriptions of National Merit Scholarships Based on the PSAT/NMSQT

Year Established	Program Name	Program Description
1955	National Merit Scholarship Corporation	Program goal is to identify and honor academically talented U.S. high school students. Students qualify based on their PSAT/NMSQT scores.
1964	National Achievement Scholarship	Same as the National Merit Scholarship Corporation program description with an emphasis on African American students.
1983	National Hispanic Recognition Program	Sponsored by the College Board to award academically prepared Hispanic students and share information with subscribing universities and colleges. Academic criteria same as NMSC qualifications.

Since its establishment in 1983, the NHRP has sponsored only one major study on National Hispanic Scholars. Clewell and Joy's (1988) study was funded by the College Board in order to provide a quantitative descriptive analysis of National Hispanic Scholars including: (a) description of the pool of applicants, awardees and non-awardees; (b) examination of characteristics of high-achieving Hispanic students; and (c) identification of the factors associated with success in

college (p. 1). Over the past 20 years, researchers have conducted studies on high-achieving Hispanic students but have not referenced the National Hispanic Scholars.

Researchers such as Alva (1991), González and Padilla (1997), Miller (2005), and Gándara (2005) have conducted studies of high achieving Hispanic students' secondary-level school performance. Some researchers utilized statistical analysis (quantitative methods) to document the challenges and barriers associated with this student population. Other researchers utilized qualitative methods to examine their personal education experiences, as well as those of other high-achieving Hispanic students. This second group of qualitative researchers used interviews to explore the challenges, triumphs, and successes of the high achieving Hispanic students (Cuádriz, 2006; Gándara, 2005; Herrera, 2003; Orozco, 2003; Rendón, 1992). Both researcher groups recognized the difficulties and challenges associated with high academic performance among Hispanic students. Two common factors identified in the statistics and in the stories of these study participants are the influences of income and family on the students' lives.

Statement of the Problem

Latinos have become the largest minority group in the United States (Rendón, 2003). Across ethnic populations, 12.5% of the people in the United States are Latinos (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). This year, 2010, it is expected that Latinos will make up 13.8% of the population and will become the largest

minority population (Hernández, 2000). As a result, Latinos are growing into a political, social, and economic power in the U.S. (Rendón, 2003).

Although the U.S. Latino population has grown substantially in the past two decades; there is little indication that this rapid increase has been adequately reflected in more Latino students attending four-year colleges (Aguirre & Martinez, 1993; Perez & De La Rosa Salazar, 1993). Historically, Latinos have been and remain underrepresented in higher education (Castellanos & Jones, 2003). In fact, in 2003, 1.3 million Latino students enrolled in college, but of those enrolled, only 40% of those attended a four-year college (Hurtado & Kamimura, 2003; Rendón, 2003). Of graduating seniors, 60% of Latinos enrolled in the community colleges, yet many of them could be university bound.

For many Latino students, the inability to pay for their college education and unfamiliarity with financial aid play the largest role in tracking them into the community college setting (Castellanos & Jones, 2003; Nora & Rendón, 1990). The annual income of Latino families is historically lower than White families (Castellanos & Jones, 2003). In addition, Latinos have higher unemployment rates than Whites (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). According to the 2006 U.S. Census Income, Earning, and Poverty Data Survey, the median annual income of Hispanics is \$38,747, which is far below Whites at \$51,429, Asians at \$63,642, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders at \$49,361 (see Table 2; Webster & Bishaw, 2007).

As a result of this financial reality, many Latino students and their families find it a struggle to afford college and do not enroll in the university. With the

Table 2

Median Household Income in the Past 12 Months by Race and Hispanic Origin: 2006

Race and Hispanic Origin	Estimate	Margin of error ¹ (±)
All households	48,451	82
White alone	51,429	69
White alone, not Hispanic	52,375	73
Black alone	32,372	155
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	33,762	659
Asian alone	63,642	652
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander alone	49,361	2,389
Some other race alone	38,372	349
Two or more races	42,213	443
Hispanic (any race)	38,747	205

¹ Data are based on a sample and are subject to sampling variability. The margin of error is a measure of an estimate's variability. The larger the margin of error in relation to the size of the estimate, the less reliable the estimate. The margin of error is the estimated 90-percent confidence interval.

Note. In 2006 inflation-adjusted dollars. Data are limited to the household population and exclude the population living in institutions, college dormitories, and other group quarters. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/acs/www/. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey. Used by permission.

rising costs of tuition, combined with existing financial difficulties, Latino students are challenged by institutional fiscal policies that limit access (Jones, 2001). Researchers such as Castellanos and Jones (2003) and Gándara (1995)

believe this financial cycle will continue if higher education is not made more accessible to Latino students.

For example, a Latina student has limited funds to attend college and therefore will continue to perpetuate poverty because she has limited mobility (Gloria, 1998). Latino students receive very little education and therefore cannot obtain higher paying jobs (Castellanos & Jones, 2003). The American dream includes receiving an education; however, many Latinos find very quickly that money is the key to receiving that education.

The benefits of education extend beyond financial outcomes. There are also social and cultural benefits that are realized in the lives of educated people. People with an education have access to greater wealth generating opportunities. Gándara (1995) asserted that middle-class mobility is achieved by underrepresented groups through education. Credentials and qualifications are in increasing demand in the workforce. Therefore, those who have limited or no education find it more difficult to attain positions that would provide the monetary capital required to change their socioeconomic status (González, 2005).

Although major barriers to accessing higher education exist, the Latino post-secondary enrollment has increased over the past 30 years from 3% to 10% (see Table 3; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2005). However, the Latino position is still below where it should be when comparing with other racial groups. As depicted in Appendix A, between the years 1976-2002 of the students who enrolled in the university, the percentage increased from 2% to 6% graduating with a bachelor's degree (NCES, 2005). This increase may seem

Table 3

Percentage Distribution of Students Enrolled in Degree-Granting Institutions by Race/Ethnicity: Fall 1976-Fall 2004

Race/ Ethnicity	Institutions of Higher Education				Degree-Granting Institutions			
	1976	1980	1990	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
White, non- Hispanic	83.4	81.4	77.6	68.3	67.6	67.1	66.7	66.1
Total minority	14.5	16.1	19.6	28.2	28.8	29.4	29.8	30.4
Black, non- Hispanic	9.5	9.2	9.0	11.3	11.16	11.9	12.2	12.5
Hispanic	3.5	3.9	5.7	9.5	9.8	10.0	10.2	10.5
Asian or Pacific Islander	0.8	2.4	4.1	6.4	6.4	6.5	6.4	6.4
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	0.7	0.7	0.7	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Non- resident alien	2.0	2.5	2.8	3.5	3.5	3.6	3.5	3.4

Note. Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2006). *Digest of Education Statistics* (2005). Used by permission.

significant, however, when compared to the 9% Black Americans and 6% of Asian/Pacific Islanders receiving their bachelor's degrees and when considering that Hispanics are the fastest growing population in the United States, these numbers are dismal. When examining the real numbers as shown in Appendix B,

Hispanics were conferred 82, 969 degrees in the year 2002 whereas Asian/Pacific Islanders were conferred 83,101. This is a surprising fact considering that Asian/Pacific Islanders have a much smaller population in the United States than Hispanics.

The disproportionate enrollment of Latino students in higher education suggests that there continues to be a gap between the majority group and the minority groups in receiving their post-secondary degrees, specifically between Latino and White populations. However, many Latino students persist beyond incredible odds. A major factor influencing Latino students' choice to attend college and their academic success is *the family*.

In college choice literature, it is understood that parental encouragement plays a major role in a student pursuing higher education (Nora, 1990). Latino parents can influence student retention when they are familiar with the college environment and given opportunities to meet faculty members and administrators (Castellanos & Jones, 2003). In addition, Latino undergraduate students featured in Castellanos and Jones (2003) and Garrod, Kilkenny & Gómez (2007) relayed the experiences that helped them succeed in college. Their achievement was affected by the support of their families, caring mentors, student support networks, and student support programs as well as the students' own spirituality.

There are many obstacles that place high-achieving Hispanic students "at risk," including isolation, language differences, separation from family, lack of financial resources, and discrimination (Castellanos & Jones, 2003; Gándara,

1982, 1995, 2005; González & Padilla, 1997). Alva (1991) defined academic success in the face of many risk factors for failure as “academically invulnerable”:

Academically invulnerable students can be described as those who sustain high levels of achievement motivation and performance, despite the presence of stressful events and conditions that place them at risk of doing poorly in school, and ultimately, dropping out of school. (p. 19)

Many of these barriers and obstacles are associated with the students’ low-income status and not necessarily the fact that they are Hispanic. Being from low-income families causes these students to live in poorer housing conditions, have inadequate access to public services, and be enrolled in schools that lack budgets required to provide higher quality education. Forty-one percent of Hispanics live in poverty compared to 13% of Whites (Hechinger, 1992). Therefore, income has a significant affect on the student.

On the contrary, Gándara (2005) argued that although these high-achieving students may seem invulnerable, in fact, they are vulnerable. Gándara explained, “their [high achieving Hispanic student] academic futures can be considered fragile, hanging by a thin thread of hope that nothing will go terribly wrong in their extended families, or in school, that will dash their pursuit of academic success” (p. 3). Gándara reported that even when the high-achieving students interviewed for this study were given opportunities for entering college (and in one case with a scholarship), their personal lives—often driven by financial factors—interfered with their original college attendance plans. Conflicting theories apparent within the literature on high-achieving Hispanic students indicates the necessity to conduct further research in the field (Alva, 1991; Gándara, 2005).

Purpose of Study and Research Question

The purpose of this study was to describe the experiences of National Hispanic Scholars and their parents, those whom the students felt have been most involved in their decision to go to college. The aim was to seek an understanding of the matriarchal/child relationship progression and the students' experiences during their early collegiate maturation. The study was intended to provide a detailed view of the matriarchal/child relationship progression for National Hispanic Scholars across low-income and high-income brackets. The focus was on exploring differences and similarities according to income between the matriarchal/child relationship progression and how the students negotiate the experiences associated with scholarship achievement and their early collegiate maturation.

The study's guiding research question is: What are the experiences of low-income and high-income National Hispanic Scholars and the experiences of their parents (NCES, 2005) beginning with the students' childhood academic achievement through their early collegiate maturation? The research question was addressed through a series of student and parent interviews. The study's interview protocol followed a chronological line of questioning focused on attaining a comprehensive view of the students' and parents' lives. The participant-narrators described their family backgrounds, the processes and experiences leading up to the students' scholarship award, the decision to go to college, the current effect the award has on the students' lives as well as other family members, and the parent-student relationships. These questions were used

to gain information pertaining to factors leading up to key events and relationships in order to ascertain the students' life history leading to college, with particular attention given to their academic progression.

Methodology

Utilizing a qualitative methodology, this study gleaned valuable in-depth data that described the experiences of low-income and high-income National Hispanic Scholars and their parents, those whom the students felt had been most involved in their decision to go to college, beginning with the students' childhoods through their first-year college experiences. Gathering the stories of the participants over their entire lifetime allowed them the opportunity to reflect and make connections, which enabled them to fully describe attached meanings to certain experiences in life. Merriam (1998) explained that "qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of the world and the experiences they have in the world" (p. 6). Participants in a qualitative study are asked about their lives and how they feel about those experiences (Merriam, 1998). This concept is ascribed to a larger school of thought and an often larger debate over the objectivity and subjectivity of research. The argument is centered on the inability to attain absolute objectivity that is free of researcher bias, which is a positivist paradigm (Christensen & Dahl, 1997). It is commonly recognized in sociological research that methodologies are not value-free but that researchers play an important role in the interpretation of the data (Watt, 2007). Reflection on the part of the

researcher is essential in that she becomes conscious of what allows her to see and what can inhibit her from seeing in her research (Russell & Kelly, 2002).

Therefore, simultaneously, though unconsciously, the researcher interpreted the stories provided by the participants (or narrators) through the guise of her own experiences and her interaction with the existing literature. Portelli (1997) stated “Meaning and practice are inseparable: the interpretation begins at the moment of collection, and all presentation—including the most ‘objective’ one—is an interpretation” (p. xiii). Yow (2005) argued that understanding the limitations of one’s own experiences helps her understand how she influences her research. The researchers’ individual experiences influence what they are interested in, the way they ask questions, and the kind of solutions being sought (Turner, 2000).

This study employed an oral history methodology, specifically topical life history, which is a description of the participant’s life during a specific period of time as exemplified in Cuádriz’s 2006 study. The participants described their life stories through the lens of their academic progression from childhood through their first year in college. This study addressed how personal assumptions and expectations about the participants drive the manner in which persons perceive the data. For example, at one time in her collegiate experience, Cuádriz recognized that others saw her as an exception to her race/ethnicity; interpreting her interviews of other doctoral students, she found that they were considered exceptions to their race as well. Cuádriz embraced herself in the process of oral history and delivered a powerful message of responsibility to the university to

provide structured opportunities for student validation. This study describes the narratives of others while paying close attention to the narrative of the researcher.

Participants in the study were entering sophomores in a large public university in the southwest region of the United States. Sophomores were chosen because of their ability to more accurately reflect back on their freshmen year experience. They received a recruitment email from Southwest University's Student Financial Services Department on the researcher's behalf. Students who were interested in participating in the study contacted the researcher directly. The researcher recruited the scholars for participation in the study (see Appendix C) and confirmed that the participants qualified according to racial self-identification and income level using a pre-screening questionnaire (see Appendix D). The researcher then asked the participants which parent they felt was the most involved in their decision to go to college and this parent was invited to participate in the study. An information letter about the study was presented to the scholar participants (see Appendix E) and the parent participants (see Appendix F).

Eighteen recorded interviews were conducted, each lasting about an hour and a half. There were nine student/parent pairs, four in the high-income category and five in the low-income category. All students chose their mother. The students self-identified their income level, which was confirmed in the interview. The majority of interviews were held at the university where the students attended (a large public university in the southwest region of the U.S.). With some

exceptions, parent interviews were held in convenient places for the interviewees including homes and secluded booths in restaurants.

Although an interview protocol was utilized (see Appendix G), the participant-narrators controlled the flow of the interview questions so that they had sufficient time to attach their meaning and fully explain their experience. As the participants described their experiences, the researcher asked follow-up questions and clarified answers in order to gain more information about a particular question that may have been important to the study. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed into English. After the tapes were transcribed, the data was reviewed with particular attention given to the way the participants recounted their stories.

After the interviews were completely reviewed, the researcher composed written descriptions of each participant's story (narrative). Similar to Cuádriz (2006) and Gándara (2005), the researcher wrote the stories of each participant as the researcher experienced them. Each narrative included details and selective quotes to illustrate important aspects of the interviewee's story. At the end of each narrative, the researcher provided an analysis of how the participant's story supported or called into question the existing literature. After all narratives were written, the researcher then examined the data for connections between students and parents across income brackets. Findings and implications of this study help describe the experience of the National Hispanic Scholars and their parents prior to and during the university experience.

Contributions and Implications

This study aimed to make contributions to the literature on National Hispanic Scholars, high-achieving Hispanic students and theories of invulnerability and vulnerability within this population, family research, and the influence of family income on Hispanic scholar's first-year experience. This study provides valuable updated information on the profile of the National Hispanic Scholar. Furthermore, it provides insight of a student population that has not been evaluated in this manner since the establishment of the program in 1983.

Present studies on high-achieving scholars have reviewed the challenges, barriers, and successes of Hispanic high-achieving students (Alva, 1991; Gándara, 2005; González & Padilla, 1997; Miller, 2005). However, this study contributes more to the existing literature by interviewing the "highest" achieving Hispanic students in the nation by income level when comparing PSAT/NMSQT scores by unpacking the matriarchal/child relationship progression.

This study also contributes to the body of literature on theories of academic invulnerability and vulnerability. The students discussed their achievement and the path to that achievement. Their narratives contribute to these theories.

In addition, this study contributes to family research and provides an inside-outside view of family dynamics as both a child and parent were interviewed and the researcher interpreted their stories. The study provides a comprehensive view of both the parent and student and their relationship with

each other as well as their experiences related to the receipt of the National Hispanic Scholar award. This approach extends beyond existing literature wherein the student's sole perspective is commonly used.

Lastly, the study contributes to the literature about income and educational attainment difference within racial groups. The two income groups—high-income and low-income—were compared within the same racial/ethnic group. As such, this study attempts to contribute to the knowledge base about the differences between low-income and high-income Hispanic families.

Limitations

Hispanic participants were the only ethnic group examined in this study; however, the ethnic groups have high in-group variation which may limit the study's generalizability. Also, the experiences of other ethnic groups may be similar or very different; therefore, this study will not compare other groups outside of the broad term "Hispanic." Hispanics were chosen as the principle subjects for this study because of the need to understand how institutions of higher education can better serve this population (Rendón, 2003). Additionally, this study's research design limits generalizability to all Hispanic students because it describes the lives of high-achieving scholars. These students have been identified, by predetermined definition of being a scholarship recipient, as academically successful and view themselves as such. Study findings are limited to a description of this population and should not be utilized to infer overarching and generalizable results to the larger Hispanic student population.

Another potential limitation is the self-reporting. The students identified their income and their racial identity. The mother/child experiences are also self-reporting and their narratives are based on their own interpretation. Self-reporting can cause some incongruity issues between the stories of the student and the stories of the mother. The data analysis maintained that everyone's experiences were unique but just as valuable.

Lastly, middle-income students were not included in this study in order that the differences, if any, between the low-income and high-income students could be more easily detected. Future research with middle-income National Hispanic Scholars would be important toward understanding the experiences of students from all income levels.

Summary

This research aims to describe the experiences of low-income and high-income National Hispanic Scholars as those experiences relate to the students' relationships with their parents' and the negotiation of the students' academic achievement. Through a topical life history approach, the study attempted to enhance existing understandings of the lives and experiences of National Hispanic Scholars and the parents from whom they seek the most guidance, all the scholars choose their mothers. The participant narratives contributed to the existing literature on Hispanic high-achieving students, family research, and the influence of family income on Hispanic high-achieving students' academic success. National Hispanic Scholars were interviewed because of the limited research on their lives. Their stories and the stories of their mothers may provide institutions

of higher education with valuable information with which to improve programs and increase the number of high-achieving Hispanic students throughout the academy.

Overview of the Study

Chapter two is comprised of a review of the existing literature. The literature review first provides a detailed history of the National Merit Scholarship Program, leading up to the creation of the National Hispanic Recognition Program. Next, an overview of literature is presented concerning high-achieving Hispanic students and the role of parental and family influence on the students' persistence or academic resilience. Additionally, the influence of income on college choice, persistence and early collegiate experience as it relates to students of color is discussed.

Chapter three presents the topical life history methodology utilized in this study. An overview of the sample population, research sites, interview questions, and other standardization components is discussed. Lastly, data collection and analysis procedures are detailed, including the process of recording, transcribing, translating, and identifying themes from the participant-narrators.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

“Sitting in Dr. Turner’s office with my mother, grandmother and brother probably seemed peculiar to those passing by, but it was exactly what was required. Dr. Turner looked my mother in the eye and told her she would take care of me. This gave my mother confidence and from then on, I was in my new academic home.” (Ulibarrí-Nasio, personal journal entry, August 2004)

In the United States, high academic achievement is measured in different ways. Some people measure achievement by high school GPA and SAT scores (Alva, 1991; Gándara, 2005; Miller, 2005; National Merit Scholarship Corporation, 2008b), while others believe that degree attainment is what really measures achievement (Cuádriz, 2006; Gándara, 1995). Within all the various definitions of high academic achievement, one standard has remained constant for more than 50 years—the standard of the National Merit Scholarship Corporation. As a result, the National Merit Scholarship criterion has been recognized for establishing a reputation of rewarding the most exceptional youth of our country (National Merit Scholarship Corporation, 2008a).

History of National Merit Scholarship

The National Merit Scholarship Corporation was established in 1955 as a non-profit organization with three goals: “[a] to identify and honor academically talented U.S. high school students, [b] to stimulate increased support for their education, and [c] to provide efficient and effective scholarship program management for organizations that wish to sponsor college undergraduate scholarships (NMSC, 2008a, ¶ 2). The organization also focuses on responding to the nation’s need to remain competitive in a rapidly changing world. The young

people selected for this scholarship are “a prime national resource essential to the county’s future” (NMSC, 2007, p. 2).

Students enter the NMSC competition by taking the preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) usually in their junior year of high school (NMSC, 2008b). Although high school counselors encourage students to take this test in their sophomore year as practice, the tests must be taken again in the junior year in order to be considered for the NMSC scholarship. Each year’s test qualifies students for their upcoming college enrollment year. For example, students who took the test in 2008 will qualify for the 2010 NMSC award. Entry requirements specify that students must: (a) take the PSAT/NMSQT in the specified year of their high school program and no later than the third year in grades 9 through 12, regardless of grade classification or educational pattern; (b) be enrolled full time as a high school student, progressing normally toward graduation or completion of high school, and planning to enroll full time in college no later than the fall following the completion of high school; and (c) be a citizen of the United States, or be a U.S. lawful permanent resident (or have applied for permanent residence, without having received a denial) with the intent to become a U.S. citizen at the earliest opportunity allowed by law. Similar questions appear on the test and the students’ responses to these questions qualify or disqualify them for NMSC consideration (NMSC, 2008d, ¶ 2).

Of the average 1.4 million students who take the exam each year, approximately 50,000 of the highest PSAT/NMSQT Selection Index scores qualify for recognition by the National Merit Scholarship Program (NMSC,

2008d). Students must make arrangements with their high school to take the test that is offered in October because they are allowed to register to take the exam on an individual basis. Students can also request a PSAT/NMSQT Student Guide be sent to the high school for distribution in order for them to understand the test regulations, receive sample test questions with directions and tips to answer them as well as a pull-put practice for self-scoring (NMSC, 2008b).

After test results are calculated, they are sent to National Merit Scholarship Corporation as well as identifying information about the students provided on answer sheets (NMSC, 2008b). The individual score report sent to each student indicates his scores on the critical reading, mathematics, and writing skills sections of the test and informs the student if he has met the NMSC entry requirements. An asterisk, on the individual score report, indicates that the student does not qualify for NMSC. Those who do qualify are considered semifinalists, and they are sent a scholarship application. After completing and sending in the application, the semifinalists who met the academic and other standards advance to the finalist level and compete for scholarships. In April, the semifinalists are contacted by NMSC and are asked which two colleges or universities to which they would like NMSC to refer them. In addition, in the fall semester of the students' senior year, their high schools are informed their status as a semifinalist or a commended student (NMSC, 2008d).

Approximately, 34,000 students of the 50,000 students selected are commended but do not move further in the NMSC competition. These students receive letters of commendation and are recognized for their outstanding

academic promise and are candidates for specialized scholarships by corporations and businesses (NMSC, 2008d).

Approximately 16,000 student semifinalists enter the second phase of the competition each year. The students are chosen at the state level and are given application materials by their high schools. Semifinalists advance to finalist position by meeting the high academic standard and other standards set by NMSC (NMSC, 2008d). In February, 15,000 semifinalists advance to finalist positions as they are notified by mail to their home addresses. Principals are notified of the finalists in their schools and provided a certificate of recognition to present to the student (NMSC, 2008d).

Final award winners are chosen based on their abilities, skills, and accomplishments—without regard to gender, race, and ethnic group or religious preference. The NMSC selectors have a variety of criteria by which to evaluate the students, including students' consistency of high academic performance from grades 9-12, information about the school's curriculum and grading system including number of AP/ Honors courses offered, two sets of standardized test scores, written recommendations by school principal or designated individual, information about the students activities and leadership involvement through the application, and the finalist's own essay as determined by a prompt asking them what sets them apart from other candidates (E. Artemakis, NMSC Public Information Director, personal communication, February, 17, 2009; NMSC, 2008d).

From March through June of every year, the NMSC notifies approximately 8,200 finalists at their home addresses of their Merit Scholarship Award. There are three types of awards: (a) the National Merit \$2,500 Scholarship is a one time award; (b) the corporate-sponsored Merit Award is for students who exhibit characteristics that might be attractive to sponsors such as careers of interest, residency, or children of an employee or member of the corporation; (c) the college-sponsored Merit Scholarship awards are presented by colleges and universities that were identified by the finalists as being their first two choices of institutions. These scholarships vary in monetary award by institution and are renewable up to four years of undergraduate study (NMSC, 2008d). Of the finalists who are not picked for scholarships every year, approximately 1,500 of them are awarded special scholarships provided by corporations and business organizations for students who meet their specific criteria.

Since its establishment in 1955, the NMSC has recognized three million students and has awarded \$1.2 billion to 324,000 students (NMSC, 2008a). In the year 2007, \$44.2 million in sponsor awards were distributed to 7,642 students, and \$7.7 million was distributed to 2,984 students for NMSC awards, for a total of \$51.9 million distributed to 10,608 students for Merit Scholarships, Special Scholarships, and Achievement Scholarship Awards. The university site selected for this study has been one of the top universities in providing awards to National Merit Scholars, sponsoring more than 100 merit scholars each year.

A significant number of Merit Scholars graduate from post-secondary institutions every year. In 2007, 9,400 National Merit Scholars, Special Scholars, and National Achievement Scholars graduated from college. Bachelor degrees were conferred at 575 colleges and universities in a variety of fields; however, there were a notable amount of students graduating in the biology/life science, engineering, and physical sciences. A survey of the scholars indicated that the NMSC scholars maintained a long-standing tradition of hard work and success in their collegiate careers.

National Achievement Scholarship. In response to the growing concern about racial equality in the 1960s, the National Achievement Scholarship Program (NASP) was created in 1964 to recognize and award scholarships to outstanding African American high school students (NMSC, 2008c). The NASP is based on the same criteria set for the National Merit Scholarship (NMS). “The two programs are conducted concurrently but are operated and funded separately” as a result of the historic context of the program and the Civil Rights Movement as well as addressing the special needs of the African American students (E. Artemakis, NMSC Director of Public Information, personal communication, February 17, 2009 & NMSC; 2008c, ¶3). African American students must choose to be considered for the National Achievement Scholarship program as indicated on the PSAT/NMSQT form (E. Artemakis, NMSC Director of Public Information, personal communication, February 17, 2009). Black students can receive recognition in both the NMS and the NASP but can only receive one monetary award (NMSC, 2008c, ¶ 3).

In September of every year, a list of the names of high school students meeting the NASP criteria along with a list of their preferred colleges and universities and intended majors are sent to higher education admission officials across the country. Certificates of recognition are also sent to the principal of the students' respective high schools for presentation to the students. The NASP students follow the same semifinalist and finalist steps as the NMS students (NMSC, 2008c).

Beginning in February, the NMSC notifies the 800 NASP recipients of the awards they will receive. There are two types of scholarships given to NASP recipients: National Achievement \$2,500 Scholarships, which is a one-time award, and the Corporate-sponsored Achievement Scholarship awards, which is based on specific student characteristics such as their status as children of employees of the corporation, residence in a desired region, or intention to pursue a career and major of interest to the corporation. These awards are four-year awards (NMSC, 2008c).

National Hispanic Recognition Program. The College Board initiated the National Hispanic Recognition Program (NHRP) in 1983 as a response to the continued growth of the Hispanic population in the United States (College Board, 2008). The purpose of the program is to identify outstanding Hispanic high school students and share information about these academically well prepared students with subscribing colleges and universities. Students must be at least one-quarter Hispanic and take their PSAT/NMSQT test in their junior year or any

other specified time outlined by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation (College Board, 2008).

Students' scores are calculated by combining the critical reading, mathematics, and writing scores from the PSAT/NMSQT. A minimum grade point average is established for the program and academic information is collected from the students' high schools. In October of the junior year, students take the PSAT/NMSQT exam. In early April, the NHRP sends information to high school principals about the students who are being considered for the scholarship. By May, high schools return verification and academic information to the program office (College Board, 2008).

In September, a CD-ROM containing students' names, contact information, and majors of interest is sent to colleges and universities. The initial National Hispanic Scholars Award Program's funding was started by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation (Clewel & Joy, 1988). The program's aim is to increase the number of Hispanics entering higher education through scholarships. The program was initially established as a three-year program; 250 scholarships were awarded the first year, 350 scholarships the second year, and 500 in the third year in the amount of \$1,500 each (Clewel & Joy, 1988). However, the program did not continue as an "in-house" scholarship program. Because the program is run by the College Board and not linked directly to the National Merit Scholarship Corporation, monetary awards are not able to be made to these students by the NMSC. Instead, student's names are provided on a CD-Rom that is distributed to four-year universities and colleges. This provides the students the opportunity to

hear from and receive scholarships and financial aid packages from many prospective schools interested in students of Hispanic heritage. Additionally, in September, certificates are given to the high schools for the students' recognition (College Board, 2008).

Each year, NHRP identifies nearly 3,000 students who are the highest scoring students nationwide on the PSAT/NMSQT. Approximately 124,000 students take the test, self-identifying as Hispanic. Included in this number are students from Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, and U.S. citizens attending international and APO schools.

Clewell and Joy's 1988 NHRP study. Since its establishment in 1983, only one major study has been conducted on the National Hispanic Recognition Program. Clewell and Joy's 1988 study was funded by the College Board for the purpose of conducting a descriptive analysis of high-achieving Hispanic students in this population. The purpose of the study was to (a) describe the pool of National Hispanic Scholar Awards Program applicants in the program's initial year, 1983-1984, and compare Hispanic Scholars (winners) with Hispanic honorable mention and semifinalists who did not receive the award; (b) examine the characteristics of high achieving Hispanic students; and (c) isolate the factors associated with success in college (Clewell & Joy, 1988).

Utilizing the student descriptive questionnaire, Clewell and Joy (1988) obtained information about the student participants' academic and educational backgrounds, English language usage, and experiences during their freshman year of college. The study sample included 750 Hispanic students who applied to the

National Hispanic Scholars Awards and 729 students who did not apply for scholarship awards. In addition, a sub-population categorized as “winners,” defined as semifinalist and award winners, was asked questions pertaining to the impact the scholarship had on them.

Clewell and Joy’s (1988) study reported several interesting findings related to NHRP student characteristics. The high achieving Hispanic scholars (semifinalists and winners) resembled more closely the economic background of their White counterparts than other cohorts of Hispanic students. These high-achieving students were academically prepared in high school for college study, had higher SAT and GPA scores than the mean of either the White or the Hispanic students. These students had a good command of English and most were bilingual in Spanish and English. The students chose selective universities and colleges and lived on campus. Many of them majored in the sciences. Though college proved to be more difficult than expected, they adjusted well, performed well in school, and were involved in extracurricular activities (Clewell & Joy, 1988).

As a result of their findings, Clewell and Joy (1988) outlined certain predictors of success for this population of high-achieving Hispanic students: (a) students with higher SAT scores and high school grades had higher GPAs in their freshman year; (b) living on campus, having a number of activities in high school, being male, and living at a distance from family were best indicators of student participation in college activities; and (c) English proficiency and a higher level of

education for the student's father predicted less adjustment problems; whereas, living a greater distance from home predicted more problems.

The NHRP winners in the Clewell and Joy (1988) study were asked about the impact the program had on them. Eighty-seven percent reported that the program increased their confidence entering higher education. Half of the winners reported the scholarship helped them get into a good college, and 40% of the students who received the award stated that the award helped them obtain other scholarships.

Although Clewell and Joy (1988) recommended that more studies be conducted on this population, to date, none have since been published. Clewell and Joy (1988) believed that studies on the NHRP students would provide a wealth of information for program administrators, selection committees, and others interested in studying high achievement among Hispanic students. Other researchers within the last 20 years, such as Castellanos & Lee (2003), Miller (2005), Zalaquett (2005), Gándara (1995, 2005), have reviewed the characteristics of high-achieving Hispanic students and provided their interpretations of the predictors of success according to their defined high-achieving context, but they have not revisited the National Hispanic Recognition Program population as did Clewell and Joy.

Review of Hispanic High-Achieving Students

Numerous researchers have performed studies on "high-achieving" scholars with their own definitions, which are often categorized according to students' secondary-level academic scores and preparation (Alva, 1991; Gándara,

2005; González & Padilla, 1997; Miller, 2005). Miller (2005) provided a literature review of high school Hispanic students and undergraduate Hispanic students. He examined the challenges associated with improving outcomes in higher education for Latino students and the lack of strategies related to such improvements. Miller found that Latino students averaged a score of two on AP exams (biology, calculus, chemistry, English literature, U.S. history), whereas the White and Asian students scored an average of three on a majority of the exams. A score of three is considered passing by most colleges and universities.

Morgan and Ramist (1998) found that students with a 1,500 SAT score or above took an average of five exams, scoring a four on each exam. Of the students with SAT scores between 900 and 1100, 14% took an average of 1.67 exams with an average score of 2.17. This is paradoxical because few Latino and Black students scored high on the SAT. In undergraduate education, when controlling for high school GPA and SAT scores, Hispanic students have lower undergraduate GPA scores than their White and Asian counterparts. Hispanics are less likely to seek guidance, assistance, feedback, and advice regarding assignments, papers, labs, and exams from professors. They are less confident in their academic abilities (Morgan & Ramist, 1998).

The current outlook, as presented in Miller's 2005 study, places Hispanic students at a disadvantage and less likely to be considered academically high achieving. However, some researchers have found that Hispanic students are succeeding in both high school and at the post-secondary level while still

maintaining and addressing a number of sociocultural variables that place these students at risk for underachievement (Alva, 1991).

Academic success. Although Hispanics (referred to as Mexican Americans in Alva's 1991 study) may have a plethora of reasons for failing academically, there is little known about the factors that increase their academic success (Alva, 1991). In her study, Alva defined academic success in the face of many risk factors for failure as "academically invulnerable":

Academically invulnerable students can be described as those who sustain high levels of achievement motivation and performance, despite the presence of stressful events and conditions that place them at risk of doing poorly in school, and ultimately, dropping out of school. (p. 19)

Alva's 1991 study was conducted with high school sophomores residing in Los Angeles County. Hispanic students made up nearly 80% of the study population. Students from this population who participated in the study were Mexican American high school sophomores living in the United States since the seventh grade who were not enrolled in special education, gifted or English-as-second language programs. A total of 384 participants were involved in the study—163 males and 221 females. Over 60% of the student participants were born in the United States. Sixty-nine percent of the students' fathers were employed, and 46% of the students' mothers were employed. The survey was administered during class and took approximately 50 minutes to complete. The survey was comprised of several instruments measuring occupational and educational status, personal resources (personal responsibility for academic performance), environmental resources (educational support the respondents

received from their parents teachers and friends), and subjective appraisals of educational experience as well as measures of the degree of stressful events and situations (family concerns, intergroup relations, and conflicts involving language issues) (Alva, 1991). In addition, the original factor analysis was conducted on the participants' school grades in standardized test scores including a composite score of each respondents reading, language, and math skills as well as their grade received during their sophomore year of high school.

The results of Alva's (1991) study suggest that several factors can serve as buffers against the detrimental effects of sociocultural events and conditions that place students at risk for academic failure. These factors include respect and care, involvement at school, college preparation, family concerns, intergroup relations, and language uses. Surprisingly, English exposure was important in standardized testing, but not in high school grades.

When considering environmental support, the academically invulnerable students reported higher levels of support from teachers and friends. The absence of parental support in protecting high school grades was surprising. However, this may be caused by the limited range of parental support measures (Alva, 1991).

A positive college preparatory climate played a critical role in encouraging students to succeed and push forward to higher education. In addition, the students' own beliefs that someday they will graduate from college as well as their feelings of being prepared and encouraged to go to college were helpful in ensuring higher school grades. Lastly, the study indicated that frequent contact

with guidance counselors when making decisions to go to college was extremely important for the high-achieving Hispanic students (Alva, 1991).

Alva's (1991) study identified a myriad of characteristics indicative of high-achieving students including a "positive view of their intellectual abilities and a strong responsibility for their academic future" (p. 18). She also provided a working definition for Hispanic students who are vulnerable to risks associated with their sociocultural attributes as well as providing a definition of invulnerability that accounts for students who succeed despite the odds. This definition informed future research such as González and Padilla's 1997 study.

The González and Padilla (1997) study sought to identify factors that contribute to the academic resilience and achievement among Mexican American high school students. A 314-item questionnaire was administered to students at three California high schools. The questionnaire measured (a) self-esteem, (b) delinquency, (c) stressful life events, (d) psychological maturity, (e) school bonding, (f) parental involvement, (g) peer values, (h) peer conformity, and a variety of other variables. The questionnaire also assessed peer values through extracurricular, academic, and social domains. The importance of keeping in touch with relatives and parental awareness of how student time was spent was also included in the study. The questionnaire was administered to students during class, and the students were instructed to take as much time needed to complete it. A total of 7,140 surveys were collected, which included 2,169 Mexican American students. Self-reported academic scores were used to identify the high-achieving and low-achieving student groups.

González and Padilla (1997) used Alva's (1991) definition of academic resilience, establishing that her definition is both reasonable and empirically supported. González and Padilla also recognized the presence of risk factors for Hispanic students. They attributed the factors to social class, purporting that low socioeconomic status (SES) strongly associates with low academic performance (National Research Council, 1993). Low SES causes students to live in poorer housing conditions, have inadequate access to public services, and attend schools that cannot afford to provide a higher quality education. Forty-one percent of Hispanics live in poverty compared to 13% of Whites (Hechinger, 1992). Therefore, income has a significant effect on Hispanic students.

Furthermore, González and Padilla (1997) described the resilient and non-resilient student profile. Resilient students were more likely to be female, to have immigrant parents, to have been born outside the United States, and to live with both parents. Non-resilient students were more likely to live with their mothers only and have lower parental education levels. Both groups spoke Spanish (90%). A supportive academic environment and a sense of belonging in school were positive factors contributing to academic resilience.

Academic resilience was demonstrated through the key characteristics illustrated above. Mexican American students, though they may have risk factors that create obstacles for their academic success, can prevail in higher education (González & Padilla, 1997). The researchers further emphasized that research should be focused on the positive student outcomes rather than negative

outcomes. Studying academically resilient students will contribute most to creating useful interventions that address students' specific needs.

Resilient but vulnerable. Although González and Padilla (1997) believed that research on high-achieving students should focus on positive attributes, it is the continual belief of major researchers in the field of high achievement that high-achieving Hispanic students may still be vulnerable to the risk factors associated with low achieving students (Gándara, 2005). Gándara defined vulnerability for high achievers as the high achievers having fragile academic futures: "Thus their academic futures can be considered fragile, hanging by a thin thread of hope that nothing will go terribly wrong in their extended families, or in school, that will dash their pursuit of academic success" (p. 3).

Gándara (2005) provided a more comprehensive outlook on the risk factors and vulnerability of Latino achievers in her Educational Testing Services Report. The purpose of the report was to (a) describe the status of academic achievement among Latino students (particularly high school students); (b) compare characteristics of Latino high achievers and White students in the K-12 setting; (c) describe the academic choices of a few students in a longitudinal study; (d) review the ability for intervention programs to improve high-achieving potential; and (e) examine policy to increase educational attainment for high-achieving low-income students. Using quantitative methodology, Gándara utilized two national longitudinal databases (the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study [ECLS] of 1998 and the National Educational Longitudinal Study [NELS] of 1988) to analyze and identify the inequalities that Latino students face. The

1988 ECLS was created by the U.S. Department of Education and included 22,000 students who were tracked from kindergarten through third grade. Students were measured on their math and reading abilities. The 1988 NELS sampled more than 24,000 eighth graders. These students were followed through their mid-20s.

Gándara (2005) also utilized qualitative methodology by tracking 28 students from three high schools on the west coast. These students resided in different geographical areas and had varied ethnic/racial compositions. The students were enrolled in schools that served low-income and working class students and had significantly high numbers of Latino students.

The 28 study participants were interviewed in person several times during their high school years and over the phone after high school. Furthermore, Gándara (2005) observed them in the classroom setting and during other school-related activities. There were four categories for the students ranging from low achievers (2.0 GPA or below) to high achievers (3.5 GPA or higher). Fifty percent of students had a 3.0 GPA or higher and had aspirations to go to college. The students participating in the study were in the high school Puente program, which supports their goal to attend college. Twenty-two students remained in the program. Utilizing a narrative approach, Gándara described their life experiences.

Gándara (2005) found significant differences between White and Hispanic students across both the quantitative and qualitative data sets. High-achieving Latino students were more likely to have parents with low education levels with 25% of parents not having a high school diploma. This finding was a stark

contrast to the 5% of White students' parents with high school diplomas. In addition, although Latino students may have been in a high-income bracket, the students' reading level was less likely to stay in the top quintile for reading. This means that education is likely to have a stronger relationship between socioeconomic status and achievement for Latino students rather than for White students.

Of the highest achieving students, seven out of eight students who started their academic careers with a 3.5 GPA and ended up with an average 2.87 GPA by the time they graduated from high school remained in the study (Gándara, 2005). The students encountered significant problems outside of the school setting that derailed their ambitions. When asked to rank their priorities by personal importance, the highest achieving students ranked school either number one or number two, competing with family.

In the qualitative portion of her study, Gándara (2005) described two students from the highest achieving group, Andres and Ofelia. Andres, though he was shy and felt that his classes were difficult, was the top ranked student in the program. With a 4.04 GPA, he was well on his way, taking college preparatory classes. Andres was the oldest of four boys; one of his siblings was an infant while Andres was a high school senior. Andres's mother attended junior college but did not finish, and his stepfather, an immigrant from Northern Europe, was a working-class man. Because the stepfather was undocumented, the mother supported the family with a newspaper route and a part-time job at a fast food restaurant. Andres took the responsibility of helping with the newspaper route,

often waking up at 2 or 3 a.m. Returning home from delivering papers, he would sleep for a little while before readying himself for school. He was a tutor and mentor for other students and was the leader of a self-initiated study group. Andres scored 1120 on the SAT and had a 3.74 GPA upon graduating from high school. He was a good candidate for a scholarship to a highly selective university. However, he worried a great deal about his mother because his leaving the family would mean that she would bear more burdens for providing for his family. Therefore he joined the Marine Corps, even though he was advised to go to the local selective four-year university. His reasoning was that the military would help him pay for college and that joining the Marines would only delay college for a little while. His decision was ultimately based on his sense of responsibility to his family and financial obligations.

Ofelia was a member of Andres's study group. She began high school with a 3.8 GPA and had ambitions to become a doctor, a lawyer, or a chief executive officer. She stated that she wanted to go to Harvard University, Stanford University, or Boston University. She grew up in foster families and was highly selective in her choice of friends. She associated with the smartest people in her class. She ranked school as the top priority in her life. She also believed that the military might be a good way for her to pay for her education. Because of her mother's inability to work as a result of health problems, Ofelia felt it was her responsibility to help out at home and work to pay for necessities. While in school, she took on several jobs to support herself. She was under a lot of stress and was hospitalized twice because of it. Her grades suffered

tremendously, and they were unpredictable. Sometimes she would have a 3.7 GPA and other times she would fail all of her classes. Although Ofelia's academic instability affected her chances of getting into college, she did not quit. She went to night school and summer school to make up the failed classes. She graduated with a 2.4 GPA and a 900 SAT score. With intervention from her counselor, she was admitted to the local state campus close to Berkeley (where her boyfriend was accepted). She spent every weekend with her boyfriend and did not make connections with others. Eventually, both her and her boyfriend decided to attend community college.

Both of the students' complicated personal lives and financial responsibilities made college a difficult uncertainty. Although both of them had incredible potential, they fell short of their original goals. Gándara (2005) warned that schools and counselors often believe that high-achieving Latino students are fine on their own. They develop this notion to "leave well enough alone," which negates the fact that high-achieving students are still vulnerable to difficulties expressed by their socioeconomic status.

In her research with low-income students, Gándara (2005) was surprised to witness the struggle that these students undergo. Daily life is much more difficult for these students without parental care, childcare, health care, or money to buy books or bus fare. Often students, especially if they or family members are undocumented, serve as translators or cultural brokers for their families in everyday life situations such as doctor appointments and obtaining a driver's license. This responsibility to care for their families is often prioritized over their

own immediate needs. She explained that high-achieving Latino students are as likely to be caught up in this web of responsibility as low-achieving and low-income students.

Gándara (2005) recommended that change come from the most fundamental of educational arenas. Intellectually rigorous preschool and kindergartner programs can contribute significantly to preparing Hispanic students with the skills required for high academic achievement. Supportive networks of teachers, counselors, mentors, and peer groups can assist the socioeconomically disadvantaged. Even when Latino students are placed in advanced placement (AP) and honors courses, they are competing against White students who have more access to resources and support (Gándara, 2005). Therefore, there must be aggressive change to introduce these resources to the Latino students early in life.

Programs designed to assist these Latino students can help them gain access to college counseling, which can encourage them to enroll in more rigorous courses that help prepare them for college entrance exams (Gándara, 2005). In addition, a supportive peer group and the involvement of family members in the students' goals could contribute to increased persistence in education. This persistence can be accomplished through personal and individual attention given to the students by school personnel who will not allow anyone to fall through the cracks. Gándara recommended that future researchers focus on high-achieving Latino students with the intention of discovering the factors that bring up the top students rather than attempting to raise the bottom students. This

recommendation introduces a psychological shift in higher education, suggesting that professionals ought to view all students as being capable of high achievement and placing responsibility on everyone for ensuring the success of all students.

Re-evaluation of “exceptional.” Cuádriz (2006) examined the myths surrounding student exceptionalism. She purported that when institutions focus on individual accomplishments, they bypass the institutional process and structural opportunities that can maximize student achievement. Moreover, Latino students become exceptions to their race.

Drawing from the topical life histories of Chicano doctoral students at the University of California Berkeley, Cuádriz (2006) inquired about the participants’ interpretations of their childhood and their parents’ relationship to their achievement. Through her interpretations of the meaning of the student narrative, Cuádriz concluded that she and the scholars she studied were being considered exceptions to their race/ethnicity because of the current racial ideology that subscribes Latino achievement and underachievement to the individual student instead of seeing achievement as a part of longer socio-historical phenomena. Her conclusion challenges the conservative view that high achievers from Latino backgrounds should be few in numbers. This realization came from her understanding that she was investigating her own story as well as the stories of other Latinos.

Cuádriz (2006) considered several schools of thought concerning exceptionalism, including those of cultural deficit theorists, revisionist scholars, neo-conservative writers, and critical ethnographers. Cultural deficit theorists

hold the belief that the Chicana/o family socialization practices and values continue the pattern of low educational attainment. These theorists believe that Hispanic families do not value education and, therefore, the children do not value it either. Revisionists attempted to correct this idea by attributing high achievement to successful family environments, parental encouragement, and child-rearing practices. The revisionists argue that these attributes are perfect ingredients for high achievement. Conservative writers of color have documented their individual experiences within the academy. Individualism, they conclude, accounts for their success even though the struggle between the academy and their culture was common. The conservatists believe that assimilation would be the way to reign over the discrimination. Cuádriz (2006), however, argued that collectively, educational attainment by minority groups is considered exceptional and not normative which pardons the institution from responsibility to these minority communities.

Cuádriz (2006) also found that her story and the stories of three of her selected study participants were key in illustrating attributes of Hispanic students and high achievers. Her own story was compelling as were the stories that she heard. Her family members were supportive of her educational aspirations throughout her life until her goals resulted in leaving her family. At this juncture, her two worlds collided. She was willing to be disowned by her family when she decided to go to the University of California at Santa Cruz. As she was literally on her way out the door, her family decided to set aside their traditions and give

their support. Her life story was considered an exception to her race, although she expressed a core belief that everyone has the opportunity to pursue their dreams.

The three scholars in Cuádras's (2006) study, Running Bear, Teofilo, and Maya, each had compelling stories as well. Running Bear admired his father's drive and felt pride in the fact that his father was industrious. While growing up, he believed that education was the way out of poverty. Running Bear adopted his father's work ethic and applied it to his education. Teofilo was one of several children in a migrant family. He had a "heavy handed" father and both parents did not encourage him to attend school. Teofilo was impacted deeply by the support of his brother. One day, in eighth grade, his brother found his report card on the table and exclaimed, "Look at these grades!" Maya was raised in a devout Catholic family and, as the eldest of 12 children, had much responsibility placed on her to help with housework and care for her siblings. She was never really encouraged in school, and as a result, Maya sought recognition from her school teachers. With every school change, she had to prove herself academically so that she wasn't just another Mexican girl. Although Maya received a scholarship for four years to any university or college in California, she chose to attend the junior college.

Each narrative in Cuádras's (2006) study can fit into numerous theoretical frameworks. The most important thing to realize is that researchers are part of the research process and that their assumptions drive interpretations about the high-achieving scholars they study. Researchers and administrators must consider their

contributions toward increasing Hispanic students' attainment of academic success.

Stories from high achievers. The most common outlet for high-achieving Hispanic scholars to express their experiences has been through personal narrative. Storytelling has been a compelling way in which to describe the challenges and trials faced by high-achieving scholars. Richard Rodriguez (1982) explained his separation from his family in exchange for the academy. He believed that he would have to choose between two worlds—his family and the academy—and in order to succeed he would need to choose the academy. His pain was the pain of academic socialization. He learned to replace the pain of separation from his family with added enthusiasm for the academy.

This struggle between the academy and family is the most common and overwhelming struggle students have communicated in their narratives. This finding was consistent in Cuádriz's 2006 study as well as Rodriguez's 1982 study. Therefore, understanding the relationship with the family is extremely important when developing a comprehensive view of Hispanic high-achieving scholars.

Rendón's (1992) essay entitled "From the Barrio to the Academy: Revelations of a Mexican 'Scholarship Girl'" sent a clear message about the cultural identifications placed upon her as a high-achieving Hispanic student. Laura Rendón chronicled the pain of separation she felt as she left behind her culture to negotiate her academic life. She echoed the feelings of Rodriguez (1982) by stating, "Scholarship 'boys and girls' are left only with what Rodriguez

(1982) calls ‘hunger of memory’ nostalgic longing for the past—the laughter of relatives, the beautiful intimacy of the Spanish language, the feeling of closeness with one’s own parents” (p. 62).

Rendón’s (1992) parents did not understand what higher education could offer and what it could take away because they only had a third-grade education. Her experiences of sharing her dreams with her family resulted in backlash and discontent. She gave in and opted to attend a local community college. This decision frustrated her mother, although it was never discussed. Her mother preferred that her daughter get a job so that she, as the mother, would not have to work. Rendón later transferred to a four-year college and it was there that she began to feel the loneliness associated with scholarship boys and girls. When going home for visits, she did not speak much about college to her family members. She somehow thought that college language and family life did not need to be mixed. She would become really frustrated with her mom when discussing how hard school was and how busy she was because her mom would refuse to understand her plight. Her mother would often tell her to leave college and return home. Rendón felt that her mother was resentful of the new person she was becoming and she feared that she might become a stranger to her family.

Rendón (1992) expressed her beliefs that there does not need to be an increase in scholarship boys and girls, better financial aid packages, more role models, or mentoring program, but rather a fundamental change in education that will not allow the intense pressure to assimilate to the academy by students of color. “Higher education often requires not only that students be humble,”

explained Rendón, “but that they tolerate humiliation. We must reject old values and traditions, mistrust our experiences, and disconnect with our past” (p. 60).

Recently, two scholars were featured in the literature as representing the undergraduate and graduate Hispanic experience. Both had struggles, and both overcame them in different ways. The undergraduate student, Veronica Orozco (2003) was born in Mexico and socialized with the norms of her culture. Women had limited education and were expected to marry and start a family at a young age. She envisioned her life that way until moving to the United States in 1988. Her parents, though they may not have understood all the values of an education, did understand that getting an education meant that a person would have a higher paying job. Orozco lived in an impoverished area in the U.S. that was full of gangs. Neither she nor her other family members had an awareness about college until her eldest brother decided to attend University of California, Irvine (UCI). She later decided to attend UCI with him, which was an acceptable arrangement because her brother could take care of her. Though their educational pursuits opened new opportunities for Orozco and her brother, little changed in the way of cultural norms. Family and education did not mix. However, it was the need to provide a better life for her parents and be a better example to her siblings that drove Orozco to succeed in education. Although her parents initially opposed her decision to pursue a graduate degree at Ohio State University, they eventually accepted her choice and supported her.

Herrera (2003) described his college choice as tracked and discriminatory. Starting in his guidance counselor’s office, he was presented with four choices—

the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corp. Unsure about his future and attracted to world travel and having his education funded, he joined the Marines. This decision was accepted by his mother with some hesitancy but relief because she was divorced with three children and wanted to make sure he had a plan for his future. After completing those obligations, Herrera was later accepted to a doctoral program. Even after being accepted into a program, completing his internships, and writing his dissertation, he still acknowledged doubting himself, expressing his thoughts that the degree-granting institutions had made a mistake. He quoted Rendón's (1992) "Scholarship Girl" article, echoing feelings of estrangement from his family. He felt love and was rejuvenated when he visited his family, but at the same time there was a deep sense of loss for his family and what was comfortable and normal because of his distant circumstance.

The literature overwhelmingly suggests that the family is essential in the academic achievement of high-achieving Hispanic students. Family members and family circumstances pose opportunities and barriers, as documented by research. Family income can present opportunities for Hispanic students or represent one of the greatest barriers to academic success.

Hispanic Families and Finances

The literature depicts Hispanic families in two ways—either as being the reason for the student's success or a detriment to that success (Gándara, 2005). Traditional Latino culture stressed the family and the collective and not the individual (Quevado-García, 1987). Hispanic parents are sometimes unaware of the demands and workings of the educational system; they often are unable to

value their children's efforts or provide the type of support and encouragement needed to influence their goal achievement and academic attainment (Gloria, 1997). Although these authors have compelling arguments explaining the Hispanic parental culture, the above statements can also be subscribed to low-income and first-generation status student families.

Cultural capital. What is commonly considered a circumstance of culture, as influenced by the cultural deficit theory, can be explained by a likely low-income status (Gándara, 2005). The body of literature that embodies this belief that class is influenced by one's acceptance and subscription to the dominant culture is Bourdieu's (1986) theory of cultural capital. Bourdieu generally described capital as a person's ability to transform accumulated material or knowledge into "reified or living labor" (p. 46).

Bourdieu (1986) identified three types of capital: economic, social and cultural. Economic capital translates directly into money (i.e., property rights and material gains). Social capital is characterized as a person's connections and social networks (i.e., nobility, titles, and family associations). According to Bourdieu, cultural capital has three forms: (a) embodied, which is a long-lasting disposition or state of mind; (b) objectified, which is in the form of goods such as books, instruments, and other items; and (c) institutionalized, which is in the form of education. Cultural capital was developed from the norms of the dominant culture in France and then subscribed to the dominant culture in America, people with European ancestry—Whites or Caucasians (McNeal, 1999). As a result of this homogenous understanding of cultural capital, many researchers have focused

on cultural capital as it presents itself for non-dominant groups such as women, ethnic minorities, and low income populations.

Huppatz (2009), a feminist theorist, summarized the potential expansion of Bourdieu's (1986) cultural capital theory: "through the concept of capital, researchers have been able to explore practices of class distinctions, and how class divisions are produced through the absence or presence of social competencies. However, the concept is much more capable than this" (p. 46).

Cultural capital has been explored recently within the context of parental involvement, which is central to this present research. Lee and Bowen (2006) described cultural capital as "the advantage gained by middle-class, European American parents from knowing, preferring and experiencing a lifestyle congruent with the culture that is dominant in most American schools" (p. 198). With this understanding of cultural capital, it would seem that those who are disenfranchised from the dominant group would have limited access to cultural capital.

Many myths surround the Latino family, including the family's lack of value of education and the predominance of illiteracy and uninvolvement in school activities (Kiyama, 2010). These myths have stemmed from a larger school of thought called deficit theory. According to deficit theory, Latino families are viewed as being fundamentally ill prepared for supporting students' education aspirations, which is detrimental to the students' academic success (Kiyama, 2010). Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez (1992) developed a term to describe the knowledge and skills required to maintain a household and personal

well being as “funds of knowledge.” When researchers utilize the lens of funds of knowledge to understand college access, family nuances and the uses of existing resources are emphasized (Kiyama, 2010). Moll et al.’s “funds of knowledge” concept acknowledges Latino families’ knowledge base and cultural exchanges with other families, which are not recognized in Bourdieu’s (1986) concept of dominate group cultural capital. Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital is undergirded by the idea that there are some people who have and some people who have not. Those persons who have not must obtain the capitals prescribed by the dominant culture. Latino families may lack the dominant culture’s prescribed capitals, but according to Moll et al., they may possess other types of valuable capital in existing funds of knowledge. Oftentimes, discussions of cultural capital are characterized by an unconscious entanglement between racial cultural and economic culture. Although studies report high poverty rates among Latino families, high poverty rates should not be translated to the expectation that because a person is Hispanic he will belong to the lower socioeconomic group. Hispanic family literature often connects culture and low-income status, which makes disaggregating the findings difficult. The studies discussed in this section reflect both the influence of income and the family on Hispanic students.

Influence of finances. Paulsen and St. John (2002) conducted a major study on the influence of social class and college costs as they relate to students’ college choice and persistence. They argued that this financial nexus is essential for understanding why students choose the colleges they choose and why they persist. If students perceive low tuition and low-living costs to be very important

in their college choice, such cost-consciousness may directly impact their persistence. Therefore, students' initial concerns about the cost of education may subsequently relate to their perception of the actual amount of money available to fund their education, which, in turn, determines their levels of persistence.

Paulsen and St. John (1997) found that students engage in a number of college choice decisions that are affected by financial factors. In addition, they found that students in public colleges consider cost an important factor in college choices. Students also consider location to home and low tuition costs. Students often choose local colleges with high financial aid and low tuition costs where they can economize living costs while living at home. The researchers further asserted that minimal consideration has been given in the literature to the role of social class as it relates to educational attainment.

It has been documented that educational institutions and policies play a role in class-based reproduction of social and economic stratification. Social class and education have been documented through secondary education and vocational education. Carnoy and Levin (1985) concluded that the American system of "education both reproduces the unequal hierarchal relations of the nuclear family and capitalist workplace and also presents opportunities for social mobility and extension democratic rights" (p. 76). The student's social class directly influences patterns of college choice. The student's financial circumstances influence the social class in which she is ascribed thereby assigning her to certain related constraints. Student social class also influences how cost-conscious

students perceive financial issues as part of the decision to attend college (McDounough, 1997)

Paulsen and St. John (2002) examined the influence of the financial nexus model as it relates to the student's background and expectations about costs, college experience, current aspirations, finances, and persistence. They studied four distinct income groups of undergraduates: (a) low-income students whose families annually earned less than or equal to \$11,000; (b) lower-middle-income students whose families earned above \$11,000 but less than \$30,000; (c) upper-middle-income students whose family income was at least \$30,000 but less than \$60,000; and (d) upper-income students whose family income was equal to or greater than \$60,000. Students who considered financial aid, low tuition, or both low tuition and financial aid were compared to students who did not think any of these variables were important.

The Paulson and St. John (2002) study utilized the National Postsecondary Study Aid Survey (NPSAS) of 1987 because it was previously used in other nexus studies. Also, the NPSAS database had survey data that covered both fall and spring. Unfortunately after 1987, this database no longer included both semesters in their sample; therefore, the researchers decided to utilize the 1987 database because of its comprehensive nature.

The study's findings showed that students in the low-income bracket were more likely to belong to minority groups. Furthermore, these students were more likely to have mothers with less education and be first-generation college students. In addition, a large percentage of low-income students and lower-

middle-income students were females and had families that would encourage them. Most low-income students, approximately 64%, chose a college because of low tuition student aid or both. In addition, more than half, approximately 54%, chose a college because it was close to their work or because living costs were lower or both. Low-income and low-middle-income students received more A's than upper- and upper-middle-income students. However, most of these students completed only a vocational track rather than a complete college or advanced degree. The lower- and middle-income students had a similar profile as low-income students (Paulson & St. John, 2002).

The largest percentages of students working while attending college were in the lower-middle class. These working students had constraints due to their limited ability to fund their tuition, but they were committed to attaining a college degree. Half of these students were concerned about work and living costs as well as tuition and student aid when considering the college choices. Lower-middle-income students were more likely to achieve a college degree and had mostly A's. Student aid played a particular factor when lower-middle-income students' aid in grants and loans matched the amount necessary for tuition charges (Paulson & St. John, 2002).

Upper-middle-income students in Paulson and St. John's (2002) study had a low percentage of minority students, and many more of these students' mothers had college degrees. Over half of the upper-middle-income students worked while they were in college; the money earned by those students who did work was not as necessary as it was for low-income students. Students in the upper-middle-

income bracket were more likely to attend private four-year campuses. In addition, they are more likely to enroll as full-time students and live on campus. These students aspired more often to attain a master's degree and obtained more of these degrees at a higher percentage rate than students in the lower-income groups. Financial aid was less substantial for upper-middle-income students when compared to low-income students (Paulson & St. John, 2002).

Upper-income students surveyed in Paulson and St. John's (2002) study represented the lowest percentage of minorities and held advanced degrees at much higher rates. They were younger, likely to be single, and more likely to graduate from high school. These upper-income students were also less likely to be financially independent. Their demographic characteristics closely paralleled the social elite. College cost was not considered to be of particular importance to them. Their aspirations were higher, and their persistence rates were the highest. Their financial aid packages were substantially lower than all other groups (Paulson & St. John, 2002).

Several class-based contrasts were evidenced in the Paulson and St. John (2002) study: (a) lower-income students were more likely than higher-income students to earn A's but aspired substantially less in postsecondary education; (b) lower-income students were also more likely to have mothers without high school diplomas and more likely to have been dropouts themselves; (c) lower-income students were more likely to work while attending college than higher-income students; (d) lower-income students were much more likely than higher-income students to be highly cost-conscious in college choice behavior; and (e) lower-

income students were less likely to attend private colleges or four-year universities, live on campus, or attend on a full-time basis. These findings indicate that patterns of privilege in society exist in the U.S. postsecondary education system (Paulson & St. John, 2002).

Of Latinos in Paulson and St. John's (2002) study sample, the lower-middle-income groups were more likely than White students to persist in college. Latinos chose to attend colleges with lower costs and were fewer in numbers than other ethnic groups. Latino middle-income and upper-middle-income groups were more likely to persist in college. Middle-income Latino families placed a significant value on postsecondary educational attainment. Low-income Latino students, with mothers who had some college education, were more likely to persist (Paulson & St. John, 2002). Paulson and St. John concluded, "Indeed the findings confirm that social class is far more complex than is communicated by hierarchical variables like socioeconomic status" (p. 225). As a result of the financial constraints of low-income students, the perpetuation of social class stratification will continue.

Cabrera, Nora, and Castaneda (1992) also looked at persistence as it related to persistence and found that the current persistence model presented by Tinto (1975, 1987) does not include the nuances present when considering social status in American society. Tinto's persistence theory asserts that academic and social components shape underlining individual commitments, including commitment to college completion and commitment to the institution itself. The greater the level of institutional commitment indicates the greater the likelihood

the students will complete college. However, Tinto's theory is limited when utilized to review the financial status of students.

Recent studies have shown that student aid is effective in compensating for the disadvantage of low-income students and supporting them to persist like their affluent peers (Leslie & Brinkman, 1988; Murdock, 1987; Stampen & Cabrera, 1986, 1988; St. John, 1990). Researchers studying a national sample of college students attending four-year institutions found that student finances exerted direct effects on decisions to persist (Bean & Metzger 1987). Consequently, students' concerns about finances can affect academic integration by increasing students' anxieties associated with the need to secure resources to finance their education, which ultimately limits the time spent on academically related activities (Bean & Metzger, 1987).

Cabrera, Nora, and Castenda (1992) conducted a longitudinal study on traditional freshman entering the fall class of 1988 and re-enrolling for the fall 1989 semester. Traditional students were selected based on the five characteristics: (a) full-time status, (b) first-time freshmen, (c) United States citizens, (d) less than 24 years of age, and (e) not married. A total of 2,453 participants were selected and administered a 79-item questionnaire that included six institutional commitment items: (a) belonging to the institution, (b) certainty and confidence of institutional choice, (c) assessment regarding the importance of graduating from institution, (d) the practical value of education obtained from institution, and (e) institutional prestige. College transcripts and institutional financial aid records were assessed to determine the students' GPA scores at the

end of the 1989 spring semester and their financial aid status. Finances were measured by student satisfaction with financial support and whether the student received financial aid.

The study findings indicated that having received some form of financial aid was found to facilitate the student's social interactions with other undergraduates at his or her institution (Cabrera, Nora, & Castaneda, 1992). Financial aid proved to provide recipients with enough time and freedom to engage in social activities and become fully integrated into the social realm of the institution, which in turn, removed anxieties so the students were able to perform better academically. Higher rates of satisfaction among students receiving financial support suggested that financial aid packages helped to equalize opportunities between affluent and low-income students.

Within the Latino student population, costs of attending college and financial aid are real concerns because of the fact that many of the students are low-income students. Valencia (1997) found that in the selected comparison population (Whites and Mexican), there were significant income differences. There were three annual family income levels present among the study participants: \$9,000-\$25,000; \$26,000-50,000; and \$51,000 and above. Fifty-one percent of Anglos and 21% of Mexicans were high income. Twenty-six percent of Anglos and 38% of Mexicans were middle income, and 23% of Anglos were low income and 43% of Mexicans were low income. These findings show that half of the Anglo (White) students in the same school were high income and nearly half of the Mexican American students were low income. This income

difference between ethnic groups places Mexican Americans, for the most part, in a cost-conscious position.

Although for Latino students the lack of financial resources has been identified as one of the most common factors for attrition, the family proves to be an effective tool in retention especially when parents are familiar with the college process (Castellanos & Jones, 2003; Jones, 2001). Latino students have a deep concern for their families because it is their single most important institution (Macias-Wycoff, 1996). Because the family is so important to the Latino student's support, the support of the family must be considered in the educational arena, especially in the area of academic persistence (Castellanos & Jones, 2003).

Influence of the family. There is a powerful effect that parents have on students' academic success (Arellano & Padilla, 1996). University students in Arellano and Padilla's (1996) study expressed that parental support was critical to their academic success. This support was defined as emotional encouragement. Gloria (1997) stated that family support was important in assisting Chicano students to persist until graduation. She also suggested that universities integrate the Latino family into the university community in order to increase the likelihood of persistence.

Zalaquett (2005) analyzed the stories of successful Latina/o students and confirmed the presence of several barriers and supporting factors: family, education, responsibility toward others, sense of accomplishment, friendship, scholarships, community support, and school personnel. In this study, 12 Latina/o students provided life stories in a written narrative that was guided by four

interview prompts: (a) please tell us your life story; (b) what obstacles or challenges (if any) have you had to overcome in order to attend the university; (c) what motivated you to pursue your college education? and (d) what would you suggest to other Latina/o students that are contemplating a college education? Each written narrative was assigned to two randomly selected professionals—one Latino and one person from another ethnic group—for evaluation. The readers evaluated each narrative for challenges and how the student overcame those challenges. The evaluators were asked to comment on whether the story would provide a positive impact for other Latino students.

Zalaquett's (2005) study found that despite the many barriers defined in the literature, there are some Latina/o students who gain access to a college career. The family was present in many of the stories. Students who reported strong family support found that that support assisted them in succeeding in school and pursuing a college education. Family support and involvement has repeatedly been the most critical factor in contributing to school success (Delgado-Gaitain & Trueba 1991; Epstein, 1991; Henderson & Berla, 1996; Kellaghan, Sloane, Álvarez & Bloom, 1993; Santiago-Rivera, Arredondo & Gallardo-Cooper, 2002). Latino parents often want to ensure their students' academic success, but they do not know how. Often they serve as motivators. Pursuing an education is a way for students to honor their parents and help the family, especially their siblings.

In Zalaquett's (2005) study, scholarships also played a critical role in student success. Scholarships were reported to be beneficial to the students. In

some cases, scholarships were the financial and psychological tool that was needed to assist them in going to college and staying in college (Zalaquett, 2005).

Zalaquett's (2005) reporting of the stories of successful Latina/o students contributes to a richer understanding of the barriers they encounter and the factors that influence their access to a college education. This study showed that even high-achieving Latino students encounter barriers such as lack of parental guidance in the education process and misinformation about college requirements. These barriers result in fewer resources available to the students for financial aid and confusions about career options. In this study, a core value identified by the students is the family. The idea of *familismo*, which is a strong sense of commitment, obligation and responsibility toward their family and extended kinship relations (Santiago-Rivera et.al., 2002), was interplaying simultaneously as students were striving to gain academic success.

In order to begin to understand the effects of parents on high-achieving Latino students, it would be necessary to ask the parents themselves. Auerbach (2004) explained that Latino parents hold high educational aspirations for their children, although the struggle for college access is a central concern for these parents. In order to ascertain the educational aspirations of Latino parents, Auerbach's study assessed whether a program called the Futures Project, in partnership with UCLA, is effective in giving parents vital information to assist their students in gaining access to higher education. The Futures Project is grounded in the idea that parents need opportunities to dialog with educators in a safe place.

Auerbach (2004) conducted 15 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with a subsample of parents. The interviews were facilitated in the parents' preferred language and explored their beliefs, knowledge, and practices regarding college pathways as well as their response to the Futures Project. Data were analyzed for themes and theory formation. Auerbach found that the Futures Program assisted parents in learning the steps to higher education and how to be involved in the process. Parents also expanded their college-relevant social networks and gained confidence to intervene and advocate on behalf of their children.

Based on his study findings, Auerbach (2004) offered several recommendations for educators who interact with Hispanic families. First, he encouraged them to begin early, in the upper-elementary grades, to reinforce and introduce planning for college to students and their parents. Second, he suggested that educators speak in the native language with the parents in small group discussions, and that they invite guest speakers from similar backgrounds to share their personal stories about their college experiences with the students and parents. Third, he recommended that the basic college information be presented often, paying particular attention to the special needs of Latinos such as undocumented citizenship which may complicate enrollment. Lastly, he encouraged educators to provide parents with opportunities to meet individually with school and college personnel. By sharing information with parents about the college experience, educators support students' academic achievement and aspirations. However, it is often assumed that Latino parents have no knowledge

about the college experience and therefore are unable assist their student in their educational and occupational aspirations.

Behnke, Piercy, and Diversi (2004) found that although Latino parents may not have information required to guide their children through college, they still influenced their children's educational and occupational aspirations. These researchers conducted a study to understand Latino youth's educational and occupational aspirations as well as their parents' educational and occupational goals for their children. Subsequently, they discovered how well the parents in the study knew about their children's educational and occupational goals.

Behnke et al. (2004) interviewed 10 families, including the student, mother, and father—during a local after-school program. The after-school program paired selected Latino youth and their families with a young-adult mentor. Participants were in the program for one to two years. Families were given a brief demographic survey to complete. Interviews were arranged by phone, and families determined the language of preferences and the best time for the interview. Ten dollars were given to each participant, and pizza and child care were provided for the family while in their home. The interview was guided by a 17-item questionnaire to ascertain (a) the parents' educational and occupational aspirations for their child and themselves, (b) the youth's educational and occupational goals, (c) the parents' perception of their support of their child's educational and occupational goals and the youth's perspective, and (d) the Latino parents' and youth's needs to attain the aspirations they had set.

The researchers found that the parents who expressed a desire to educate themselves were more likely to have children who wanted to educate themselves. Also, parents with little desire for education had children with low aspirations for education themselves. Occupation aspirations were similar and paralleled developmentally between parents and children. Families with clear occupational goals were more likely to have similar interests between parents and children. Only half the parents were capable of reporting their child's aspirations for education and specific jobs, as validated by the youth's response. If the parents did not know the aspirations of the child, they still had high aspirations for their child to succeed and pursue their goals. Parents identified several barriers to achieving their goals, including low English proficiency and limited access to information about the college experience. Students had a similar understanding of the barriers to their success, including understanding the pathways to achieving goals, racism, and low English proficiency (Behnke et al., 2004). This study indicated that there is a direct link between Latino students' experiences and aspirations and those of their parents (Behnke et al., 2004). Parents' interaction with their children is essential to assuring the students' academic success.

Studies have shown that Latino students' most important reason for wanting to pursue their education is to please their parents (Alva, 1995, Ceja, 2001; Talavera-Bustillos, 1998). It is often assumed through the deficit theory that Mexican parents do not positively encourage and shape the educational goals of their children. In addition, the assumption is often made that low-income Latino parents do not value education and do not participate in their children's

education. However, studies have shown that Latino parents do value education. In fact, they place a high value on education (Ceja, 2001; Delgado-Gaitain, 1990; Gándara, 1995; García, 2001; Valencia & Solorzano, 1998). Although parents may not have been educated, their lack of education does not directly translate into low expectations for their children. For example, Gándara (1995) maintained that the stories and advice of their parents most influenced the academic success of the Chicano students in her study. The parents' experiences, instead of direct involvement in the educational process, served as valuable motivation for the students. Gándara referred to the parents' encouragement as "the culture of possibility," which was especially effective when the parents shared their stories and their own faith in the possibility of mobility (Gándara, 1995).

Ceja (2004) focused on gaining an understanding of the college aspirations of first-generation Chicano students and the role parents played in shaping those aspirations. The aim of the study was to show the important role parents have in the resiliency of Chicano students. Ceja drew from Alva's (1995) definition of resiliency as the student's ability to sustain high levels of achievement, motivation, and performance despite the presence of stressful events.

Four major questions guided Ceja's (2004) study: (a) What role do parents play in shaping the college aspirations of students? (b) Among Chicana students with college going aspirations, what form does parental influence and encouragement take? (c) What do parents say or do to inoculate in their daughter's drive for high education? (d) How does a theory of resiliency help [educators] understand the role of parents in shaping their children's educational

aspirations? The study sample was drawn from a group of Chicana high school seniors. Twenty seniors were interviewed in the Los Angeles area. All students were first-generation, low-income, and college-bound Chicana students. Of the study participants, seven represented the University of California (UC) system, seven represented the California State University (CSU) system, and six students represented the community college system. Utilizing one-on-one semi-structured interviews, the study participants were interviewed on three different occasions—in the fall semester of their senior year in high school, the end of their senior year of high school, and six months after graduating from high school. Interviews were audio-taped and transcribed by an external transcribing agency. The researcher analyzed the data for thematic patterns related to the theory of resiliency and identified sub themes (Ceja, 2004).

Ceja (2004) found that the important role of parents was mentioned consistently across all twenty interviews. Parents' messages related to educational aspirations were delivered to their daughters in two ways—directly and indirectly. Some parents would talk to their daughters about education and its importance, while other parents would not. Of those parents who would not share verbally with their daughters about education, their daughters still reported an awareness of their parents' encouragement, which motivated them in their educational aspirations. These messages—direct and indirect—translated into powerful sources of motivation for the students and helped them develop resiliency. Though the parents in the study had little formal education, they

understood that the only way for their children to succeed in the United States was to seek higher education and do well in school (Ceja, 2004).

Ceja (2004) utilized direct quotes from students in exemplifying the direct and indirect messages received by the Chicana students. For example, with direct messages, Ceja quoted a student named Erica about her family's beliefs in education as a way to gain a better life in this country:

They both feel that education is a big deal. They both say that the only thing they could leave for us is our education. They both feel that by getting an education you can do better in life, especially here. (p. 347)

An example of parents' indirect messages was provided by a student participant named Gloria:

I want to go to college because I see how my parents really try a lot. They come from Mexico and they didn't really have enough opportunities, and they had to settle for whatever they could. I really want to try to be successful, try to progress in life so I could become a better person than them... they struggled a lot. (Ceja, 2004, p. 353)

Another participant in Ceja's (2004) study, Claudia, explained her motivation, which was influenced by her observations of her parents' struggles:

I want to have a higher education because my parents don't have one, and I don't want to go through what they went through. They don't speak English. My dad is the only one that works, and he has to almost kill himself, working hard every day to give us what we have. (p. 355)

The messages and experiences of the parents motivated these Chicana students to continue their educations. Their lives with their parents and the messages communicated to them—direct and indirect—contributed to their resiliency (Ceja, 2004).

Student Resiliency

Resiliency was one of the major themes expressed in Garrod, Kilkenny and Gómez's (2007) book entitled *Mi Voz, Mi Vida*. In this text, 15 Latino students tell their stories about their college experiences. The students were born after 1980, and many of them were first-generation college students. The students were enrolled in highly selective universities. Garrod et al. explained, "These 'superstar' students are deeply human; they feel insecure, lonely and isolated" (p. 2). The students came from varied income backgrounds, family circumstances, and sexual preferences. Four major themes emerged from the students' narratives: (a) resilience, which focuses on the struggles the students had; (b) biculturalism, which propagates the movement in and out of both cultures; (c) mentoring, which is the importance of significant adults in their lives such as parents; and (d) self-identity, illustrates the ongoing question about their Latinoness (Garrod et al., 2007).

Resiliency factors are often tied to the economic hardship that many of these students experience. The high-achieving scholars expressed that going through difficult times made them realize how important it was to grow stronger as a result of hard situations. For example, Eric Martinez had a perpetually abusive relationship with his parents. From drugs to physical abuse, he grew up with a great amount of pain. Following his mother's death, Eric was adopted into his aunt's family. While living with his aunt's family, he realized that his turbulent childhood embedded in him the necessary characteristics to persist despite any challenge. Eric's aunt provided him a safe environment within which

the positive aspects of his persistence could influence his academic pursuits (Garrod et al., 2007).

Biculturalism was described in the text as what it means to be Latino amidst the stereotypes associated with Latinos in the United States (Garrod et al., 2007). The students in the book expressed ongoing struggles to find who they were in the Latino world and the Anglo world; this process can be described as developing their self-identity in a two-world culture. Often stereotypes of being uneducated, poor and Spanish-speaking were placed on them by their peers, even if they were from middle- to upper-income families and were not fluent in Spanish. As a result of this stereotyping, some students did not feel Latino enough because of their economic status, English fluency, and physical features. One student expressed that his White skin may have shielded him from some racism, but not all. He was once called a “spic” by his roommate’s father. Likewise, another student, with dark skin, struggled with that fact that even in the Latino community, he was the only dark-skinned male (Garrod et al, 2007).

Mentoring in this book was considered life-saving because of the many risk factors the students faced with the likelihood of dropping out and involvement in drugs, crime, and violence (Garrod et al., 2007). For many of the students, their mentors came from within the family. In particular, two students named their mothers as the mentor from whom they derived strength. Both mothers raised their children as single-parents. For example, one son recalls his mother being upset with him because he threw a summer college program

application away. He understood then that his mother wanted him to succeed. She did not accept her son missing out on opportunities (Garrod et al., 2007).

Through the compelling stories of the 15 students, the authors communicated the many nuances of the Latina/o student (Garrod et al., 2007). Some of the students from low-income households who also describe family challenges with abuse or alcoholism, while other students were from upper-middle-income families. Yet both student groups reported struggling everyday with biculturalism and discovering their self-identity. One commonality among them all was their persistence; they demonstrated incredible resilience and resolve. Every high-achieving Hispanic student has a story to tell. Every parent of a high-achieving Hispanic student has a story to tell. It is through these stories that researchers can describe the real educational experiences of the Hispanic family.

A resiliency story that is often not told in the literature is the experience of the Latina/o students making the decision to go to college and their experience within their first year (Kinser & Thomas, 2004; Perna, 2000). Kinser & Thomas (2004) suggested that there is research available on the experiences, perspectives, failures, and successes of students of color who are enrolled in college but there is little known about their decision to go college.

Pre-collegiate factors have been analyzed and have found that Hispanic students statistically are less likely to complete the steps necessary for college admission (Kinser & Thomas, 2004; National Center for Education Statistics, 1995). For example, Hispanic students are less likely to take college entrance

exams and less likely to apply to college (National Center for Education Statistics, 1995). “Regardless of student preferences, opportunities to attend baccalaureate degree-granting institutions, particularly more selective private colleges and universities, are severely restricted for those students of color who do not take the minimal steps for admission” (Kinser & Thomas, 2004, p. 25). Though Hispanic students may seem to not be making the appropriate decisions for college admissions, those students in the upper academic quartile react similarly as White students and consider university selectivity as well as available financial aid.

In a study conducted by the Cooperative Institutional Research Program on first-time, first-year, full-time students at the community college, students of color subscribed their motivations of attending college as (a) parental influence, (b) the desire to improve study skills, (c) the desire to learn more things, (d) the desire to get a general education, and (e) to become more cultured (Laanan, 2000). The study’s findings relative to motivation from the family were consistent with the qualitative and quantitative data presented in Alva, 1995; Arellano & Padilla, 1996; Auberbach, 2004; Behnke, Piercy & Diversi, 2004; Ceja, 2001; Talavera-Bustillos, 1998, and Zalaquett, 2005. The family becomes pivotal in the student’s decision to go to college as family members can influence college admission process, major choices, and be a supportive factor to the students (Kinser & Thomas, 2004; Laanan, 2000). However, the family can play a detrimental role in a student’s decision to go to college as family responsibilities and accountability may conflict with university expectations (Kinser & Thomas, 2004; Terenzini, et. al, 1994).

In addition to the resiliency of the Latina/o student in navigating through the social and economic barriers that may inhibit them from making a decision to go to college, research suggested that persisting beyond the first-year experience is critical (Adelman, 1999). Rendón, García & Person (2004) called for the transformation of the first-year experience for students of color. They discussed the factors that contribute to students of color leaving college: (a) attending school part-time; (b) being married with family obligations; (c) being a first-generation student; (d) lacking validation by significant others, family or friends; (e) experiencing cultural shock; (f) receiving financial aid; and (g) lack of interaction with faculty. Many students of color are first in their families to attend college, which attributes to the above listed barriers (Kao & Tienda, 1998; Kinser & Thomas, 2004).

With the many obstacles to the first year experience for students of color, creating a successful transition to the college environment is imperative (Jalomo & Rendón, 2004). Jalomo & Rendón (2004) described the transition to the college environment as a negotiation and a separation process. They posited that the university does not understand the separation phase that “students experience when they move away from the everyday realities with which they are familiar to join a new world of college life” (Rendón & Jalomo, 2004, p. 38). There is a new identity formed as the student enrolls in college, which often has its drawback of disassociation and unfamiliarity to family and friends as described in Rendón’s (1992) barrio girl essay and Rodriguez’s (1982) scholarship kid narrative.

Jalomo and Rendón (2004) suggested that validation is a key component in helping students to persist their first year in college. Validation comes from university faculty and/or staff as well as family and peers. Fostering validation practices in the university must be the result of a genuine concern and care for all students (Jalomo & Rendón, 2004). Programs ranging from early outreach programs to freshmen programs have been cited as assisting students of color in their transition to college. Jalomo & Rendón (2004) highlighted a few of these transition programs including the Puente and Upward Bound Bridge programs, orientation programs, learning communities, and freshman programs that all focus on exposing the students to campus resources, involvement opportunities, academic centers, and social groups/clubs. Although these programs effectiveness has been documented in the literature (Auerbach, 2004; Behnke et al., 2004; Gándara, 2005), these studies have not provided a solid context in which to describe the students' early collegiate maturation.

Summary

Researchers have studied the factors contributing to academic success among high-achieving Hispanic students for more than 20 years. Studies have included information from both secondary education and post-secondary education databases, which indicate that certain risk factors for Latino students may contribute to their struggle for academic attainment. Qualitative researchers, collecting personal narratives about the tension between the academy and the family, have focused on the importance of understanding the integral role of family in Latino students' post-secondary education. The theory of resiliency that

has been identified in the literature provides a working definition for those students who do succeed despite all the risk factors that may contribute to failure.

Despite the abundance of literature on high-achieving Latino students, there has yet to be a study that details the experiences of the students and the parents' within the National Hispanic Recognition Program population. No research has been conducted on this population since Clewell and Joy's 1988 study. There has yet to be a study that examines the differences between low-income and high-income Hispanic students in an effort to disaggregate the social class variable that may usually be compounded with race. This present study will ask questions related to the students decision to go to college and their early collegiate maturation, which will add to the existing research on students' of color transition to college.

Therefore, this study proposes to describe the public university early collegiate maturation experiences of low-income and high-income National Hispanic Scholars and the experiences of the parents who the students feel have been most involved in their decision to go to college. This study will attempt to address the literature gap by contributing knowledge about the lives of high-achieving NHS students and their parents. Chapter three details the topical life history methodology that was utilized in this study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

“Reading through the stories of so many Latinos like myself, I am in awe of the beauty that is the human resolve. I see my story in all of them—achiever and non-achiever alike—and it makes me ponder on the fact that I could have easily been swayed either way.” (Ulibarrí-Nasio, personal journal entry, Summer 2008)

Gaining an insight of the experiences of high-achieving scholars and their parents, those whom they feel have been the most involved in their decision to go to college, can best be accomplished through qualitative research. Although quantitative research data has been collected on this student population utilizing questionnaires, there has yet to be a qualitative study conducted on National Hispanic Scholars.

The utilization of a qualitative research design can result in the collection of valuable detailed data from which analysis can produce a rich description of the lives of NHS—low-income and high-income—and their parents. Merriam (1998) explained that “Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of the world and the experiences they have in the world” (p. 6). Participants in a qualitative study are asked about their lives and how they feel (Merriam, 1998). The research approach is inductive, whereas multiplicities of interconnected variables are present and the researcher approaches the data to build concepts, hypothesis, and theories (Merriam, 1998; Yow, 2005).

Prior research conducted on high-achieving scholars indicates that there are multiple variables associated with both the failures and successes of high-achieving scholars (Gándara, 2005). Utilizing qualitative research methodology

helps to explain these interrelated variables and describe nuances that may be unique to one group (Yow, 2005). As study participants explain their lives, it is the job of the researcher to be as objective as possible and not interject her own experience so as not to bias the results. Though this notion seems to be the most scientific in process, it is nearly impossible to know for sure if the researcher was able, at any one time, to turn off her subjective thinking during the analysis process (Merriam, 1998). Yow (1998) and Turner (2000) argued that understanding one's unique experience and how it influences the type of research explored, questions asked, and interpretation of the data while simultaneously recognizing the limitations of those experiences, helps researchers understand how they influence the research.

Portelli (1997) stated, "Meaning and practice are inseparable: the interpretation begins at the moment of collection, and all presentation—including the most 'objective' one—is an interpretation" (p.xiii). Although researchers cannot separate themselves from the research, the data is not tampered with; rather it becomes enriched as the researcher begins to understand respondents' meanings through her interpretation.

When the researcher becomes an instrument in the research methodology, the best way to truly understand the interpretation of the data is for the researcher to employ good research practices and be reflexive (Watt, 2007). In this reflexive process, the researcher becomes aware of how she sees the data and what inhibits her from seeing further (Russell & Kelly, 2002). Therefore, the research

methodology considers the researcher's own assumptions and behavior that may be impacting the inquiry (Watt, 2007).

In family research, the practice of reflection is often encased in the balance between the insider and outsider perspective. The insider perspective is only derived from the experience of the family members through their daily experiences and inside understanding of the intricacies in a family (Christensen & Dahl, 1997). The outside perspective is mutually exclusive to the researcher. The researcher's perspective operates from the objective and, therefore, separates from the subjective (Christensen & Dahl, 1997). However, in family research, the insider-outsider dichotomy are not exclusive frames of reference because family researchers are also enculturated members of the society; therefore, the "family researcher cannot be considered independent from the research participants" (Christensen & Dahl, 1997, p. 273). Family research suggests that the insider-outsider perspective should be viewed from a multiple insider perspective, along the continuum of insider and outsider (Christensen & Dahl, 1997).

In this study, the research participants included both the student and the parent reflecting on the experience they have with each other and their own lives. This practice of reflecting on one's own experience as well as the experience of others allows the research to include both an insider and outsider perspective. In addition, the researchers own experience with the stories of both the student and the parent will add an additional level of outsider perspective, as well as insider perspective, as the researcher interprets the data through her own life.

This study utilized the qualitative research design of topical life history, which aims to encapsulate the lives of the participant-narrators and the lives of the researcher in order to ascertain the meanings that are developed and how the researcher “interjects themselves into this process” (Yow, 2005, p. 1). Oral history research exemplifies this shift in attitude about the open and interactive relationship between the narrator (participant) and the interviewer (researcher) wherein both are perceived as knowledgeable about the topic of discussion as well as seeking further understanding (Yow, 2005).

Yow (2005) described oral history as:

an in-depth interview, recorded memoir, life history, life narrative, tapped memoir, life review—implying that there is someone else involved who frames the topics and inspires the narrator to begin the act of remembering, jogs memory, and records and presents the narrator’s words. (p. 4)

In order to gain a better understanding of the lives of the National Hispanic Scholars and their parents who participated in this study in the context of the students’ academic achievement during their first-year college experience, this study used topical life history as the research design that informed the development of the study’s interview protocol (see Appendix G).

Research Design

A topical life history, which is a description of the participant’s life during a specific period of time such as exemplified in Cuádras’s (2006) study, was used as the methodological template for this study. Cuádras interviewed doctoral students at the University of California-Berkley through a topical life history approach, gathering and documenting the students’ narratives about their

childhood and their parents' relationship to their academic achievement. During the process of her study, Cuádriz came to an important realization about her assumptions of achievement: "My dilemma arose when I realized that the stories I heard could serve as evidence to support arguments from conservative scholars and writers" (p. 86). She expected to hear the students' stories about challenges they had overcome and great sacrifices others had made that enabled the students to achieve their academic goals. Her expectations were derived from her personal experiences and the indignation of "merit" ideologies that singled out the accomplishments of some in order to release responsibility to others. She believed that when an institution of higher education focuses on the exceptionalism of one, the institution's responsibility is deflected and they are not held accountable in creating an overall environment of achievement for all students.

Therefore, in order to truly understand the power of the interpretation of this study's data, the researcher must first uncover her own assumptions, hypotheses, and expectations of National Hispanic Scholars' life histories as high achievers and their relationships with their parents as they relate to their children's achievement. Such assumptions can empower the researcher to fully understand her interpretations of the literature.

Researcher Assumptions, Expectations, and Experiences

Information related to the researcher's assumptions, expectations, and experiences is best communicated in the form of a personal narrative. My assumptions and expectations are surfaced out of my own life as a Hispanic high-achieving student. As a senior in high school during the year 2000, I was a

recipient of the Gates Millennium Scholarship, which is sponsored by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. This scholarship covered all my expenses through my doctorate to any school in the country. Only about 1,000 out of 64,000 students were selected to receive this scholarship in 2000. I self-identify as high achieving and in a similar “intellectual category” as the National Hispanic Scholars who participated in this study.

I come from a family that switches in and out of the upper-middle class to the middle-class and vice-versa. My mother and father have owned several businesses, including those related to immigration, property management, real estate and loans, and travel, among other areas. My family is small—my parents, my brother, and me. My brother completed his doctorate in June 2009, and I completed my doctorate in December 2010. My parents are proud of their two children and their two doctors. Based on my brother’s and my academic experiences, which I attribute to my parents’ influence, I fundamentally believe that parents are the greatest influencers of high-achieving students’ success. My assumption is that the family, no matter how difficult things may be either economically or culturally, can be the greatest source of encouragement for students to succeed.

My mother has not received her bachelor’s degree—yet—I am still hoping for this. My father was awarded his degree later in life and became a teacher and real estate broker. My mother is street smart, and my father is book smart. Between them, they taught my brother and me the best of both worlds. I believed

their success as parents was unique in “producing” two successful Latino children.

Going into this study, I believed that there was a “magic formula” for assisting children to become successful and that, if all Latino families learned it, then my people would rise up and take hold of our destiny to be a powerful force in this country. I am now aware, after reading Dr. Cuádriz’s (2006) article, that my assumption is connected to the revisionist theory. This theory holds that success lies within the Latino family and that all good attributes produce successful students. This assumption, though noble, is not entirely correct because of the many various circumstances that Latina/os encounter that impact who will succeed and who will fail.

When considering the relationship of income as an overarching category encompassing relationship between scholar and parent, I find my assumptions come from my own life and that of my Latina college friends. Being from an upper-middle income family and benefiting from a college scholarship from the Gates Millennium Scholarship Fund, my financial situation in college was comfortable. I worked because I wanted to. I traveled home when I wanted to. But my life was the exception among my friends, many of whom struggled to make ends meet while balancing extra family responsibilities. As a result of my friends’ hardships, a few dropped out or went back home to attend a local college. I expect, through my own experience and the students in Gándara (2005) study who were academically vulnerable because of family and financial obligations, that I would find in my research that the low-income high-achieving student

participants would have more challenges and be much more “connected” to their families, regardless of proximity

I also assumed that the parents with upper-level income would be much more understanding of the demands of school and would let their children be more autonomous, whereas the parents with low-level income would expect their children to continue contributing to the family, either financially or with their time, or both. With my assumptions outlined in this chapter, my personal narrative is presented in chapter four in order to further explain my assumptions and how they related to the study participants’ narratives.

Research Question

The overarching research question driving the development of the study’s interview protocol was: What are the experiences of low-income and high-income National Hispanic Scholars and the experiences of the parents (who the students felt had been the most involved in their decision to go to college) as they relate to the scholar-parent relationship and the students’ academic progression from early childhood through their early collegiate maturation?

Data Collection

This section on the data collection phase of the study includes four subsections. First, the study sample and participants are presented. Second, the research site is described. Third, the nature of the study’s open-ended interviews is discussed, and fourth, the importance of researcher-participant rapport is explained.

Study sample and participants. The study sample was a convenience sample. Considerations related to researcher travel expenses, time, and the availability of subjects influenced the selection of the research site—a major research university in the southwest region of the United States that supports over 100 National Merit Scholars (including National Merit Scholars, National Achievement Scholars, and National Hispanic Scholars). The participant-narrators in the study were sophomores or second-year students. Sophomores were selected because of their ability to accurately reflect on their early collegiate maturation. In addition, research on sophomores has proven to be essential in understanding persistence patterns (Graunke & Woosley, 2005).

Potential participants received a recruitment email from Southwest University's Student Financial Services Department on the researcher's behalf. Students who were interested in participating in the study contacted the researcher directly. The researcher recruited the scholars for participation in the study (see Appendix C) and confirmed that the participants qualified according to racial self-identification and income level using a pre-screening questionnaire (see Appendix D). The researcher then asked the participants which parent they felt was the most involved in their decision to go to college; all scholars chose their mothers to participate in the study. An information letter about the study was presented to the scholar participants (see Appendix E) and the parent participants (see Appendix F).

The researcher attempted to gain the participation of a minimum of five student-parent pairs representing each income category—high-income and low-

income. However, the researcher was only able to interview four self-identified low-income students and five self-identified high-income students. Income levels were defined according to the students' perspective and self-report. The comparison between low-income and high-income students was imperative because there is still a 30% gap between high-income students and low-income students enrolling in institutions of higher education (Gladieux & Swail, 2000). The disproportionate amount of high-income students enrolled into higher education as compared to low-income students warranted further research. All student participants self-identified as Hispanic, Latino, or Mexican American. There were nine student-parent pairs interviewed for the study, which represented a total of eighteen interviews.

Research Site. The university where the research was conducted is a Carnegie Classified Research 1 university. The university is located in the southwest of the U.S. and has approximately 40,000 undergraduate students and 13,000 graduate students. The racial make-up of the undergraduate students includes 67% White and 21% minority (African American, American Indian, Asian American, Hispanic), with 2% international and 5% undeclared. Eighty percent of the undergraduates are full-time students.

National Hispanic Scholars at the research site are located in the university's Honors College. The University Honors College has a sub-demographic of 2,800 students. Of those students, 54% are female and 46% are male. Students are represented in all colleges; however, there are 40% enrolled in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, 21% in the business school and 10% in

the College of Engineering. Incoming freshmen have an average SAT of 1320 (math and verbal only) and a 3.8 GPA. The National Hispanic Scholars are a part of the academic elite of the university with additional resources that are available to the honors students. These resources include a living and learning community catered to the honors students, freshmen courses taught in small classes with the availability of one-on-one mentoring by the honor college faculty and an honors college writing center. Therefore, the National Hispanic Scholars that participated in this study had a unique experience that stems from their status in the university's Honors College.

The majority of the student interviews were held at the university where the students attend. These interviews were held in a private room in the campus library, with only one exception—one interview was conducted in the student participant's parents' home. Interviews were held in convenient places for the parents, including restaurants and homes. Interviews held in a public venue were arranged in a secluded area to create an area with minimal interruptions.

Open-ended interviews. A total of eighteen open-ended interviews were conducted; each interview lasted approximately an hour-and-a-half. Interviews were conducted separately in a location convenient for the participant, and all interview sites were secluded to ensure the privacy of conversations. Interviews were conducted to explore the detailed experiences of both the student and the parent in the defined economic categories. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed for analysis purposes.

The interview protocol was comprised of open-ended questions that followed a somewhat chronological line of inquiry in order to gain a comprehensive view of the students' and parents' lives. Each participant-narrator was asked about (a) family background, (b) aspirations (the student's and the parent's for the child), (c) the processes and experiences that led up to the awarding of the scholarship, (d) the decision to go to college, (e) the current effect the award has on the student's life and the family, and (f) the current effect the scholarship has on the scholar-parent relationship.

The student participant and parent participant interview protocol was comprised of 18 open-ended questions as detailed in Appendix G. The aim of the open-ended questioning was to develop a foundation for understanding what life experiences had and continued to influence the high-achieving students from both the students' and parents' perspectives. The interview protocols were followed with each interviewee, but the topics of discussion were not limited to the prepared questions. Flexibility was utilized in order to allow the participant-narrators to share the unexpected (Yow, 2005).

Before each interview began, the purpose of the study was explained and information about how the research project had progressed was shared with the interviewee (Yow, 2005). This step of explaining and making sure the participant-narrator understood the research project served to build trust and put the participant at ease (Yow, 2005). The participant-narrators were allowed to control the flow of the interview questions so that they had sufficient time to attach their meanings and fully explain their experiences. As the participant-

narrators responded to the interview questions, the researcher validated their responses, ensuring the interviewees that they were contributing valuable and helpful information. In order to gain more information about a particular question, the researcher-interviewer posed follow-up questions. Using gentle suggestions and paying careful attention to the interviewee, the researcher presented further questions for the purpose of encouraging the student or parent to expand upon interesting comments. In addition, the researcher-interviewer occasionally posed “why” questions and clarification questions to the participant-narrators as outlined by Yow (2005). Lastly, the researcher took brief notes during the interviews, noting physical appearances, mannerisms, and voice inflections that provided depth to the recounted stories.

Researcher-participant rapport. Prior to each initial student and parent meeting, the researcher made direct contact with the participant. The purpose of this initial contact was to verify the student or parent’s eligibility to participate in the study and build a rapport with the researcher. By becoming familiar with one another prior to the interview, the uncomfortable feelings that could have inevitably permeated the interview were dissipated for both the participant-narrator and the researcher-interviewer. The researcher attempted to build trust by arriving on-time and prepared for the interview, and she was accommodating to the participant-narrators’ varied schedules.

Data Analysis

All interviews were conducted separately, digitally audio-recorded and transcribed into English. After the audiotapes were transcribed, the data was read,

with particular attention being given to the way the participant-narrator recounted the story. After the researcher carefully read all interview transcripts, she developed a written description of each participant's narrative. Adhering to the approach utilized by Cuádriz (2006) and Gándara (2005), the researcher wrote the stories of each participant as she experienced them and analyzed them through the scope of the existing literature. Each narrative included details and selected quotes to illustrate important aspects of each participant's story.

After all participant stories were written, the researcher then examined the data for connections between the students and parents and across income brackets. Similar and difference themes were identified and discussions of their interpretations are presented in chapters four and five. Findings and implications of this study provide a description of the experiences of the second year National Hispanic Scholars and their parents across income brackets prior to and during early collegiate maturation.

Summary

A review of the existing literature on high-achieving Hispanic students yielded numerous studies. Some researchers utilized qualitative methodology by interviewing either the student *or* the parent or the student *and* the parent in the context of a particular school site or program. However, none of these studies included the views of the highest PSAT/NMSQT achieving Hispanic students (National Hispanic Scholars) and their parents in the university setting, as gleaned from open-ended narrative-based interviews. The stories of these students and parents are missing from the literature; therefore, this study aimed to fill the gap

in the literature by presenting an insight of the lives of the highest achieving Hispanic students and their parents from their perspectives.

Chapter 4: High-Income National Hispanic Scholars

“Well, it [the National Hispanic Scholarship] definitely had an enormous effect. I mean, when I read the letter from Southwest University, I kind of had the thought, ‘If I get accepted, I’m definitely going here.’ It kind of determined everything, in terms of where I am right now and where I live and everyone I know.”
(Stephanie, personal communication, March 26, 2010)

This research study attempts to describe the differences and similarities within and across income groups for second-year National Hispanic Scholars attending Southwest University. In order determine differences across groups, the study examined the experiences of high-income and low-income National Hispanic Scholars. Student participants self-identified their income category and were placed in said category for the purpose of analysis.

In this chapter, the stories of four high-income students are presented. Each story includes significant and salient contributions from the parent they chose to be interviewed, their mothers, in order to provide a extensive description of the students’ topical life histories during their academic progression from childhood through their early collegiate maturation.

Following each narrative is an analysis that identifies connections to the existing literature. For the purposes of maintaining confidentiality and proper research protocol, all participants were given a pseudonym and the university name was changed to Southwest University. The narratives are in alphabetical order and follow this order: *Angelica*, *Gabrielle*, *Leila* and *Stephanie*. Following the four narratives, the common themes and sub-themes are presented.

Narrative 1: Scholar Angelica and Parent Dorothy

Angelica was born and raised in the southwest region of the U.S. She has long straight dark brown hair and a sweet smile. During the interview, her personality was as pleasant as her appearance portrayed. Her mother, Dorothy, was a single mother during Angelica's elementary school years. Dorothy was selective in the type of people who educated her daughter. Dorothy wanted her to have the best opportunities available. Angelica recalled her childhood babysitter:

But—and I also went to a babysitter before I went to elementary school, and I give a lot of credit to her because she wasn't like a day care or anything; she was just my babysitter. But my mom, you know, saved a lot of stuff from when I was a kid, and I was looking at things from like 1993 and they were like, like one of them it was like the word 'alligator' but with letters missing. And we would fill out what letters. And in 1993, I was three. And she did a lot of stuff with us. And I think she [the babysitter] gave me a real good head start. And I don't even think—I don't think she went to college or anything, but she was really good with us kids. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Angelica's babysitter set a good foundation for her learning. In kindergarten, she was already reading and knew the mechanics of writing. Angelica does not remember how her mother was able to find her innovative babysitter:

I don't know how she [my mother] found her [the babysitter]. I know my brother went there first. Pretty much everything that I got was because it was tested on my brother first. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

The intentionality of Dorothy's decisions regarding her children's academic environment was evident throughout their entire lives. There were several schools that Dorothy could have sent her daughter, but she chose to send

her children to schools near Southwest University. Dorothy explained her reasoning behind her choice:

Because I wanted to make sure that they were close to the university. And there's actually other schools that are maybe even closer to the university, like Crescent Elementary school is closer. But I felt it was important to place them where the children they would go to school with would be foreign students. To me that was important because I grew up overseas. And I know that's important. And I knew my children would not grow up the same way I did, but this was the best thing that I could do for them so that they would be diversified. (personal communication, December 18, 2009)

Dorothy grew up overseas. She has dark hair and olive skin, and she showed a great amount of pride in her upbringing and her conscious decisions to raise her children in a similar way.

She was a single mother, and she felt the best thing she could do was to ensure her children were exposed to good academic environments. Angelica reflected on her mother's involvement in her education:

Um, she was really involved. I think a lot more involved than I ever noticed when I was a kid. Because she wasn't in PTA and stuff like that like other kid's parents were because she worked all the time. But she really made sure that I had the right teachers. And I think she communicated with them a lot. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Dorothy reflected on her commitment to her children:

I was a single parent, so I worked a lot. And it was hard getting, you know, back and forth but I tried not to miss anything. As long as the kids told me they had something, I was there. (personal communication, December 18, 2009)

Dorothy evidences an obvious love for her children and an understanding of their unique differences. Angelica's older brother was classified a "gifted" child by his schools, and during his school years, Dorothy befriended a cafeteria

lady at the school who would inform her about the best teachers. Subsequently, Dorothy would make certain that her son, and then later her daughter, had those particular teachers.

And academically she, um—I have a son who’s gifted, and he did really well, and then she kind of—we followed in his foot steps as far as teachers. Because the teachers that he received were phenomenal, and the trick to the phenomenal teachers was I befriended the cafeteria lady, and her children were a year older, one and two years older than mine. And every year she would tell me who the best teachers she thought were. Because her kids had had all of the teachers in the schools. At least in the grammar school. (Dorothy, personal communication, December 18, 2009).

In elementary school, Angelica was exposed to a very enriching intellectual environment. As a result of her promising scholarly ability, Angelica was tested for the gifted program at her elementary school. She was not immediately placed into “gifted” education but was placed in a pull-out program that gave her the opportunity to attend specific advanced courses provided at another school.

Oh, in third grade I was in Pop, it was like the PACE pull out program. And that was because I didn’t make the cut for the real PACE in third grade. And then in fourth grade, I made it. And I went to PACE, and that was at a different school. And it was all day. And so in fourth and fifth grade I was in PACE.

And in sixth grade, I tested and I again didn’t get into the PACE program, but what they decided to do, because they knew that, like, I’d been in it. And that you know, I’d always done well. They had me take the test not timed. And I did so much better on it, and I got it. So they gave me a second chance. And that was good. (Angelica, personal communication, December 17, 2009).

Angelica was on the border of being considered gifted and yet was not labeled as gifted. Her academic presence in the classroom warranted notice, but

her test scores were just below the mark. Noticing that Angelica was obviously a bright and gifted child, one of her elementary school teachers stepped in so that she could qualify for the PACE program in third grade. Dorothy recounted the experience she had with this teacher:

So when my daughter tested, she tested just below the requirement and Mrs. Hughes, and for her it was a difficult thing to do. She came to me, she said, "I hope this doesn't offend you. But there is an opportunity for Angelica to get into the gifted program. But the problem is that she would have to go as an Hispanic student." And my concern at that time, I didn't even care how they qualified, my concern is if she's a little bit lower in the testing, I'm not sure it's going to be good for her to advance. And that's the same issue I have today with these children, you know, where they lower the bar and then it's really difficult. (personal communication, December 18, 2009)

The choice Dorothy had to make on her daughter's behalf was one that she did not take lightly. She wanted her daughter to be given opportunities but only if they would be a true benefit. Angelica's brother was in the gifted classes and Dorothy was disillusioned by the caliber of students who were in the program:

Because they're so little. And I saw from my son, I had been at a meeting with a lot of parents and their children and quite honestly, I was a little shocked at the parents' interest in their children being gifted. And it wasn't necessarily the child that was so gifted, it was the parent pushing so hard. (personal communication, December 18, 2009)

As a result of her early experience with her son, Dorothy decided to forego her daughter's placement in the PACE program but allowed the teacher to place her into the POP program. She felt that if Angelica truly qualified for the PACE program, she should attend but not before that time. Dorothy did not want to push her daughter too hard or to overwhelm her.

Angelica developed strong academic habits as a result of transitioning in and out of the POP program. She was bright, but with her hard working attitude, she accomplished much more than just her natural abilities would have allowed.

So as far as what kind of a student she was, she was a very, very good student. She wasn't gifted like my son was in the beginning, but then once she was actually able to get in...And she was able to join him the following year. But she has always been a really hard worker. And I attribute a lot of that to her excelling and being successful. (Dorothy, personal communication, December 18, 2009)

In addition to her academic development, Angelica was involved in school. Her mother recalled that she was the character Jo in the play *Little Women*.

Angelica's transition to middle school was difficult. She had a naïve and lovely view of the world while in elementary school. However, middle school presented challenges.

Well, when I first went to middle school that was a real shocker for me. Because I felt like my elementary school was like really good, and wholesome, and then I went to middle school. And I was like hearing people say bad words and all this stuff. And I got stressed out because I never been in a situation like that before. And I think I got really shy. Because I just didn't, like, I had never had friends like that before. And I just kind of went into my shell. (Angelica, personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Angelica's shyness resulted in her having only a few close friends who were nearly all boys. She felt comfortable with the boys because they did not judge harshly or get oversensitive. She knew that her guy friends were like her brothers and that she would be protected.

In high school, Angelica struggled at the beginning. She was placed in a study hall class that she thought was for students who wanted to excel academically, but the class was actually for those students who were struggling

academically or had discipline problems. As a last resort, Angelica signed up for a journalism class to replace the study hall credit. She found a passion for journalism and participated in it all four years of high school, eventually becoming the editor-in-chief of the yearbook. Angelica was also involved in tennis but did not pursue an athletic career.

During her daughter's high school years, Dorothy continued to ensure that she was placed in the proper courses in order to maximize her success. In high school, Angelica's brother was involved with a program called the Peggy Payne Academy. Angelica described the program:

But then in high school, I was in the Peggy Payne Academy. And that's like the school within a school. And it's basically honors classes for honors kids. Like, not just the regular honors classes, but the honors version of the honors classes. And I did that my first year. And I did fine, but my mom found out that I wasn't being ranked with the rest of the student body, and my mom wanted me to be in the top ten percent or the top whatever. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

The Peggy Payne Academy was a good opportunity for Angelica; however, there was one major issue with this academy. When it came to class ranking, Angelica was not being factored in with the rest of the high school. Her mother saw this as an obstacle to getting scholarships. Dorothy had a slightly different version of the story:

And it was so incredibly competitive with all gifted children. So both my children chose on their own to get their high school diploma [instead of graduate from the Peggy Payne Academy] because they knew that they had a better chance of getting a scholarship that way, than staying with the gifted program. (personal communication, December 18, 2009)

Whether she influenced Angelica's decision or Angelica decided on her own, she left the Peggy Payne Academy so she could be better positioned for scholarships.

It was a strategic move. Angelica still attended the honors courses with the Peggy Payne Academy students but was ranked and compared with the general school student body.

Angelica, reflecting on the support from both her parents, recalled the influence her mother and father had on her decision to attend college:

And then just my mom because she was always the one who made sure that I was getting, you know, good grades. She told me—I don't know, who just talked to me about college. And I don't think she ever sat down with me and had a conversation, but my mom's always taken the forefront with her kids because that's who we are to her.

And so she, she never pushed us or anything. I think we just did it because that's what we thought we were supposed to do. I guess just the expectations and since we didn't know any better, it wasn't stressful on us. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Setting a standard for college attendance was the technique utilized by Dorothy, and Angelica's father supported that effort.

In addition to the expectation of her mother, Angelica projected academic success from within herself. She remembered her early feelings of measuring her achievements:

I remember getting my cards before they had real grades, like in kindergarten I think there was—like I don't know, like "underachieving," but some lower grade like that. "Satisfactory." And then I think "excellent." And I remember I would get "excellent," and they would be like, "Oh, good job." And I think ever since I got that first report card, I never wanted to get anything else because I knew that I could get the top notch. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Angelica internalized her feelings of success and wanted to do well in school because she believed that she could be an excellent student. She desired nothing more than the feeling of being rewarded for having done her absolute best.

As a requirement for her honors courses, Angelica took the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) . She thought the test was relatively easy.

When filling out the PSAT information, Angelica recalled the uneasiness she experienced when being asked her racial identity:

And when I took it, I just marked "other" because I didn't realize being Hispanic had any sort of good thing tied to it. And I didn't think it was any of their business what race I was, you know, so I just put "other."
(personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Angelica is half Hispanic and half Caucasian. She felt that the racial-identifying question was limiting her to choose one race over the other race. As a bi-racial student, she chose "other" because that is the category she felt best suited her.

Once she realized that she should have marked the Hispanic box, because a friend informed her about their award letter, she went to see her counselor who gave her some incorrect information. This information caused a chain of events that was a major issue in Angelica's senior year. Angelica recounted her experience with the counselor:

And so then I went to see my counselor, and she was like "Oh, no, don't worry about it." Well first, I can't remember what happened first, but I remembered you know, "Oh, you didn't mark Hispanic." And I was like, "Okay, well can I change it?" And she was like, um, I don't remember what she said, but it was basically like, "No, it's too late," or something. And—no, no, no, she told me, "Yeah, you can change it before December." And you know, I had enough time to change it. So I was like, okay and I was like, you know, "If I change it, will my score qualify me?" And she told me that it didn't. And I was like, "Oh, okay."

And then I thought it was weird, but then I let it go. And then finally I went back again, but by this time it was probably February. And my dates could be way off. I don't remember. But it was, you know, relative. And when I went in, I asked her again. And I was like, "Are you sure I didn't score high enough for the scholarship?" And I was like, "May I please see the score that I got and then the scores that the other

students who did receive the scholarship, may I see their scores too?” And she looked, and she was like, “Oh, yeah. You did qualify but it’s too late now to change your thing.” (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

As a result of the counselor not taking the time to check if she really did qualify, Angelica missed the opportunity to change her selection on the racial identity box. Angelica was so upset that she could not do anything more for herself that she decided to ask her mom for help:

I just remember, “Oh, please mom. Please. Get it taken care of”... And I kind of knew she would, but there was still that like feeling in the pit of my stomach. “Oh, I messed up, I should have marked Hispanic.” But then I was like, “Why? I didn’t know.” I had no idea. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Dorothy understood her daughter’s plight and, of course, helped her.

However, she did not have any luck with the school either.

And she [the counselor] was very, very nasty, very rude. And she put it in writing, which was unbelievable to me. So I was so upset and I went and I talked to the principal. And she had the audacity to share with me that her son had received it as well.

When I was trying to fight for my daughter to see if they could do something to help out. And I thought, “Well, that’s great for you, but I’m trying to help my daughter because you guys did not do your job.” But they did not feel that was their job at all. So I don’t know what high school’s job is, a counselor is try to go help these kids be successful and put them into good schools. I don’t know what their job is if that isn’t their job. She just closed doors, “Sorry. I can’t do anything. You’re out of luck.”

So what I did was I called the—and she was a new principal at that high school. So what I did was I called the old principal. And he helped me. He said, “This is what you need to do. Let me give you a name.” So he gave me the name of the district superintendent. And I have an uncle who has a master’s in education. And he has worked in the [close geographical] area. And I called him and I said, “What do you suggest?”

So between the two of them, they had me go to Denver was his last name, the superintendent. Not that he could help me very well, but at least

he listened to my plight, and he, you know, suggested a few things. I did submit a complaint against the counselor, and it was not a formal complaint but he was going to bring her in and talk to her. (personal communication, December 18, 2009)

Although Dorothy was unable to obtain the answer she wanted from the counselor and principal, she was not afraid to keep moving forward and find someone to help her. After all the fact finding, Dorothy was back where she started. The school could not do anything to resolve the situation. It was an unfortunate circumstance, but the problem became a matter for the testing service to address. After several requests for the counselor to contact the testing service on Angelica's behalf were unsuccessful, Dorothy took matters into her own hands and directly contacted the testing service.

So I went ahead and I called the National Hispanic Society. And I said, "You know, I don't know what's going on, this is what happened." So she explained everything pretty clearly to me. But she said, "Since the deadline is over, there's no way you're going to get that scholarship."

But then she said, you know—and then I started asking questions like, "Well how do these get funded?" "Do you fund them?" And, "Can I talk to your supervisor?" She says, "I'll talk to my supervisor."

So what I ended up finding out was that the funding comes through the university, does not come through the society. So then that threw me into a completely different place. And this is all happening within one week.

So then I went down to Southwest University and she already had a President Scholarship. Which is a full ride. And I talked to a lovely, lovely woman who deals with the incoming freshman scholarships. And she, I called her and she explained to me how it happened and she also said, "You know, we still have a lot of funding. Most of the scholarships have already come through. We still have funding. If you can get me in writing that your daughter qualified, Southwest University will back it up." So I have Southwest University to thank for that. (personal communication, December 18, 2009)

After multiple phone calls, Dorothy was able to get matters resolved and her daughter received the scholarship. During the information gathering process, Angelica and other members of Dorothy's family became very nervous.

And she gets kind of nervous and doesn't like confrontation. Most people don't. And I don't see it as confrontation. And I think it's just part of my personality. And I'm just not afraid to—I've always said what I felt. And everybody can probably tell you that know me professionally. And say that everything's black and white with me. I mean, I just, I don't beat around the bush, I don't—I can't. I'm pretty focused on what I'm trying to do, and you know, I'm always sensitive to people, and I don't want to hurt anybody's feelings. And I don't get mad, and I don't get irate, I don't say my temperament's always the same, but I'm direct. There's definitely no guessing. (Dorothy, personal communication, December 18, 2009)

Upon receipt of the scholarship, Angelica and Dorothy were both elated.

Dorothy said they were jumping up and down with excitement. For Angelica, the scholarship was a huge relief. She was concerned about continuing to be a burden on her mother.

I knew it was all on my mom. I remember telling her, "Aren't you glad, Mom, that I got this scholarship because you're not going to have to pay for me nearly as much as," you know, I knew my mom would pay. Because sometimes I feel bad because my mom is so generous with helping my brother and I out. (Angelica, personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Angelica's feelings of guilt stem from comparing her financial situation with that of her boyfriend. She explained the difference:

I've been with my boyfriend since my freshman year of high school, and he is on the totally opposite spectrum. Like, no one in his family has ever gone to college. A lot of his cousins haven't even graduated high school, you know, and they're just working now. So he never grew up around that and like, his mom helps him with like the car insurance and stuff, but he pays his car payment, he pays his rent, he pays everything. So he has a lot more on his shoulders and he has student loans and all of that stuff. So I'm lucky that my mom has the means [to financially support her]. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

The financial benefit of the scholarship is a great comfort to Angelica. She is budget conscious and a savvy saver. She has a history of saving all of her money, even birthday money.

Um, I just keep it, you know, tucked away in my bank account still. It helps because it makes me feel more comfortable because I do have that money in there. And I feel like it would be the end of the world if I didn't have that extra scholarship money. (Angelica, personal communication, December 17, 2009)

She saves her money for large purchases such as a television and stereo and for traveling. Although the scholarship pays a substantial amount of her educational expenses such as tuition, books, and fees, Dorothy pays for the rest of her expenses.

When deciding what college to attend, there was really only one school that she wanted to attend—Southwest University. She explained her reason for only picking Southwest University:

I'll go to Southwest University, and then if I want to pursue higher education, I'll think about Harvard and places like that. But for now, I just didn't have a desire to go out of state. I didn't feel ready to fly the coop all the way and be in someplace that I'd never been before around a bunch of people I never knew. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Angelica's first year at Southwest University was a "flop" (personal communication, December 17, 2009). Her first course, a campus 101 course, was nice because it taught her about the resources on campus. Most of her classes were fine, but her first-semester honors course was very difficult for her.

My other classes were fine, but I decided to do the honors college and I decided that last minute. But by the time I had gone into it, we have to take the Human Event [course], and we have to take one class each semester for the first two semesters. And this class is like, you read these really deep philosophical books and then you have these discussions in

class. And then we discuss you know, how do we know the earth is really round?

And I remember sitting there and being like, “They have pictures from outer space and its round; can we just talk about the next thing?” (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Consequently because of her disinterest in the honors courses, she did not do as well as she expected. She was discouraged and thought that she was not right for college.

So I felt so like, “What is wrong with me?” Like I’ve never got a C on an exam before. And then a D on a paper? And like, you know, I got these grades right around the same time. And I remember thinking, “Maybe college is just not for me.” Like, maybe, I don’t know. I always thought I was really smart, but maybe you just have to be a certain type of person for it. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

In her despair, Angelica called her mom crying,

I did talk to my mom. And I remember telling her about my grades and she—and this was when I was still working at Kid’s Zone early in the mornings. And she—and I was talking to her, and I was telling her about the grades that I got and I was bawling and bawling and bawling. And she was like, “Angelica, if you need to quit Kid’s Zone, it’s okay. If you get a C in one of your classes, it’s okay.”

And she was telling me all of this stuff and I remember thinking like, “What?” Like, “It is okay?” Because I never had it before. I didn’t know how she would react. And she was like, “It’s fine.” And she was like, “You know, your grades aren’t going to be everything. And you won’t always have the best professors, and you won’t always understand the material like you want to.” And that was really comforting to hear, especially from her. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Angelica was surprised that her mother understood her in this situation.

Compassion has not always been a strong point in their relationship. Her mother was never really approachable while she was growing up. Dorothy told Angelica “I’m not your friend. I’m your mom. So don’t think I’m your friend” (personal communication, December 18, 2009).

Dorothy's character is direct, and throughout most of Angelica's life, her mother would often get upset and yell at her. Afterward, Dorothy would feel remorseful for her actions but would never directly apologize for what she had done or admit she was wrong. While in college, Angelica matured and one day stood up to her mother's ranting. She explained in great detail the moment in which she triumphed:

She was dropping me off here at school one day because, for whatever reason, I think my car was in the shop or something. And I can't remember. She was like, talking on the phone and doing this and doing that, and I was trying to give her directions on where I needed to go. And she got so mad at me because I was trying to tell her what to do. But I mean, she almost ran over a skateboarder. And like I was getting stressed out, and she just got so mad and like was saying all these things.

And she was like, "I was on the phone with a client." And I know she wasn't on the phone with a client because she was talking to the receptionist lady at work. And, I don't know, I was just so frustrated that she was trying to make it such a big deal.

And a couple of days later, she called me and she said, "Angelica, do you have anything that you'd like to say to me?" Like I needed to apologize to her. And for the first time, I like, stuck to my guns.

And I was like, "Mom, I don't have anything to apologize to you for" because I was just made really uncomfortable by the situation. Because she was writing stuff down, and doing all this stuff with a thousand Southwest University kids skateboarding and biking and walking all over the place. And, you know, she kind of tried to argue with me about it and twist it to this way and that way.

Oh, and then the last thing she said before I got out of the car was, she was like, "Honey," and she like rubbed my ear. And she was like, "You may not be able to multi-task, but I can." (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Angelica stood her ground that day. Instead of agreeing with her mother and apologizing, she let her mother know that her actions were not okay.

Although Dorothy never did officially ask for forgiveness, she has made a

conscious effort since to be more caring for her daughter, as exhibited previously when Angelica had less than expected grades and was upset.

Dorothy explained her efforts to be a better mother and be more compassionate:

And they'll share things and every once in a while, and I'm learning how to listen more. Because when they were growing up, I did more of the talking. And now I'm listening to what they're saying and I'm trying to differentiate between them just needing somebody to bounce off of—like a bouncing board, no comments back versus actually needing input. So I'm growing up with them. (personal communication, December 18, 2009)

Angelica's personal growth during her freshmen year was astounding. Not only did she develop more confidence dealing with her mother, but she learned to adapt to an awkward situation with a new roommate. She described her apprehension with having a roommate:

But yeah, when I say freshman year was a flop, I lived with—it was my brother in the house, me and then a girl that I was friends with in high school. We weren't best friends or anything, but we knew each other. And I remember I was even kind of nervous to live with her because I'm generally like kind of quiet and shy ever since middle school. And I've been coming out of that. But she was like, class president senior year, and she was always, like, you know, she was sophomore president, junior president, and then student body president.

So she was always you know real loud, real outgoing and all this stuff. And like I said, we were friends, but we weren't that close. So I was kind of like "Oh." And I remember my best friend was the one who told her that I was looking for a roommate, and I was like, "I wish she hadn't said anything." And like, I was not looking forward to her moving in.

But she did move in, and she was like the best roommate ever. And I miss her, you know, I miss her living with me. But she's my best friend now, and I just I love her. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

This unexpected female friendship became integral to Angelica's freshmen year social experiences. Angelica and her roommate were socially isolated. They jokingly called themselves "old ladies." Angelica grinned as she talked about her social life:

But um, but she and I, we always joke that we're old ladies. And you know, freshman generally go out all the time and are exercising their freedoms, and we would be so tired because we would have just gotten off of work, or we would be writing a paper and we'd just be too tired. And we would just want to go to bed.

Like we would rather sit at home and watch Gilmore Girls than go out. And we'd always be like, "What's wrong with us? We're so old. We should be taking advantage of our resilience and everything right now." (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Her freshmen year was much less social than she expected. The exhaustion of classes and work schedules caused her to just want to come home and relax. In her second semester freshmen year, she decided that she wanted to pledge in a sorority. She wanted to get more involved with school and increase her social circle. Angelica hesitated telling her mom about her intentions to join a sorority.

I remember I talked to her briefly about it my freshman year and she didn't really think it was a good idea at all so I was just like, "Okay. I won't do it" because I wasn't really gung-ho about it. I just wanted to see what she thought. And since she wasn't gung-ho about it either, I figured whatever.

And then this year when I talked to her about it, she was just like, "I mean, do it if you want to do it." And it was funny because when I had last asked her, she seemed very like, "No, don't do it."

And I was like, "Are you sure mom? Because last time." And I didn't even tell her until after I had already signed up and did everything. But I was like, "Because last time you made it sound like you really didn't want me to." And she was like, "Oh, I'm sorry." She's like, "I don't even

remember being like against it or anything.” (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Angelica and Dorothy’s relationship has changed significantly. The hesitations of her past with her mother have now dissipated. She is maturing and so is her mother.

Summary and Analysis of Narrative 1

Dorothy seemed to practice both direct and indirect methods of encouraging her daughter as defined in Ceja (2004). Dorothy told her daughter about college but also showed, through her example and enthusiasm for postsecondary education, that Angelica was expected to attend the university. Since their early childhoods, Dorothy was intentional in the placement of both her children in the best available opportunities—from the hiring of an education-centered babysitter to the enrollment of her children into the best classes and the Peggy Payne Academy. Lastly, Dorothy served as her daughter’s advocate when there was misinformation given to her by a high school counselor that may have cost her the opportunity for a scholarship.

Angelica internalized her academic success throughout her life and could have been considered academically invulnerable according to Alva’s (1991) definition of academic invulnerability: “described as those who sustain high levels of achievement motivation and performance.” According to the standardized tests, Angelica was not initially considered gifted. However, her outstanding work ethic was apparent to all students. Dorothy believes that it was her daughter’s work ethic that helped her to be so successful.

Although Angelica seemed academically invulnerable, she did not perform to her standard in her first-year honors courses, causing her to question why she was attending college. Her intellectual confidence was shaken, but it was the words of her mother that helped her to refocus and persist.

A large part of Angelica's early collegiate maturation was her breakthrough in her relationship with her mother. Through her somewhat rebellious action of not apologizing on cue, which her mother expected, Angelica became emotionally independent as described by Chickering and Reisser (1993). She began to trust her own emotions and emotionally disconnected from her mother. She became independent and this made all the difference to her relationship with her mother.

Narrative 2: Scholar Gabrielle and Parent Christine

At 5'9", Gabrielle is not hard to miss in a crowd. She is a physically fit young woman with medium brown hair and light brown eyes. She has an olive, but fair, complexion and looks like she could tan very well. On the day of our interview, she wore sporty attire. She was confident with her head held high and a firm hand shake.

Gabrielle grew up in northeast San Antonio, Texas. Her family has been in San Antonio for generations, and she comes from a rich family heritage. Gabrielle's mother Christine wanted to make certain that she was "worldly," so she took her to different places in the country and outside the country. Gabrielle recalled those trips:

We traveled a lot. We went to New Mexico for the Hot Air Balloon Festival. Like, you know, Colorado, we just, my parents wanted us to like, I don't know. My mom has always said that she wants to make my brother and me worldly. So she wants to take us different places, experience different things, I guess so we're open to new ideas and stuff like that. That's really important to her.

So as a child, I remember a lot of things like that. Doing different things than my friends did. For example, going downtown or something because that's where my mom wanted us to, I don't know, kind of explore or something. (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Christine wanted to ensure that Gabrielle had an open perspective in life, something that her father impressed continuously her whole life. Thus, Gabrielle was exposed to fine arts, culture, and social experiences that could contribute to a better understanding of the world around her.

Gabrielle was an intelligent child. She had an enriching environment, full of stimulation and learning. Christine recalled her daughter's early development:

So Gabrielle, we started reading to her early on. I mean, she was a bookworm. We started doing Spanish early on; we did everything very early. And every night that was our deal. After homework, we'd work on her homework with her, and then we'd make it a point to spend lots of time reading, flash cards, fun games. I mean games to make it fun for her. That she would be challenged. And she was always really into it. She never really just moaned and groaned about it. She always wanted to learn as much as she could. (personal communication, March 29, 2010)

Gabrielle's enthusiasm for learning and thirst for knowledge was noticeable to her elementary teachers as well. Soon after entering school, Gabrielle was chosen to be taken out of the mainstream courses and placed in a talented and gifted program called "Talent Pool." During her interview, she described the program:

But they kind of pull you out, and they take you and they do these little activities and your, I don't know, critical thinking activities for, you know,

an hour once a week or something. And you're with other students who had been selected by teachers as high achieving. And that was when we were in the younger grades in elementary school. (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Gabrielle did not understand at the time that she was considered high achieving. She enjoyed the Talent Pool classes but did not attribute her further academic success on the foundations learned in the gifted program. The courses did, however, contribute to her overall development as a student.

She continued to excel academically in middle school. The school provided her, and all other high achieving students, with courses that were distinguished as pre-AP and honors classes. The main differences between the general courses and the pre-AP courses were that they were more intense and involved more projects. Gabrielle completed classes with high grades. Gabrielle reflected on her reason for doing well in school:

So I don't know. But I never felt any pressure from my parents to do good or to go above and beyond just normal school. And was just they expected me to do well. But I never got rewarded for it. It was never like, you know some kids, "You get an A on your report card; I'll give you \$10 for every A, \$5 for every B." My parents never did that. There was never any reward for doing good. It was just more a pride issue for me. I wanted to do good and I knew it made my parents happy when I did good. So that was even more motivation.

And I like learning. So there was never an issue to take other, like, harder classes, or anything like that. Because I like it. I like learning. And I like a challenge. If a class is too easy, I actually don't do as well because I get lazy. Because, I mean, it's not significantly worse, but I can definitely tell the difference. I mean, if it's hard and it challenges me, I work harder to do better (personal communication, March 25, 2010).

Gabrielle's motivation for doing well in school stemmed from her intrinsic desire to do her best. Making her parents proud was a contributing factor, but she

excelled mainly due to her love for learning. A challenging work environment was the ideal place for Gabrielle to succeed. When she was challenged, she often made it a point to meet and exceed the expectations of her teachers and parents.

Christine recalled her daughter being an independent learner and self-motivated when it came to homework. She described her daughter's work ethic:

She never had a monitor on homework. Always good, always an honor, always an AP student. Never checked on her. Came home from school, responsible, did her homework first. She was one of those that she would stress out until her homework was done and then she could relax. So just very much a go getter. And it was that way from the very beginning until, I mean, and I knew she would do well. I didn't know she'd do as well as she did as far as the scholarship and the opportunities that she would have. (personal communication, March 29, 2010)

Being an independent and motivated learner was beneficial for her home life.

Christine and Gabrielle's father were divorced and Christine worked full time.

Gabrielle recounted her mother working all the time:

She was really, she's always had a full-time job. And she works in upper management, so she's always really busy. But she did, like, you know, besides like being in partially involved in PTA, like, occasionally she was there to chaperone for a field trip or something. You know, when she could, which Adam and I appreciate.

You know, you don't have to be super mom that bakes cookies for the entire class every week. But you know, if we had a class party, she would make, you know, food or whatever. She would be the chaperone. You know, she never really went, like, above and beyond, I would say, as far as being involved because of her job. But Andrew and I were never resentful for that because we knew that she was busy. (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Gabrielle and her brother adapted to their mother's busy schedule and were happy when she was able to participate in their school activities. She appreciated her mother for her hard work and providing for them.

In high school, Gabrielle took AP courses and was in the elite academic group in her school. These groups of students were privy to specific information from the counselors on campus. They were told in advance about the possibility of competing for the National Merit Scholarship or the National Hispanic Scholars Award. She recalled what her counselor told her:

And my counselor told me if you are Hispanic and your score is around this range, you have a good chance of getting National Merit or National Hispanic Merit Scholar, or whatever. So I didn't really think anything of it. (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Gabrielle was also invited to take a PSAT course that was comprised of two three-hour long courses. Angelica felt that this course was not thorough, but it helped her to mentally prepare for what was expected on the test.

Although Gabrielle remained somewhat unaware of the National Hispanic Scholars Award and the impact of her Hispanic heritage, her mother knew exactly the opportunities that could be opened to her. Christine made certain that Gabrielle was marked as Hispanic on her birth certificate and then again in her school records. Gabrielle recalled the determination of her mother:

Well, first of all, I guess, gosh, when I was a freshman or sophomore, my mom made sure that on my records at my high school it said that I was Hispanic. Since my birth certificate said it, she said, "You're more likely to get scholarships if you are Hispanic." (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Christine understood the advantage of her daughter being Hispanic.

In San Antonio, there is an invisible dividing line that separates the affluent Mexicans and the poor Mexicans. Gabrielle lived on the north side of the city, which is the affluent side. Her mother, however, grew up on the south side

of town but had her father constantly pushing her siblings to do and be better. It was a big deal for Gabrielle's grandfather to make sure his children and grandchildren had the cultural advantages in life that he lacked.

Gabrielle benefited from her mother's focus on ensuring her daughter was well educated in the culture and arts as well as the world around them. She believes that her mother wanted to help her children open their minds to new things, so as to not be narrow minded. Even with this expanded perspective, Gabrielle has been able to define her own cultural identity. She is half White and half Hispanic. Her features are not stereotypically Hispanic and so she has not experienced the labeling as much as she could have if she had with defining Hispanic features. Gabrielle explained her concerns about her physical features:

So I never felt like I was labeled that because I don't really look Hispanic. Like, I have freckles and stuff. So I never really felt bad about it or felt, I don't know, like I was treated differently.

Because I don't think—my brother has blue eyes. I mean, we very much look like we're White. You know, so I never felt that way. And I don't know if Andrew ever felt that way, but I could kind of see how my mom, I guess, well, even though she doesn't really look Hispanic, I could see how my grandparents would want to avoid that negative stigma of being Hispanic. (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

As a result of Gabrielle's physical appearance, she has not been associated with being Hispanic. She knows that if she looked more Hispanic, it may have been harder for her to avoid the negative stigma placed on Hispanics in San Antonio. Paradoxically, Gabrielle's grandfather still lives on the south side of San Antonio because it is believed that if you move to the north side of town, you are a "sell out" Mexican. Though he wants his posterity to see more of the world and be

educated through new experiences, he does not want to lose his connection to his neighborhood.

Christine also found it important that her children hold on to their Hispanic heritage. When Gabrielle was born, Christine made certain that her ethnicity was marked as Hispanic on her birth certificate. Christine also encouraged her daughter to learn and speak Spanish.

She, you know, she knew the importance of speaking Spanish, so ever since middle school she was, she took Spanish and then went on to high school with Spanish, and then in college she took Spanish. She's still not as fluent as I would like her to be just because it's not conversational; I always tease with her. I say, "You know, after you get your schooling, we're going to send you to Costa Rica for two months. (Christine, personal communication, March 29, 2010)

Gabrielle does not see the value of her Hispanic heritage as clearly as her mother does. Her reasoning is that she is half White and that she has never associated with the Hispanic culture. Gabrielle believes that her culture doesn't matter.

Because San Antonio is mostly, like, Hispanics. So I guess if you live in the nice part of San Antonio, there's more White people, but I don't know. I never felt bad about it because I was only half. And even if I was full Hispanic, I don't care because to me that doesn't, I don't know, determine anything. Like, I could be Hispanic and have a lot of money; I could be Hispanic and not have a lot of money. Whatever. You're still Hispanic. To me, it doesn't matter. (Gabrielle, personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Gabrielle's Hispanic racial identity was something that she considered to be important when filling out her PSAT form. Whether that was her true feelings or just a tactic to be considered for racially specific scholarships, Gabrielle checked the Hispanic box on the PSAT form.

Her initial reaction to receiving the award was anti-climatic.

And I found out at the end of my junior year that I got it. And I had no idea. Like, “Okay, cool.” I had no idea I would get so many scholarships. I had no idea how big of a deal it was. (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Gabrielle began to receive scholarship offers in the mail and the privilege of the award began to sink in. She recalled her feelings in receiving the letters from universities:

So then it wasn't until like fall when I started getting, you know, letters saying, you know, “Congratulations, you're a National Hispanic Scholar. Come to our university and we'll pay for all of your school.”

Like, “What? I can get a scholarship for just doing good on this test?” Honestly, I had no idea. And I think the reason, this is just what I concluded, is a lot of schools in the Midwest were asking first. Like Nebraska, Iowa, places in Illinois, I think they kind of want diversity. That's what I figured. Because why else would you—I don't know. It's a lot of money. (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Her mother was very proud of her and was extremely excited for her daughter when she received the first scholarship offer. Christine remembered her elated emotions:

Oh, my gosh, it was just such a relief. It was just wonderful. We were so proud of her, we just couldn't see straight. You know, and then just to have the offers just continually come in the mail. Yes, it was just incredible. She could have gone, I mean, had distance not been a problem, she could have just gotten into some awesome schools in the Midwest that, you know, she would have had a blast. And the weather. Distance and the weather. She was just like, “I don't want to go where it snows.” (personal communication, March 29, 2010)

Although most of the people in Gabrielle's close association were happy for her accomplishment, there were some that felt that she had an unfair advantage. Gabrielle described an experience with one of her friends:

In high school, one kid told me, he was just kind of a jerk all the time. I mean, as a joke, he was not trying to intentionally be mean, but he said I got the smart Mexican award. And he was like, “I didn’t even know that you were Hispanic.” And I was like, “Yeah. I’m half.” (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

She reacted to her friends’ criticism by laughing. She believes that had she been full Hispanic, she may have taken more offense. Also, she had the confidence to know that she was a successful student with or without her racial identity.

Because honestly, I mean, I was a really good student. And I did really good on my SAT’s and I did really good on my other tests regardless of my race. I had a really high GPA in high school. I worked hard; I was in all advanced classes. (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Gabrielle is confident with her academic merit and feels that there is no one who could make her feel insecure. She does believe, however, if her friend was more serious with his comment that she would have probably been really offended.

Christine also struggled with her peers regarding her daughter’s award as second rate. She explained her frustrating experience:

I will let you know one thing that really frustrated me. When Gabrielle received the scholarship for the National Hispanic Merit Scholar, is I could not believe the number of people that said, “Oh, well, if there would have been a National Merit Scholar for, you know, for English or for Indian,” or for whatever nationality they said, then you know, whatever their background was, “then we would have had that opportunity as well.” And it’s so frustrating. Or like, “Oh, well that’s not as good as being a National Merit Scholar.” And it’s like, “Why? Why?” Gabrielle would hear it from the kids and I would hear it from coworkers that I work with or whatever. It’s—and it’s just jealousy is all it is. (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Although they both received negative responses from their peers, Gabrielle and Christine remained proud of her accomplishment and were grateful for the opportunities that the scholarship afforded Gabrielle.

One of the most apparent benefits of the National Hispanic Scholar Award was the number of schools interested in recruiting her. She received letters, brochures, and other recruiting materials from several big name schools in the country. Quite a few of the scholarship offers were from schools in the Midwest. She had no interest in those schools whatsoever; in fact, she had no real desire to leave the state of Texas. Her choices came down to universities that were large and located in the southwest region. She described her thought process in choosing Southwest University:

Huge universities. So I didn't really think anything of it. Turns out three days later I get a scholarship or the letter from Southwest University saying, "Oh, you know, if you come here, we'll give you \$92,000 over four years." And I was thinking about it like, "Hmm, I might go to Southwest University." (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Gabrielle received multiple letters from Southwest University, marketing their programs, including the Honors College. Gabrielle described the experience:

It was a big university, lots of programs, you know, that looks kind of cool. So I kind of thought about it but I was just like, "Oh, whatever." And the next day I got a letter from the Honors College here, saying, "You know, we know that Southwest University is offering you this scholarship, apply to be in the Honors College."

And I was like, "That's kind of cool they have an honors college" because all of the other universities have an honors program, but not an entire college. That's really cool. I like that. (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Her interest was peaked because of the opportunity she might have to be involved in the Honors College, but she was still disengaged from the process.

Christine recalls Gabrielle going to a Southwest University presentation in San Antonio for National Hispanic Scholars and she was bored, aloof, and

uninterested. However, Christine was impressed with the presenter's passion for Southwest University's mission. Christine decided that she would bribe her daughter to consider any of the schools that offered her 100% tuition and so she told her that she would replace her old hand-me-down car with a new car if she decided to go to Southwest University. She recalled bargaining with her daughter:

So we made a deal with her. We said, "You go visit some schools that offer you a deal and we'll buy you a new car." And that was, "Okay. I'll do that." So, you know, I said, "You don't get a car if you go to Texas. You're on your own. You're going to have the same hand-me-down car." So that was enough to spark her interest to Arizona. It was just a no-brainer. She fell in love with it. So it was a win-win for us all. And she's been very, very happy, you know, since then. (personal communication, March 29, 2010)

Gabrielle's love for Southwest University began after she visited the campus and the Honors College. She recounted her experiences:

So we flew...and I went through a tour at the University Honors College. Because they hosted me, or whatever. And I walked through the campus, of course, March, like right now; it's beautiful, sunny all the time. There's palm trees everywhere.

And I was like, "I love this. It's warm; it's pretty; it's warm most of the year." And basically, I came back to San Antonio and I was like, "You know what, Mom, I think I want to go to Southwest University. I don't want to go to UTA anymore."

And she was like, "Are you sure?" And I was like, "Yeah, I actually really want to go." If I don't like it, which at first, I didn't because I was really homesick. But I was like, "If I don't like it, so what. They pay for my first year of school. UTA will always be there. I can always come back home and go somewhere else." (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Gabrielle's enthrallment with Southwest University was unexpected. Though she was excited about her decision, she was still keeping her home university as a

back-up in case she didn't like it. Christine had mixed emotions about her daughter going out of state. She was proud of her for being brave enough to make that choice, but she also worried about her daughter being homesick.

Unfortunately, Gabrielle was homesick like her mother feared. She recalled the first few days:

Well, first semester I had a really good GPA because I didn't know anybody here, which made it hard. My first two weeks here I think I cried every single day. And I won't openly admit that to anybody because I was miserable. (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Gabrielle suffered those homesick days by herself. She did not want to worry her mother and stepfather so she did not tell them her true feelings. She explained why she wasn't able to share with her parents:

I mean, the first couple of weeks I was like, "I wanted to transfer back; I hate this." But I never told them it was in the back of my mind because my mom is, I guess she misses me a lot. And I can tell. She always wants me to come home for breaks. So I was scared that if I told her, she might get this idea in her head like, "Oh, she might come back. She might come back."

And if I change my mind, she would be crushed because it's not like she doesn't want me to be here. She loves that I'm here. (personal communication)

Gabrielle struggled with homesickness, but she did really well academically. Her study habits improved because she did not have any social distractions. She made the Dean's List and created a nice GPA cushion for herself. During her second semester, Gabrielle would need to rely on her cushion to get her through and remain eligible for the scholarship.

A few factors contributed to Gabrielle's decreased GPA during the second semester of her freshman year, including having more social opportunities,

changing her major, and not prioritizing school as much as she did during the first semester. The change from having no friends during her first semester to having friends during second semester was a welcomed and needed happenstance.

So I was friends with the people that lived on my dorm floor. And we'd go to dinner and the dining hall together and kind of hang out on the weekends, but nothing really. So I had this great GPA to kind of bank on.

Second semester, I took more challenging classes and so—and plus I had more friends, so it was a lot easier to get distracted. I never did badly, but I had more difficult classes. So my GPA wasn't as good. But since I had that awesome GPA from first semester, it evened out (Gabrielle, personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Gabrielle's GPA was affected by a change in her major during the second semester. She met with her psychology advisor but was misinformed about the sequence of classes according to difficulty. She took an upper-division biology course and an honors statistics course during her second semester. She was very overwhelmed by all the work and did not do well.

Gabrielle's academic struggle during those four months was immense. She shared her heartbreak and frustrations with her mother. She had no reservations about sharing her struggles with her mother because she knew she was working as hard as she possibly could. She detailed her relationship with her mother during this trying time:

She knew that even though I was struggling, that I was doing my best. She knows it's the kind of person I am. So I was not ashamed to tell her because I didn't feel guilty about my bad grades because it was honestly because I was struggling. I did everything I could to make them better.

So while getting C's was disappointing and it brought down my GPA, I knew I couldn't have done any better because I tried my absolute hardest. So I didn't feel ashamed telling her that because in high school, my classes were a lot easier, so I think it would have been like harder for

me to tell her, “I’m doing bad in this class” because it was easier. But since it was college level and she knew I was trying, I don’t know. I didn’t have a problem talking to her about how I was struggling. (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Her mother’s consoling words and listening ways were enough for Gabrielle.

Christine remained supportive and only gave her daughter advice in regards to meeting with the tutors, teaching assistants, and others who could provide support.

In addition, Gabrielle got a job working for student services on campus.

In this position, she was able to see the inner-workings of the university and the marketing benefit of recruiting National Hispanic Scholars. When listening to the tour guides who walked students around campus, she often heard them refer to the number of National Merit and National Hispanic Scholars who were at the university. She described her experience:

Because I mean, not to speak down to Southwest University, but I work in the student services building, and I hear them, say, give information sessions to perspective students. And they’ll say, “Oh, yeah, we have the Honors College, and it has the most National Merit and National Hispanic Scholars than any other school in the nation.”

And like, I almost feel like sometimes it’s kind of just to be like, “Look at what we have”... And I don’t really think it’s that big of a deal. I’m not offended that that’s what they want because who doesn’t want to make their school look good. Who doesn’t want something to convince students to come here? I love Southwest University, and I’m glad that they gave me this scholarship so I could come here and enjoy the resources that I have and make these friends, and just be in a different place. Because [it is] very different than Texas. So, I don’t know.

I’m glad that it happened, but just sometimes it kind of makes me laugh when I hear them say, “Oh, we have the most Hispanic Scholars and the most Merit Scholars.” (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Gabrielle understands that Southwest University has invested a large amount of money in each of the scholars and they have the right to market that investment. She just finds it interesting that the National Merit and National Hispanic Scholars are used to increase the credibility of the school.

Through the first year, Gabrielle and Christine's relationship developed. Gabrielle remained emotionally dependent on her mother, but she began to take on other responsibilities in her life without her mother's help, including paying her bills and making sure everything was set for her semester. They remained in more frequent contact at the beginning of the year than at the end of the year. Although Christine initiated most of the calls the first semester, Gabrielle began to open the communication up more and equally reached out to her mom during the second semester.

Gabrielle's first year at Southwest University made her grow up quite a bit. She grew more independent and was grateful for the opportunity to go away to school. She believes that she grew up so much faster than her friends back home who stayed at a local university. Christine also noticed the difference in her daughter: "You know, because the older she gets, we've always been close, but it just seems as though we almost talk adult to adult now. Instead of mom-child." (personal communication, March 29, 2010). Overall, the first year experience for Gabrielle had its ups and downs but she was able to get through it, adjust, and is now a stronger and more independent woman.

Summary and Analysis of Narrative 2

Gabrielle grew up in a family very well aware of the principle of cultural capital. Her grandfather's efforts to expose his daughter to the world around them as well as her mother's focus on showing her the world were influential aspects of their family history. Christine was affected by her father's efforts and benefited from her education. She remained connected to her culture through her language and traditions. Gabrielle, however, was further disconnected from her culture than her mother. She believes that disconnection is a result of her bi-racial identity.

Christine was always intentional in making certain her children were identified as Hispanic. She understood the scholarship benefits that they could have if they were identified as Hispanic. Gabrielle and Christine experienced negative, racist comments from their peers that said that affirmative action was the only reason she received the scholarship.

Gabrielle remained emotionally dependent on her mother when she struggled academically. She also had a difficult time with homesickness but persevered by making the conscious decision not to tell her mother about her feelings. She did not want to alarm her. This decision was mature, and she was able to manage her emotions.

Narrative 3: Scholar Leila and Parent Rachel

Leila is into punk music. She has an edgy and rebellious style that is reflected in her appearance and language. She has an olive complexion and dark brown eyes, and she is 5'5" tall. She was born in Chicago, Illinois, and moved to

Las Vegas when she was in elementary school. Her parents are married, and she has a younger brother that looks up to her. Her parents created a healthy living environment, and she was a happy child. Rachel, Leila's mother, described Leila's background:

Well, my husband and I have been married since she was born. There's never any arguments, I mean, there's nothing. There's no drinking, nothing. No violence in the home. So she's always lived a very healthy life. And I always tried to give her everything she needed for school. She's never had need for any, you know, any, like, basic necessities like some of us, some of us Hispanics had when we were growing up. Like I had when I was growing up. (personal communication, April 15, 2010)

Rachel was intentional in creating an ideal environment for her daughter. She had a difficult childhood and wanted to make certain that her children would be able to feel comfortable at home. Most especially, she always wanted to have the basic necessities for her children. Rachel worked when Leila was a toddler, but she soon quit her job because of her home obligations. She described her reasons for staying at home:

Um, I mainly stayed with them. I stayed with them. I was working in Chicago when she was born, and I quit my job when she was three years old because she was very needy. And she seemed like the kind of little girl that, she wasn't loving Mommy, I guess she kind of had this little bit of hatred because I went to work. (personal communication, April 15, 2010)

Although Rachel was unable to work and their income was reduced significantly, Leila never felt poor or deprived. She credited her mother's attention to budgeting:

My mom's has always been really good at managing money. So I've never felt poor. But when we lived in Chicago, my dad worked. He was the only one who worked, and he was a waiter. So my mom was just a stay at home mom with me and my brother. And like, I never felt poor, like, I still went to Catholic school and stuff when I lived in Chicago, but

we definitely have a lot more money right now than we had. (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Leila grew up in an encouraging environment with both of her parents valuing education and telling their daughter to succeed. She was an excellent student. Even in Leila's early childhood years, Rachel and her husband felt it important to stress that education was essential to having an easier life. Rachel recalled talking to her daughter in her earliest years:

Well, since the beginning, I always encouraged my daughter that she needed to do good in school. You know, she needed to learn as much as she could. I paid for her education in Chicago; she was going to Catholic school. And she was doing very, very well. She always got A's, A's, A's. Very, very smart girl. And like I said, I continued to talk to her. I still talk to her that the only way she is going to have a good life is by getting an education and not dropping out of school. (personal communication, April 15, 2010)

Upon entering elementary school, Leila was tested and was found to be gifted. There was a gifted school in Chicago, but it was far from where they lived. Rachel decided to send Leila to Catholic school. Leila recalled going to several different schools within those first few years. In order to maintain a calm and peaceful learning environment for her daughter, Rachel placed Leila in a school that was separate from the schools that her cousins attended.

Leila and her family moved from Chicago to Las Vegas when she was in the fourth grade. She was tested by the public school system and was again found to be gifted. The public school offered her the opportunity to be in their gifted program, and her mother decided it would be a good experience for her. Leila reflected on her experiences of being placed in the gifted program, GATE:

I got into G.A.T.E. in fourth grade. I think it's because in Chicago they don't even have stuff like that. At least not in Catholic schools. But when

we moved to Las Vegas, we didn't really have very much money. We moved in; we didn't have anywhere to stay out here. We moved in with my grandma for a little while until we found a house and we were able to put a down payment and bought it.

So I was in public school for the first time in my life. It was pretty scary. Um, the school I went to, they told me about it because they were like, "You're kind of smart. Have you ever heard of the G.A.T.E. program?" And they got me into it.

The G.A.T.E. program at that school was really cool, but then I transferred to this other school when we moved out of my grandma's place. (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Leila enjoyed the GATE program, but her enjoyment was somewhat short lived because she moved and entered middle school. She was involved in accelerated classes throughout middle school but did not involve herself in extracurricular activities. She felt that it may have been a mistake that she did not participate in extracurricular activities. She explained, "In middle school, I didn't really like, honestly, I've never really been involved with extracurricular activities, which probably isn't a good thing" (personal communication, March 25, 2010).

Being a singularly focused student was even more noticeable because she worked independently. Leila never asked her parents for help with her homework. Her mother reflected on her daughter's autonomy, "Honestly, honestly, whatever her homework was always too hard for me" (personal communication, April 15, 2010).

During Leila's middle school years, Rachel decided to go back to school. Her example and sacrifice made an impression on Leila. Leila expressed her feelings about her mother's resolve to go back to school:

Well, probably just because she went to college. I mean, my dad influenced me a lot too, but I think my mom, like, I don't know. My mom to me is like, they're both fighters, like both of my parents are fighters, but my mom, she went through a lot when she was younger. And like, I don't know. It was just such a big accomplishment. Like, I was really proud of her when she went back to school. She went back, yeah, I was like in sixth or seventh grade when she went back to school. She had always wanted to be a nurse, but she had never actually went [to school]. (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Rachel completed her associate's degree and became a registered nurse in a low-income public hospital emergency room. She attained her dreams, exemplifying the words of wisdom she imparted to her children. She explained her intentions for pushing her daughter to complete her education:

I just want her to be able to get a paycheck where she can support herself without having to worry about, so many Hispanics or women in general; they just depend on the husband for support. I want her to be independent. I don't want her to say, "I have to stay with this guy just because I won't be able to pay my mortgage or my rent." To be able to say, "Well, I can let him go because I can still pay my bills." (personal communication, April 15, 2010)

Rachel's concern for her daughter's welfare stemmed from having experienced many women in her life who struggled to meet their financial obligations because of their lack of education. Leila remembered her mother telling her often that if she could be a nurse, than there is no reason she can't be a doctor. Leila's aspirations while in middle school and high school to become a doctor reflected her mother's desires for her.

In high school, Leila remained in the honors and AP courses. Although she was smart enough to excel in her courses, Leila decided that she wanted to rebel and be lazy. She explained, "During my sophomore year. I don't know. I was just screwing around. I was just like, 'Screw school.' Like, I don't know.

My just attitude was like [negative]” (personal communication, March 25, 2010).

Leila did not like school. She didn’t like the structure, the rules, or the order; it was all unappealing to her. She hung out with the punk rock kids who were not into school and developed a rebellious and isolating personality. She described her social circle:

I like, I’m just kind of drawn to people who aren’t really like, high achievers. Like, I mean, like I listen to punk rock. And especially in high school I was really into punk. Now I dress more than before, you know. So the kids I hung out with were just punks and stuff like that. So they weren’t really honors kids; they were just kind of degenerates. (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

As a result of the influence of her friends, Leila did not do well in school during her sophomore year. However, in her junior year, she decided to do better and she raised her GPA. During this time, Leila was also distant from her family because she believed they were too strict and confining. She caused tension at home, but she eventually gave it all up and started getting serious.

Leila’s parents tried to guide her, and they were constantly reminding her that she was a smart kid and that she could do so many things because of the opportunities that are in this country.

Look, you were born here. You’ve been given all of the opportunities of the greatest country in the world. You need to take them. You need to do well in school. Because we were born in Mexico, you know, we know you need to appreciate what this country has to offer. (Leila, personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Not only did the realization that the U.S. was a country abounding with opportunities influence Leila’s family, but changes in income levels from what they had known in Mexico had a tremendous impact on the family. Leila recalled the shift in her thinking over time concerning Hispanic people. In high school,

she was in an open classroom debate about whether English should be the only language spoken in the U.S. She remembered being upset by people thinking that English should supersede all other languages. However, as Leila grew older, she began to recognize that she was often frustrated with phone prompts to press “1” for English. She noticed changes in her mom’s opinion. She described her mother’s opinion on the English-only issue:

I think one thing I’ve really noticed that’s changed is our, the way we, especially my mom. Like, she’s gone back to school. The way she looks at things. Just like immigration issues and stuff like that. I think we kind of, we’re kind of like—as far as that ideology, as far as immigration, we’re kind of tending towards the more conservative side even though we’re Mexican.

And it’s kind of like now, she works at—I told her she works at some ghetto part of Las Vegas, and a lot of people are Latino. And she kind of like, she now kind of feels that people shouldn’t be coming here illegally and abusing this country.

Just like, if someone comes in and demands that someone talks to them in Spanish, she won’t even speak Spanish to them. She just talks to them in English. Just because the way we kind of see, I don’t know how to explain it.

It’s just weird to me because my parents both came here illegally. They’re not illegal anymore; they’re both citizens now. But they both came here illegally, so it’s weird for me to have a mom who was, you know, she was a wetback herself. She went across the Rio Grande to get here. (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Although her mother’s change of opinion on immigration issues is strange to Leila, she finds her own perceptions changing as well. Leila remains proud of her heritage and views her success as a credit to her culture as well as herself.

My whole thing is, “Yeah I’m Mexican, so what.” I like to, I don’t know. I don’t know how to explain it, but I think I put myself on a higher pedestal. Like, not a higher pedestal, but I set goals for myself just because I’m Mexican. Just because I want to achieve and be like, “Look, I’m a minority and I did this.” (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Leila took the PSAT and did not hesitate to fill in the Hispanic box for ethnicity. She took the test twice, once as a sophomore and later as a junior. She did not do well on the test during her sophomore year, so she retested in her junior year. In addition, she was aware that she would not qualify for the National Merit Award or the National Hispanic Award if she didn't take the PSAT in her junior year. She remembered saying to herself, "‘If I want to get into a good college, I need to get it together.’ So my junior year, I took the PSAT's because I was more focused and that kind of stuff" (personal communication, March 25, 2010).

When she retested the second time, she was only three points shy of the National Merit Scholars Award. She was somewhat disappointed because of the negative opinion some have of race-based scholarships. She explained, "I don't want to be stereotyped. I don't want to be like—I don't want people to be like, 'Oh, she's only on full ride because she's Mexican.' You know? I guess to some degree that is true" (personal communication, March 25, 2010).

As she received word of the award from her counselor, she was told that there was no money attached to the scholarship. She described her reaction to the award:

But I didn't even realize that there was like, like, when they gave me the certificate telling me that I was a National Hispanic Scholar, my school counselor just gave it to me and she just, like, "Yeah, there's no money attached to this or anything; it's just, you know, a certificate they give out to people."

So I didn't really, like, I just thought it was just kind of some award. You know, I didn't really think it was that big of a deal. But then, I don't know how, I guess I was researching universities and I found a university in Nebraska gives people full rides for being National Hispanic Scholars. And I was like, "Hey, wow, I wonder if other universities do

this.” And I found the list and I was like, “Hey, that’s pretty awesome.” (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Her initial reaction to the award was anti-climatic because my counselor told that there was no money attached to the award. Upon her discovery that the award could result in scholarship offers, she was very excited. Her mother was also excited. Rachel remembered her daughter’s feelings about the scholarship:

Well she was just really, really excited. She was like, “Mom, look. I got this letter and they’re accepting me, and they want to give me a scholarship.” I think she got accepted to four different universities. I know she was really, really excited. And I was really, really happy too. Really, really happy.

And I’m like, “Well, you know what, you should look at the four of them and you should pick the best, and the one that is giving you the most money because an education is an education.” (personal communication, April 15, 2010)

Her mother’s advice resonated with Leila, so she explored all her options. Her first school of choice was the University of Washington. However, the university wasn’t offering any financial assistance. Her parents were not interested in schools that may put her in debt. They urged their daughter to explore other options before making a commitment to any institution. Leila recalled her thought process when evaluating schools:

My dream school was University of Washington. I got in, but it was really expensive. And my parents, like, my mom’s very, like I said, she’s very financially conscious and stuff. And she’s not going to pay more for something [than] she has to. I mean, she’s not going to like—if I was still in Las Vegas I would have gone to a community college for the first two years and then transferred to a university in the state. My mom wasn’t going to pay for out-of-state tuition.

So I just kind of, like, University of Washington was my dream school; I got in, but I realized I couldn’t afford it. So I just looked at the schools that were giving me good awards. From there, I kind of just chose Southwest University. (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Rachel, however, expressed that she would have preferred her daughter to attend an in-state school, although she would have paid for an out-of-state school if Leila insisted. She stated explicitly, “I would have had to pay for her school. Even if I had to work extra, I would have helped her pay for her school” (personal communication, April 15, 2010). Although Rachel was willing to pay for her daughter’s education regardless of her choice school, Leila knew that passing up an opportunity to receive a free education would be a mistake.

The celebration of her decision to attend Southwest University and her accomplishment of receiving the National Hispanic Scholars Award was limited to her immediate family because of her extended family’s judgment of her. Rachel’s family members love to brag about their children; however, when those children don’t live up to the goals described by the parents, the rest of the family is ruthlessly critical.

Southwest University was one of the schools that heavily recruited Leila. She received many letters from Southwest University from different departments and programs throughout the campus. Initially, she did not want to attend Southwest University. Leila made her decision to attend the university very late. She enrolled in June, a mere two weeks prior to school starting. She explained her reason for changing her mind, “Because I knew they were going to give me a full ride, so I was like, ‘Oh, I might as well try for this school’” (personal communication, March 25, 2010).

Leila and Rachel visited Southwest University for the first time immediately prior to the start of the school year. Rachel drove her daughter to the

university by herself because her husband had a very busy season with work. Rachel made it a point to drive Leila to the university because she felt like she needed to check things out. She wanted to be familiar with where her daughter would be living and the environment to which she would be exposed. Rachel helped her daughter set-up her dorm and left. Rachel recalled being sad, although she had a sense of knowing that this university was where her daughter needed to be. She explained:

And even though I was a little sad because she was going away, I knew that if I were her and I had the opportunity to go to school, even though she was going to be away from home, because that's what I wanted to do, I would be really, really happy. (personal communication, April 15, 2010)

Leila attended a smaller campus for her freshmen year because the nursing major was housed on that campus. The experience was very scary. She explained in detail her experiences:

My first week, well, as soon as I got there they put us all on a bus to go to the stadium for some freshman orientation thing, I don't know. So it was pretty crazy because I didn't know anybody so I was just like, "Oh, my God." But like, I don't know. It was an interesting experience. I mean, I met my roommate, and she didn't really know anyone either. And we just became friends.

Like, I just, I've always been really shy and really reserved. And I think that's one of the reasons I wanted to go to an out-of-state school. I wanted to expose myself, and I wanted to be able to not know anyone and be able to be independent and be social and not, you know, be all like shy and stuff.

And I'm really—I was really proud of myself because I did. Since I didn't know anyone I was like, "Damn, I need to meet some people." So I was more outgoing than I have ever been going into that situation. My first week was pretty good. It went a lot better than I expected. I met a lot of people and stuff. (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Although Leila had a shocking first experience at college, she quickly adapted and went outside her comfort zone. She was a shy girl most of her life, having only one group of friends, but she wanted the opportunity to gain a new perspective and become more outgoing. She was successful in her attempts to make friends, which helped her ease into university life. She described her social life:

As far as my first semester, I was in [a smaller] campus, and it was pretty dead. So we didn't really do anything. We just kind of sat outside of our dorm and chilled. Like, I went to a club once, but I'm not really a clubbing type of person. I mean, parties are cool and stuff, but I'm just kind of like, I'm not really a party type of girl to be honest (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Although she didn't attend parties or go out dancing like most of her colleagues did, Leila still enjoyed her new freedoms. A rebel at heart, her parents' strict rules for her while she was growing up were finally gone. She loved the opportunity to dictate her own schedule. She explained her life in high school compared to her life in college:

But before, my curfew was always 10:00 p.m. And I still have to ask my parents, "Can I go do this?"... So my parents were always really strict. So since it was like, my first semester, I was like, "Hell yeah, I got freedom." And I did well, but I could have done better. (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Academically, Leila has always questioned her motivation. She is not fond of school because it often does not challenge her in the right ways. She has a pattern of slacking off and then doing really well to make up for it. She knows that she is capable of doing very well but just does not have the focus to maintain persistent efforts.

In addition to her inability to focus at times, Leila was taking a rather heavy course load. She took an anatomy/physiology course for the nursing program and earned D's on all the exams and a C on lab. She ended up with a B in the course, but she believed that she was fortunate to receive that grade. She was intentionally slacking a bit in this course and all other courses so she could gauge how much effort she would have to put into school. During her second semester, she had the same experience with another course. Her slacking made her truly upset because she felt like if she had only made greater effort, she would have been more successful. She explained her frustration:

That's what upsets me the most. If I put all of the effort into it and I had gotten a C, I would still be mad about it, but I'd be like, "You know, maybe I'm not smart enough." But I didn't put enough effort. I started off doing really well. I was on track to get an A in the class. And then when I started working, I started slacking off. And the third test I completely bombed. And after that, I had to do really well on the final in order to get a B in the class. And I stayed in my room for four days straight and just studied, so I got a C. I was pretty upset. (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Leila eventually shared with her mother the end result of her classes.

However, she kept her struggles to herself in the midst of the semester. Rachel recalled calling her daughter one time when she was stressed:

I mean, sometimes I will call her and she's like, "Mom, I'm like, really busy right now. I'm trying to study for this test I have, so many chapters to read," or something like that. And I'm like, "Okay. That's fine. I will call you at a different time." So, yeah, sometimes she sounds, you know, a little stressed. But she doesn't really complain about her classes to me. (personal communication, April 15, 2010)

Rachel is proud of her daughter because she is taking hard courses and is still keeping up her GPA so she can maintain the scholarship. She stated, "And she

knows that she has to keep, I don't know, A's and B's in order to keep her [scholarship]" (personal communication, April 15, 2010).

After a difficult first semester, Leila decided that she wanted to switch majors. She didn't feel that nursing was what she wanted to do. She switched her major to biology, which is a subject with which she always struggled. Leila felt that the biology major would challenge her and could keep her engaged in her school work. Her strategy worked, and she maintained a good GPA.

Leila has long been intrigued by mental health hospitals because of the stories her mother used to tell her when she was younger. She explained her interest:

This is like, if I am going to be a doctor, I want to work in public health, too. I don't want to work at some little crazy hospital with crazy people. I just think working in [public health] would be more interesting and I think I'd be helping—I don't know. I just feel like I'd be helping out more kind of because it's a lower income area. And also, I just don't want to deal with people who are stuck up and rude and rich. You know, like [they] are just mean. (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Her aspirations to become a doctor and to help in a low-income area are certainly influenced by her mother's current profession. She sees the valor in her mother's career and wants to emulate that compassion for others. Although her goals are something to be proud of and to celebrate, Leila does not share her excitement with her mother's family because they are very judgmental and overly critical.

In order to deal with family members' criticism, Rachel does not share with her family Leila's accomplishments and encourages Leila not to share her goals with them. Rachel believes that should her daughter change her mind about

medical school, she doesn't want her family to think it was because of her not being able to be compete. She explained:

They brag a lot about their kids. I don't want her to do that, because you never know. I mean, I don't want her to start bragging about how smart she is, how she's going to be a doctor, how she's going to do this and that.

What if something was wrong and she doesn't do it? They're going to start talking all of this crap about her. That's the only reason I don't want her to. I'm like, "When you decide what you want to do and you become what you say, and you accomplish what you thought you were going to be, then they can know." (personal communication, April 15, 2010)

Leila honors her mother's advice and remains humble about her education decisions. She works hard and focused on maintaining her required GPA

One of the greatest distractions to her academic focus is Leila's job, which she does not need. Her mother would support her if she didn't work, but Leila values the principle of personal responsibility, which makes her job appealing.

I like working. I like to feel productive. I don't like to just sit on my ass and just be like, you know, I don't like to be the kid whose parents pay for everything. And my parents could pay for everything; they didn't want me to get a job. But I like to make my own money. I like to feel independent. I like to be productive. (Leila, personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Leila has her own money to pay for some of her expenses, but her mother and father assist her with the rent and are her safety net in case she has a hard month. Rachel gave her daughter an ATM card when she went to college that is linked to her account, but Leila rarely uses it. Rachel described her financial support for her daughter:

Well, very rarely she will use it [the ATM card]. And she will tell me, "Mommy, I need money for the bills. I'm going to transfer, whatever, \$150, \$100." And I give her for rent money every month. She will transfer it from the account. And then when she needs extra money for

bills and stuff, she will tell me and I will just transfer the money. So I'm glad that I can work and help her out. (personal communication, April 15, 2010)

Leila remained close with her parents throughout her freshmen year, although the frequency of their conversations tapered off. She talked to them often at the beginning, but it soon dissipated because Leila settled well into her new college life. Leila described her communication with her family:

I mean, I talk to them, you know; it was like, I have left home so they were calling me more often. My mom would call me every day; now my mom doesn't call me every day. Now she'll call me once a week or something. But I've never been much of a talking-on-the-phone type of person. Like, I'll text people and I'll hang out with them, but as far as calling people, I don't really call people. I don't remember the last time I called someone. Unless I was returning their call, unless I had to. But as far as just calling people just to talk, I don't really do that. I guess I'm weird in that way. (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Leila's reserved nature improved over time as did her love and appreciation for her family. She remembered being a very difficult teenager:

My relationship with my family, when I was like, you know, kids go through whole little rebel phase. And I went through that when I was like 12 through 15. Probably when I was 16, I was like, "Fine, whatever." So that's when I was really kind of like, "You guys suck." You know, but and then when I was in high school I was like, "You guys are way too strict." But now that I'm in college, my relationship with them is really good. I love my family. (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Leila has a supportive family and as she pursues her education, her family will support her efforts to accomplish her goals.

Summary and Analysis of Narrative 3

Leila received both indirect and direct messages about college from her mother Rachel. Rachel made it known to her daughter that the opportunities afforded her by having been born in this country were too valuable to pass up. By

her example of returning to school to pursue a degree, Rachel showed Leila that education was important and valuable.

Leila's study habits were interesting. She was classified as gifted but did not develop consistent study habits. Her slacking was only turned around when she made a conscious decision to focus on her school work. In college, she resumed the habit of procrastination while enjoying her freedom.

Leila's description of her mother's racial identity change was intriguing. She felt it ironic that her mother who was once, in her terms, a "wetback" would eventually have such little tolerance for immigrant people. There was a sense that Leila did not understand her mother's view and found it contrary to what she believed.

Leila's relationship with her mother was distant and she did not keep in constant contact with her during the first year of school. She began school with an autonomous attitude as evidenced in her desire to work and support herself, although her mother could easily have supported her. As the year progressed, Leila moved through the autonomous phase to become interdependent as she began to share more with her mother and appreciate home to a greater degree.

Narrative 4: Scholar Stephanie and Parent Gloria

Stephanie is 5'8". She has a fashionable style. She has tan skin and wears her hair long and straight. She speaks eloquently and clearly.

Stephanie grew up in Redondo Beach, California. She is half German and half Puerto Rican. Her parents were divorced when she was very young and she lived with her mother most of every week while growing up. Her mother, Gloria,

who is a “New Yorican,” having grown up in New York in a majority Puerto Rican area, shared her love for many cultures with her children. Stephanie felt that her parents’ divorce did not have a lasting effect on her. Her father lived only two towns away during her childhood, and they remained close by spending time with him often during weekends and vacations.

In Stephanie’s early years, Gloria did not work, so she was able to be with her children. Gloria was very involved with her children’s educational setting. The school she selected for her children was a “parent participation” school, which was new and innovative in her area. The parent participation program is a school that involves and values the participation of the parents. Parents are involved in curriculum development, volunteering, and other school activities. The decision to send her children to that school did not come without some opposition from her former husband and mother-in-law. As a result, Gloria allowed her eldest child, a son, to go to a regular public school, but he had a terrible experience that year, so she switched him to the parent participation program too.

The school Stephanie attended in her early years was located in the affluent neighborhood of Palos Altos, California. Gloria and Stephanie attributed Stephanie’s early educational foundation to this school. Stephanie reflected on her elementary school experience:

Yeah. So I had a lot of really positive experiences with education when I was younger. It was kind of a really sheltered experience, though, because it was a really small school. And I hear about other people talking about bullies or mean kids or clicks, and I didn’t really experience a lot of that until I was older. (personal communication, March 26, 2010)

Gloria remained involved in the development of her children's education and the education of all the children at that school. It was a requirement for all parents to volunteer and assist the students in the classroom and in extracurricular events. However, Gloria's level of involvement with and support of her children's education was well beyond the school's expectations. She continues to exert extra effort to make sure her children have an enriching education. Gloria recalled one experience when her daughter had not an inkling of what her mother's position and authority was in the school:

The kids, they wouldn't know that. To the kids, you were one of the moms that wore a green apron... I don't think that my children ever really understood what it meant that I was on the board until we had a little bit of drama. And essentially, my daughter told me something that happened at school.

I'm sure the other kids talked about it, maybe some kids talked about it with their parents, but it did happen to get to the board of directors and a change in policy was made. And of course, the teachers then made announcements in the classroom. And the teachers said, you know, "Effective immediately, we have a new policy for the following on the playground," whatever the issue was.

When I picked my daughter up from school, she was in the first grade. She had this little look on her face like a little pout, which was not like Stephanie. We got in the car and she was very quiet. And then when we were driving in the car she said, "I need to talk to you about something." And I said, "Yes?" And she said, "I know that you told everybody about what I told you." And I said, "Stephanie, what are you talking about?" She said, "Mrs. Snyder made the announcement today that there was a change in the rules on the playground and they knew it was because of what I told you. And you must have told that board." She wasn't really sure what the board was, she goes, "you must have told the board."

And I said, "Well Stephanie, actually we did talk about that, but it didn't have anything to do with the conversation we had." And she said, "No Mom, I didn't tell you because I wanted you to tell anybody. I didn't want you to do anything. I just wanted you to listen." This is from a six year old. (personal communication, April 6, 2010)

Gloria learned in that moment that her daughter was mature beyond her years and that she would have to listen carefully next time Stephanie was talking about school. Stephanie's independent nature was both innate and a nurtured behavior.

As a result of her mature personality and responsible nature, Stephanie's parents grew to have trust in their daughter enough not to worry about her academics and whether she was doing her homework. Stephanie described her parents' involvement: "It wasn't a really hands-on experience. They weren't always like, 'Let me know what all of your grades are now. Let me know what you're doing. Are you on top of this?'" (personal communication, March 26, 2010).

While Stephanie was in elementary school, Gloria was also in school. Gloria's dedication to school was a source of inspiration for her young daughter. Stephanie reflected on her mother's collegiate experience:

So that was really cool. So she went to Marymount College, which is a junior college, and she transferred to UCLA after that. So when I was sick—I was sick a lot when I was little—I would go to UCLA with her and sit with her in classes and stuff. It always felt kind of like a treat, I guess. (personal communication, March 26, 2010)

Stephanie had many memories of her mother staying up late completing homework and papers. She understood the importance of education through her mother's example.

Gloria recalled this busy time in her and her family's life:

I think, I don't think I can take sole credit for it. I think her father as well. I think, I attended UCLA as a mother of two young children on my own. And when my kids were sick, I couldn't miss class.

So there were many a time where Travis and Stephanie were individually bundled up sitting in a lecture hall at UCLA because I had a mid-term. Or it was, you know, an important class before the next exam. I can remember rushing across town in my little Honda with the two of them in a car getting the time stamp on a final exam and getting it in on time without having a babysitter. But I never made it stressful. I always made it fun. For them, it was just learning was a really critical, important, exciting part of our lives (personal communication, April 6, 2010).

The university atmosphere and the educational world were fun and exciting for young Stephanie. Not only was she exposed to college via her mother's efforts, but her father was a laboratory manager at UCLA, and later her mother obtained employment at California State University-Dominguez Hills. Stephanie was often on campus, so college life became second nature to her and her brother.

Stephanie enjoyed the intellectual stimulation of the college environment; this enjoyment was an extension of her father's influence. He was an avid reader who taught his daughter to love learning through the study of books and newspapers. Stephanie recounted her father's influence on her:

Probably the number one thing I would have to say is he's a very voracious reader. There's always like, when I visit him in California, there's always ten different kinds of newspapers and just a wall of books. Yeah. Like, so many of my memories come from him reading with me. Kids books, or him on his own reading his own things. I remember he would always go through phases. A Charles Dickens phase, a Virginia Woolf phase. And like, it was always kind of like our thing. (personal communication, March 26, 2010)

Her early development, coupled with the enriching environment that she received both at home and at school, resulted in Stephanie being recognized in middle school as a gifted and talented child. She entered public school and was immediately placed in the Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) program. She

recalled not having as positive of an experience as she did in elementary school because of multiple simultaneous changes in her life.

Yeah. And in middle school and high school I went to public schools in Redondo Beach. I had an okay experience, I think. It was definitely a bit of a shock, kind of transitioning from the elementary school transitions to middle school. And that was when my mom started working. So my brother and I spent a lot of time together after school or whatever. We went home together or to the library. And I was in the honors program, it's called GATE (Stephanie, personal communication, March 26, 2010)

The GATE program was designed to enrich students considered to be gifted. The activities were engaging and geared to develop students' critical thinking ability. In Stephanie's case, the GATE program was somewhat of a recap because of the student-centered parent participation elementary school she previously attended focused on enriching the student's intelligence. Gloria recalled her daughter not being satisfied with her GATE experience:

I don't think Stephanie, or from Stephanie's point of view, that she found it to be all that meaningful. And I think partly it's because it wasn't a very solid, strong program at her middle school. And I think part of it is so much of how G.A.T.E. is implemented is around enrichment. And she had had such a rich enrichment already. (personal communication, April 6, 2010)

However, Stephanie developed socially during the GATE program. Her elementary school experience was a bit sheltered, but her public school experience in middle school gave her the opportunity to build lasting friendships. Stephanie recalled the social growth in the GATE program: "And I was, most of my friends growing up were in that program, too. That's how I met my friend who's still my best friend. It was a very over achieving, nerdy crowd" (personal communication, March 26, 2010).

In high school, Stephanie continued to excel academically. She took all honors courses and then AP courses. Her parents were very hands off her education. She would inform them of the things she needed like money for AP tests, which they provided, but beyond that they did not interfere. Stephanie believed this to be different from her peers in high school because their parents were very involved and often hovered over them.

Stephanie not only excelled academically but she was a well-rounded student. She was involved as editor of the newspaper, participated on the academic decathlon team, and was founding president of a local Amnesty International club. Stephanie attended a very racially diverse campus. She appreciated having such an international experience.

I know a lot of people who went to high schools where there was like two Black kids. And to me that's just unimaginable. Because I went to school with over 2,000 people and I feel like there was so much interaction, there were White kids, Hispanic kids, Asian kids, Black kids, a lot of Pacific Islanders; that was a really good experience. (personal communication, March 26, 2010)

Her involvement, with the creation of an Amnesty International Club at her high school, was a central part of Stephanie's high school experience. Having grown up with a politically savvy father and mother, she was passionate about the equal treatment of all people. She picked Amnesty International because of the wide range of issues that they represented, including human rights. She reflected on her decision to create the Amnesty International Club:

It was something I was kind of interested in. I had heard of the organization and it was something that I felt very kind of fired up about, I guess. I was very passionate about it, at the time and when I was in high school I was listening to a lot of punk music. I was very into being angry,

very liberal, and I guess I'm kind of still like that, just without the angry teenager bit. (personal communication, March 26, 2010)

Stephanie's passion for human rights and her rebellious phase were a part of her growing understanding of the world around her. Her mother encouraged her to lead her own life and to figure things out for herself. Gloria recalled telling Stephanie and her brother, "You're the captain of your own ship. I'm just the navigator. I can plan the map for you and tell you which way you need to go, but everybody decides their own course'" (personal communication, April 6, 2010).

In her junior year, Stephanie took the PSAT. Her social circle knew about the tests, and they were studying for it. They were all very nervous because they knew that doing well could result in receiving the National Merit Scholarship.

She remembered the intensity of that time:

I think the qualifying scores were from junior year, not from sophomore year. So I guess sophomore year was just kind of preparation. And then after junior year, and that's the really intense year for college admissions in high school. It's when you're taking all the APs and stuff. So PSATs was just one in a line of so many standardized tests and essays and projects that I remember taking that year, which is very, very intense time.

And over the summer, so I guess it was summer 2007, I got a letter, you get those letters from the AP like oh, you're a, like honors, AP Honors Scholar, whatever, things like that. I got a letter saying I was a National Hispanic Scholar. So that was the first time I'd heard about it.

It sounded really cool from the letter. It talked about how you might be contacted from a lot of different colleges; maybe they had scholarship programs. I mean, it seemed, I was really excited. I didn't know about it before, but to hear about it, it seemed great. (personal communication, March 26, 2010)

Stephanie was happy to receive the National Hispanic Scholar award. As a result of her hard work and concentrated school schedule, she graduated in her

third year of high school; she was 16 years old. She decided to graduate in May and so she was a bit late for college applications; therefore, she took a year off. Stephanie took a couple classes at the community college, but she mainly took the opportunity to work and save money. During that year, Stephanie developed a stronger conviction regarding her education.

Um, it was definitely after being in school for essentially my whole life or whatever, it was weird to be alone that much. And not just alone that much, but also at my jobs, kind of. Like, um, I mean, they were just like, I worked in a gelato shop, and then I worked at an accessory store, so they're like little not a big deal kind of jobs.

But I kind of had that experience of spending time by myself a lot more, which I hadn't had really. And then I also had this experience of working with adults; this is their job. So I also had adult responsibilities for the first time.

Because when you're in school, it's important, but ultimately you're doing it for yourself. You know what I mean? You're choosing to do well. You, but you know, when talking to someone who owned the business I worked for, this is their livelihood, and this is their life. (Stephanie, personal communication, March 26, 2010)

Though she was working two jobs and making money, Stephanie was still very much focused on getting her college degree. Throughout that year, she received many inquiries from universities. Stephanie was very happy about the National Hispanic Scholar award, but she had limited knowledge about the scholarship aspect of the award until she began receiving letters from Universities. Stephanie remembered the details of the college letters:

There were a lot of—I think I got letters from, University of Nebraska was a big one, and I remember when I got letters from Southwest University and University of Southwestern, too. I want to say University of Alabama, and those were letters talking about scholarships.

And I also got information from a lot of schools that I think I was sent because I was a National Hispanic Scholar, but not necessarily

scholarships. I got a letter from Scripps College saying that, I think it was the National Hispanic Scholars, they would fly you out to see the school. But because I live in L.A. it's a two hour drive. (personal communication, March 26, 2010)

The universities offering scholarships received Stephanie's attention more than the others. She had considered the University of San Francisco and even applied, but they were not offering her any scholarship money and so she declined the admissions. Southwest University was appealing to her, according to Gloria, because of a presentation given by one of the recruiters. Gloria recounted the experience: "I think that particular presentation appealed to her because this person really believed in what they were representing. And it came across. And Stephanie really responded to that" (personal communication, April 6, 2010).

One of the major contributing factors for Stephanie's experience was the amount of the scholarship that Southwest University was offering in comparison to the rest of the universities. Stephanie candidly outlined her thinking when she received the scholarship offer from Southwest University, "Well, it definitely had an enormous effect. I mean, when I read the letter from Southwest University: "I kind of had the thought, 'If I get accepted, I'm definitely going here.' It kind of determined everything, in terms of where I am right now and where I live and everyone I know, kind of" (personal communication, March 26, 2010).

Stephanie had made a commitment early on not to get into debt for her education. She also did not want to be a financial burden to her parents with student loans. She further explained her reasoning for accepting the scholarship:

And it's kind of what's enabled me, like I said, the fear of debt, sort of. I mean, it's a huge relief to know that I can get a college education, which

has always been something I assumed I would do in my life, without having to worry about crushing loads of debt or anything like that.

And definitely to not have to worry about anything like that for my parents as well, which was a major concern for me, like, a major reason I took the scholarship. Because, even if I'm willing to take on all of the loans, which I'm not because it's scary, I don't want my parents to have to feel that burden too because, of course they would have helped me pay for a private school or even another state school if I didn't get a scholarship. I wouldn't want that for them. (personal communication, March 26, 2010)

With her mind pretty much made up, Stephanie moved forward and made plans to attend Southwest University. In the summer prior to her enrollment, Stephanie visited the Southwest University campus and was well impressed with the Honor's College. She recalled her initial feelings of the Honor's College:

And I came and visited. Definitely a huge pull of it was the honors program. And I just had a really positive experience. The people I dealt with at Honor's College, when I was applying and had questions, were so hands on, and it felt like a smaller community at such a huge school. (personal communication, March 26, 2010)

Gloria felt that above the scholarship amount, the Honor's College was what made her daughter's mind up to go to Southwest University.

While preparing to leave California and attend Southwest University, Stephanie was very nervous. She felt overwhelmed by all the changes that were going to happen, but at the same time she was confident in her ability to adapt because of her many exposures to university life. She settled in at Southwest University just fine. She made friends easily in the dorms. Gloria and her son drove Stephanie to school and stayed a few extra days to make sure that everything went well. Gloria did not have a favorable first impression of dorm life:

My son and I took her to move her into the dorms, and I was, um, it was the dumpiest, ugliest, most horrible dorm on campus. And I did not want to leave her there.

And I thought, “There’s been a terrible mistake.” She said, “Whatever you do, don’t make any trouble. Don’t say anything. Mom, it’s no big deal.”

She had been assigned to a different dorm, but when she got the assignment she said, “Well no, I wanted to be in the college dorm with the other Honors students.” So she said she wanted to be in the Honor’s dorm. (personal communication, April 6, 2010)

Stephanie’s confidence with her decision and a few positive interactions with some students on her floor put Gloria’s mind at ease. She took the back seat and became a support to her daughter. Gloria recalled those last few heartbreaking days:

So that was, you know, a little bit fine. So I tried to be very brave and not burst into tears and be happy about leaving her. And excited for her.

And it wasn’t until we drove away when my son offered to drive so that I could cry in the car and get it out of my system because he knew how overwhelmed I would be. And I said, “No, no, I’m not going to cry.” And then we started to drive through the desert, and I just cried for about 45 minutes. Not hysterically, but okay. (personal communication, April 6, 2010)

After Stephanie’s family left, she was all alone and began to feel a little bit of loneliness. She described her homesickness:

But I mean, I talk to them a lot. I mean, I missed home. Not as much as, I see a lot of other people who just went back home or even now they miss it so much. I’m happy here or whatever, but you know, I still have my moments of homesickness or whatever. (personal communication, March 26, 2010)

There were numerous benefits of the Honor’s College, but there was one aspect of the dorms that Stephanie found challenging:

And I feel like, maybe to be fair, the demographics of the Honors College, which I hate to say, but it might be true, but I mean, most of the people I know here are from definitely way more homogenous communities, which was shocking to me—mostly Caucasian. (personal communication, March 26, 2010)

As stated previously, Stephanie grew up in a very diverse area and had the privilege of living in Los Angeles County, which is an international hub. Over her life span, she had been finding her own racial identity, and she has settled on being considered mixed race or bi-racial. She described her feelings:

I mean, I feel bi-racial, but I mean, ultimately since race is a construct in the first place, you are how people perceive you. I have a White last name, but I'm not a White person. So I think ultimately if I had to pick a box or whatever, it's going to be Hispanic, specifically. I grew up with a fairly diverse group of friends.

Mostly White, but I had a lot of friends who were also half Hispanic or Asian, or half Asian half Hispanic, or whatever. So that was really nice. It didn't feel like that weird, I guess, to be bi-racial for the most part. I mean, most people were. But it wasn't a big deal to me growing up for the most part. And I think it's something that I've actually thought a lot about more recently. (personal communication, March 26, 2010)

In addition to her growing understanding of her racial identity, Stephanie took some time to explore what her passion and future career would be. Upon entering Southwest University, Stephanie believed she wanted to be a human rights attorney. However, with further consideration, she believed that was not the right profession. She recalled her thinking while pondering a new major:

And I had some really positive education experiences. At the time, I wasn't really sure what I wanted to study in or major in, so that was a huge—that kind of plagued me.

Like, I was always so concerned and like, “What am I doing? What am I studying? Why am I here? I need to figure out my life plan,” kind of. So that was something that worried me a lot, I guess. But

otherwise, I actually, yeah. It was a really positive experience. (personal communication, March 26, 2010)

During her first academic year, Stephanie did not do as well as she preferred. She was not engaged in most of her classes and was distracted by the burning question of a major.

My first semester, I definitely did not do that well. But since then, I've done a lot better. I definitely had a couple of classes, especially when I was doing. And I was just so bored by all of my pre-req classes. So unengaged. And I was like, "I don't want to do this." But I had an honors seminar I really loved, and now I love my art history classes. (personal communication, March 26, 2010)

Eventually, after much soul searching and a dip in her grade point average, Stephanie decided that art history would be her major. While she struggled academically, Stephanie did not discuss her struggles with her family. She didn't want them to think less of her. Stephanie detailed the dynamics of her conversations with her parents:

I mean, we don't, like I said earlier with my, I didn't really—I don't share specifics with them unless it's something I'm really passionate about or something I'm really struggling about.

So it wasn't something I came to them and I didn't really want them to know because I felt like an idiot for kind of messing up about it or whatever, so I just told myself, "You'll do so much better from now on." (personal communication, March 26, 2010)

In addition to her discrete manner in sharing information about her academic life, Stephanie was non-specific when it came to discussing her social life. She was not out of control in any way, but she did like to have fun. She explained her social life:

Well, I mean, a lot of my memories when I think of my first year is a lot of just kind of like sitting around in the dorm. Like, a lot of going next door to your neighbor and like, "Oh, let's watch a movie." Or it's 4:00 in the

morning and you walk across the hall and you're like, "Oh, let's go get pizza."

I really loved that experience of community living in the dorms. And I still live in the dorms, but it's different once you're not a freshman because that's when everyone wants to make friends. And now we have suites with living rooms, so it's not like everyone leaves their door open and you just go in and out.

So I'm really grateful for that experience because it's just so fun to be around all these young people all the time kind of living together. I loved that. (personal communication, March 26, 2010)

Stephanie had built a strong foundation with her mother prior to college and with this new phase in her life, her relationship with her mother has evolved. Gloria has become a sounding board for Stephanie. Their relationship has matured with the passing years. Stephanie described the admiration she has for her mother:

I don't feel like it's kind of, "I'm the parent this is what I'm telling you to do—I'm the child and this is what I need to tell you," sort of relationship. I feel like there's more of a mutual, I don't know—understanding maybe.

I mean that's not always the case. Obviously I got a speeding ticket and I was in a lot of trouble, you know what I mean? If I call them like, "Can you please send me \$200?" they're not psyched. And I'm financially dependent on them, and certainly emotionally dependent on them, too. But ultimately I feel like we have a really good relationship. It's not like a necessarily a parent-child. (personal communication, March 26, 2010)

Gloria and Stephanie communicate often. They do not speak daily, but they try to make an effort to connect frequently during the week. Gloria texts her daughter if she does not hear from her for a while, but that is not her preferred method. She wants to hear her daughter's voice. As Stephanie approaches another school year, their relationship will evolve as added pressures, stressors, and changes of locations will cause them to have to adapt and grow together.

Summary and Analysis of Narrative 4

Stephanie benefited from her mother being active in her education. Her mother was not only a classroom mom but took on a much more meaningful position in her school as a board member. Gloria was intentional in enrolling her children into the parent participation program even though she received criticism from her husband and mother-in-law. Stephanie was inducted to the college environment rather casually because her parents were involved with the university. She was no stranger to the university setting and always knew through her parents' example, indirect messages, that she would attend college.

Stephanie's first year of school included exploring her major, finding herself socially, and trying to balance her dependence on her family. She still remains emotionally and financially dependent on her family. During her first semester, Stephanie was academically vulnerable. She was not engaged in learning and did not do well. When she found her passion and a new major that better suited her, she was able to secure her GPA and maintain the scholarship.

Stephanie shows evidence that she has worked through her racial identity. She is bi-racial but recognizes the fact that because she looks Hispanic, she is often assumed to be Hispanic only. Her understanding of race being a construct helps her to understand and make meaning of others' assumptions about her race.

High-Income Scholar Analysis: Within Group Themes

All four narratives of high-income scholars and their parents were analyzed for common themes and the themes are presented by category and subcategory. The five major thematic categories are (a) academic progression, (b)

racial identity, (c) scholarship award, (d) early collegiate maturation, and (e) matriarchal/child relationship progression.

Academic progression. As a result of the topical life history approach of this study, the researcher inquired about the student's academic pattern over her life span. Some students detailed their upbringing, but the parents focused on their students' academic progression. Most of the student participants shared an early love for reading and were placed in critical thinking programs or "gifted programs" at various points in their K-12 education.

Early reading. Most of the participants showed an exceptional desire for reading at an early age. Their parents cultivated this preference and assisted their children with expanding their love for reading. In each narrative the student was exposed early to reading. It became a natural and fun exercise for them. A parent or guardian made it a point to take an interest in teaching them, and the students gravitated to reading at an early age.

Gifted programs. The schools these students attended provided a critical thinking environment for these "gifted kids." All of the high-income students attended public schools in high-income areas and benefited from academic tracking called "gifted programs."

Conversely, in two of the four high-income student stories, their gifted program experience was somewhat strained. Because she did not make the cut-off score, Angelica was placed in the POP program, which was a feeder program for the PACE program. Her mother, Dorothy, was approached by a teacher to place her daughter in the program anyway under the Hispanic category, which

allowed Angelica to have a lower score and still qualify for admittance to the program. Angelica was too young to understand the difference and merely tried again the next year and made the qualifying score. In Stephanie's case, the GATE program proved not to be as enriching as she and her mother thought it would be in comparison to the elementary school parent participation program in which she was previously enrolled. Although Stephanie and Angelica did not have a favorable experience with the gifted program at their schools, they continued their attendance.

Work ethic. All four students were described as hard working and self-motivated. However, one student worked independently and did not enjoy school. As high achieving students, Angelica and Gabrielle were engaged in school and had fun learning. The structure and experience of school was appealing to them, especially when courses were challenging. Leila, however, was different; she did not like school and sometimes did not do her best out of laziness. All of these high-income students showed success and struggle in their academic progression, which was amplified by the changes in environment in college.

Knowledge of PSAT. The PSAT/NMSQT when taken in the fall of the junior year of high school qualifies students for the National Merit Scholarship, National Achievement Scholarship, and the National Hispanic Recognition Program. Most of the students in the high income group had a slight idea about the test through their high school counselors or teachers.

Anti-climatic reaction to National Hispanic Award. However, upon receiving the news of the National Hispanic Award, all the students reported not

clearly understanding that a scholarship could be attached to the award. They often believed it to be some kind of certificate instead of an opportunity to fund their education. Through their friends or their own research, the students became aware of the funding available through some universities because of the National Hispanic Scholars distinction. Once they understood the monetary value of the award, the students were intrigued by the possibility of their undergraduate tuition being paid. The scholarship aspect of this program was unclear at best and took some initiative on the part of the students to contextualize its value.

Racial identity. The National Hispanic Scholars Award requires that a student be considered one-quarter Hispanic. In the high-income study sample, three of the students were half-Hispanic and half Caucasian, and one was full Hispanic. When it came to classifying themselves on the PSAT form, the bi-racial students were often confused or offended by having to categorize themselves into one box. In fact, on previous test, the students would often mark “other” as their racial identity.

Negative peer reactions. As a result of the students’ unclear racial identity, some of their peers criticized the award. Gabrielle received a negative comment from a high school friend. Gabrielle’s mother, Christine, was more upset than her daughter when her peers questioned the validity of the scholarship. Leila felt that people, in general, have a negative opinion of the race-based scholarship. In order to avoid the stigma she just calls herself a National Scholar. She recognizes that the National Hispanic Scholarship is a race-based scholarship,

but she doesn't want others to believe that she is less of a scholar. The benefit of the scholarship is far reaching and has a large influence on the scholar's decisions.

Scholarship Award. Southwest University's key recruiting factor for National Hispanic Scholars is the offer of nearly a complete all expenses paid scholarships for four years, which amounts to approximately \$92,000.

Influence of scholarship amount on college choice. The scholarship award amount is outlined in a letter sent to all National Hispanic Scholars. The letter effectively caught the attention of the perspective Southwest University students, including the high-income students. The high-income students based their decision to accept the scholarship on their desire not to burden their parents with their undergraduate expenses. All the students were excited about the scholarship opportunity and felt compelled to attend Southwest University.

Student employment. Even though the scholarship funded most of the cost of attendance, there is still unmet financial need. With the high-income scholars not being eligible for federal grants, they have must fund the balance of their education. All of the high income students are financially dependent on their parents for rent money and some bills that the scholarship does not cover. Most of them chose to work to help with some of their miscellaneous expenses and to add to savings. The students work either near or on the university campus.

Early Collegiate Maturation. The scholars' first year at Southwest University presented various adjustments related to family, social behavior, academic performance, and personal challenges. However, their first week was described as a time of hope and mystery about the future.

First impression. It is said that the first impression is the lasting impression. This does not seem to be accurate in the case of Southwest University. The first task for every freshman to complete when beginning college is to move into their apartment or dorm room. The Honors College, which houses the National Hispanic Scholars Program, provides all the scholars an opportunity to stay in the honors dormitories. On occasion, the first impression of these dorms was not favorable. The dorms were described as “old and musky” and viewed as racially homogenous.

One student, Leila, did not attend the main campus but attended a smaller satellite campus of the university. Within minutes of her arrival, she was rushed off in a school bus to an orientation session. She felt uncomfortable and disjointed.

Although, the students’ first impressions were not favorable, they persisted. While persisting, all of the students maintained an attitude of discovery. They all reported adjusting after the first week to university life.

Homesickness or separation anxiety. Some students had an easier time adjusting to the new changes of college life than other students. Homesickness or separation anxiety affected both the students and their parents. Gabrielle’s homesickness was the most severe case of all the high-income students. She suffered silently, however, and did not want to alert her mother of her melancholy condition. Most of the high income students admitted missing home but were able to focus and move on quickly.

Separation was difficult for both the students and their parents. The greater understanding of the benefit of the student living on their own, the easier it is both students and parents to persist and move forward through the temporarily difficult circumstance.

Social life. Southwest University, just like many other universities in the country, has a reputation for being a social hub for students. It is rumored that students attend this school just because of the social scene. The high-income National Hispanic Scholars enjoyed their freedoms but tended to be socially shy and maintain a small group of friends.

Academic adjustment. Although there was not much of a social adjustment for the students because they maintained their introverted habits, the academic adjustment was sometimes significant. The challenge was different for each of the four scholars. This was a salient topic of discussion because of the proceeding information regarding the student's academic progression.

Gabrielle's academic struggle was not apparent until the second semester and was amplified by a busy social life. She did not keep her academic challenges from her mother because she believed that she was doing her best considering the type of classes she took.

Stephanie's first semester was difficult because she was not happy with her classes. She was not engaged in learning. Stephanie did not tell her parents about her academic problems because she felt they were frivolous, and she knew she could do better.

Angelica had a heartbreaking time in some of her classes. She did not understand the curriculum and was not being taught in accordance with her learning style. She questioned her resolve.

Although her mother was often unapproachable in her life, Angelica decided to speak to her mother about her academic struggles. She was surprised by her mother's support.

Lastly, Leila did not do well academically because she put little effort into her courses. She had a habit of slacking off prior to entering college. This problem persisted through her first semester. Leila did not share her difficult academic times with her parents. She did, however, report her second semester grades because she did very well. Although, the scholars had different reasons, they all did, in fact, struggle. They experienced a shock to their intellectual identity and all made a commitment to improve.

Personal challenges. One of the scholars, Angelica, related personal challenges in her relationship with her mother. Her mother had always been an emotional tyrant. However, one instance in her freshman year she stood up for herself. Angelica's personal triumph with her relationship with her mother was a break through. After this event, Dorothy and Angelica were able to create a better relationship based on respect and understanding. This experience was traumatic but turned out to be life altering.

Matriarchal/child relationship progression. As a part of the study's research design, the scholars were allowed to choose the parent who they felt was most involved in their decision to attend college to join them in participating in

the study. All students chose their mother. Therefore, this study is positioned with a unique opportunity to highlight the matriarchal/child relationship progression. Both the students and their mothers reported how their relationships were impacted by direct and indirect messages related to college attendance.

Divorced parents and single mothers. Three of the four students experienced their parents divorcing, most often occurring in the students' younger years. All of the students of divorced parents lived with their mothers who had to begin or continue working to support their children. Each student talked in detail about her mother's involvement in her early education. Two of the students' mother's worked full time when they were in school. They reported that their mothers weren't directly involved in classrooms and could not always attend school functions, but they understood clearly that their mother were busy.

Indirect messages. The high-income students often received indirect messages from their parents. More than anything they learned about life through the examples of their mothers. Two of the students expressed very explicitly the way their mother's life touched them and created a template for them to follow. Stephanie and Leila's mothers examples of returning to school was a powerful indirect message to these young women. They understood the importance of education, which stayed with them.

Direct messages. Whereas examples of education attainment were poignant in the lives of the scholars, the words of wisdom and conversations they had with their parents also made significant impressions. These talks were often described like a "voice in their head telling them to do well." The repetition of

the college attendance conversations as well as their parents' passion in delivering the direct messages made an impression on them.

Positioning. The student-parent narratives describe positioning, which, for the purpose of this study, is defined as the purposeful and deliberate acts that parents conduct in order to place their children in schools, environments, or situations that will increase their chances for success. Positioning is a *key* finding in this study and will be further explained in chapter six. The following excerpts highlight the principal of positioning in each of the scholars' lives.

First, Leila was placed in several different Catholic schools during her first years in school. She was tested as a gifted child but was placed in Catholic school to avoid possible tensions with Leila's cousins. Rachel positioned her daughter in the school that would help her have a healthy and safe environment.

Second, Stephanie's mother Gloria acted contrary to her husband and mother-in-law's preferences in order to ensure that her daughter attended the new parent participation school in a nearby town. This school was located in one of the most affluent areas of Los Angeles County. Gloria was not just a home room mom but served on the school's board of directors. She was convinced that this program was the best educational environment for her children.

Third, Gabrielle's mother Christine knew the importance of her daughter's Hispanic identity to her education. She made certain that both Gabrielle's birth certificate and her school records indicated that she was Hispanic.

Lastly, because she was a full-time working parent, Angelica's mother Dorothy utilized positioning as one of her main tactics to help her daughter. She

used various strategies to assist her daughter such as placing her in good schools, identifying unlikely allies, and fact finding.

Although Dorothy lived near the university, she carefully selected the elementary school her children attended because of its diverse student population. Because of her experiences overseas as a part of a military family, she valued diversity and wanted her children to be exposed to various cultures.

Dorothy found an unlikely ally in a cafeteria worker at her son's school. The cafeteria worker, a woman, turned out to be an invaluable source of information for Dorothy so she could position her children in the classrooms of the best teachers at the school.

Later on in high school, Dorothy transferred her daughter out of an academy because she was not being ranked with the rest of the school. Her daughter was, on paper, no longer a part of the academy but was taking all the academy courses. This special arrangement was made possible because of Dorothy's persistence.

Communication. As the student's mature and become more independent, their parents grow with them. Their relationship becomes more of a give and take rather than strictly parent-child interactions. An excellent example of a scholar whose relationship with her family changed over their lifetimes is Leila. She was a rebel in high school and disagreed with her parents' strict rules. However, Leila's disposition has changed and she appreciates her parents and enjoys a loving relationship with them.

Both Christine, Gabrielle's mother, and Gloria, Angelica's mother, found that their relationships with their daughters have grown to become characterized by mutual respect, with communication and listening at the center.

The student participants redefined their relationships with their parents during their early collegiate maturation. The parent-child relationships evolved from dependence to interdependence as the students became more autonomous (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

Summary of High-Income Findings

An examination of the student participants' academic progress from childhood through the early collegiate maturation revealed several similarities. First, the high-income students shared similar experiences related to early reading and enrollment in gifted education programs. Second, these students' parents carefully positioned their children into academically beneficial circumstances. Third, the students performed exceptionally well on the PSAT/NMSQT, which resulted in numerous scholarship offers. Lastly, the students and their parents described first-year college experience that involved challenges with maintaining GPAs and negotiating changes in family relationships. The experiences of the low-income National Hispanic Scholars who participated in this study are described in chapter five through the narratives of the students and their parents.

Chapter 5: Low-Income National Hispanic Scholars

“So many children—like people like my mom—they don’t even know about college at all. And it was like such stratification. Such a, I got so bitter about that. So upset by the way that things are. And the way that it’s—people are stratified in the way that they can’t—they don’t have the resources to mobilize themselves out of the position that they’re already in, which is, I think mobilization is education. But if you don’t have the resources to know that education is that resource, then you’re basically stuck in this perpetual cycle of poverty, basically. And I think it’s pretty sad.” (Phoenix, personal communication, December 17, 2009)

In this chapter, low-income National Hispanic Scholars narratives are presented. There are five participants in this category that self-identified, in their pre-screening questionnaire, as low income. The narratives are presented in alphabetical order according to their pseudonym: Clint, Julie, Marcy, Neil and Phoenix. The all-girls Catholic school that two of the girls attended was also given the pseudonym of Maricopa. Following each narrative is the researcher’s summary and analysis including relevant connections to the literature. Lastly, the chapter concludes with an analysis of the themes found within the five participant interviews.

Narrative 5: Scholar Clint and Parent Sophia

Clint is approximately 5’8.” He has light skin, brown eyes, and a spiky hair style. He is very eloquent in his speech and presents a mature countenance. One could mistake him to be older than his actual age. His mother, Sophia, was 18 years old when she gave birth to Clint. His father was Sophia’s high school sweetheart. After his birth, Clint’s dad was in his life for a short while, but for the most part, Sophia raised him with her mother’s help. Sophia was a determined young woman and attended junior college right after high school and then

relocated with Clint so she could attend the major university in the state for a year. She had no help with raising her son and the stress of single parenting became overwhelming, so she moved back home to live with her mother. At an early age, Sophia noticed that her son was intelligent.

I think that though, like, I've always just told him that he had to go to college. It was never an option not to go to college. And early on, I think that when he was about four or five, I kind of knew that he was going to be a really good student, or just he just had an old soul.

And it's funny, but I do tell him that when he was younger I just knew exactly what kind of person he would be. He's a really good person. And he was always—what's the word? He's really self motivated. And he was always challenging himself. And K through 8 he excelled. (Sophia, personal communication, March 22, 2010)

In order to cultivate her son's intellectual abilities, Sophia placed Clint into a private elementary school. This school was an art-based school, and music was a normal part of the routine. Clint loves classical music because of his early exposure to the arts.

When Clint was just six years old, Sophia met her current husband. They were married one year later, and Clint's stepfather became the new father figure in his life. Shortly after their marriage, the family moved to a city that was just beginning to develop in their area. The city where Clint grew up developed so rapidly that his school district boundaries changed every year. Clint recalled the changes were near constant:

And because of that, schools were being built every other year. And you know teachers were being hired. Brand-new teachers, every single year. So every school that I went to from second, third grade on, even until graduating high school, I went to a different one. With new teachers, new buildings, new everything. (personal communication, March 22, 2010)

The constant change caused some stress for young Clint. In addition to adapting to annual changes in grade levels, he had to become familiar with new buildings, classrooms, administration, and myriad other changes associated with new schools. Eventually, he adapted to the changes because of his love for learning.

Clint remembers, by name, the teachers who impacted him in his early development. His first-grade teacher was one in particular that he felt helped him develop his ability to use reason and logic.

Yeah, so when she talked to us it was eye-to-eye. And she was very intimidating for a little old lady. But she always pushed you and she would never let you get off the hook. So any time she would ask you a question, you could say, “Well, I don’t know.” And she would be like, “Okay.” And she’ll tell you one thing, and then she’ll ask you the question again. And she would just keep doing that until you finally get it. (personal communication, March 22, 2010)

This daily exercise in class caused Clint to cry on occasion, but it affected his mindset toward learning. He is grateful for this teacher helping him develop a skill for justifying his answers. “But you know, because of that, always having to justify myself and having to come up with stuff, I don’t know, viable stuff out of nowhere” (personal communication, March 22, 2010)

In the sixth grade, Clint had another innovative teacher who inspired him. He remembers her general presence as masculine and somewhat intimidating. He recalled an experience in Ms. Andrews’s classroom:

But her kind of like, she taught—that was; I think it was sixth grade because that’s when we started to do the switching of classes. Like, we went to one class for math. And she taught social studies. Social studies was something that I hated. I hate it, but she made it interesting.

And she was always very flexible and very—she was very, what’s the word? She made learning fun. Like, she always did projects. She did what I now know is what’s called project-based learning.

Like, you know, the first week we had to, the first week was about ancient Egypt. So she made us make little scale models of Egypt with the pyramids and stuff. (personal communication, March 22, 2010)

Clint was most impressed by teachers who did not use traditional methods of teaching. He appreciated teachers who challenged him to think differently.

His interest in thinking outside the box was cultivated in his elementary school years through the Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) program.

However, his experience in GATE was less than desirable and was not what he thought it would be. Clint expressed his disappointment when recalling a particular story:

The way I picture gifted education, you think the kids get pulled out and they go and they work on the same material, but advanced. The GATE pull-out program for me, when I was a little kid even at the time I was like, “This is a joke.”

I mean, it was mentally stimulating, yes, but I mean, I didn’t learn anything. It was like word puzzles. Like it was, like there would be a projected picture on the board, and it would be a box. And it would have the word “think” somewhere outside. And you had to get what the picture was saying. And it would be “think outside the box.” You know that kind of thing.

And there was like, she had a multitude of the puzzles. She had a multitude of puzzles. And I don’t know if you’ve seen it, but they’re like, they’re pieces of metal that have been shaped into different forms. And you have to like play with them to unlink them. And it’s all. (personal communication, March 22, 2010)

The GATE program was not a good fit for Clint because it was more focused on IQ development than offering advanced curriculum. He decided to remain in GATE until he was old enough to attend middle school. Middle school always

brought certain challenges, but for Clint he learned a life-long lesson from his seventh-grade teacher who was disabled. He explained the impact Mrs. Ruth had on his perspective of life:

Because Mrs. Ruth, her mindset was, she was actually handicapped. She was in a wheelchair. And you know, she wasn't born that way, she was in an accident.

But she always told us, "If I can bounce back and achieve being a teacher," because I can't remember what she did beforehand, but she said that she was in a car accident and her husband died, unfortunately. But she bounced back from that, went and got another degree, a teaching degree, and then started teaching us. And she watched us succeed. You know, she's teaching us, and we're succeeding. (personal communication, March 22, 2010)

Her life story touched Clint's life. He knew from then on that there was nothing that he could not do and nothing he could not overcome.

In high school, Clint continued to challenge himself and signed up for honor's classes. He wanted to take all the honor's courses offered at his newly opened school. He felt that he wanted to set himself apart from his peers and do his very best while in high school. His mother's words of wisdom helped him to make that decision.

High school, like I said, I did the honors courses just because I didn't want to be put in with the rest of everybody else. And all throughout my college, or, not college. I'm so used to saying that. And all throughout my middle school and high school career, my mom was saying, "Clint, you always have to do your best. Clint, you always have to succeed because if you don't, you're going to wind up this or that—on the street or you're not going to do anything with your life." (Clint, personal communication, March 22, 2010)

He was intrinsically motivated by his desire to do his best as well as extrinsically motivated by those around him who expected him to do well. At the completion

of his freshmen year, Clint signed up for the school's first International Baccalaureate (IB) program.

But anyway, that's—my school was the first one in [our city] to do it. We were like the pilot program. And what it was, it's a two-year program your junior and your senior year where you're in the class with the same 30 people. The same 30 students. And you go to each class, and you're learning all of this really intense material because the curriculum is mandated by the International Baccalaureate Society in Sweden, of all places. It it's an internationally recognized program.

You know, you take it, you study and at the end of the two years, you take these four-day-long exams where you get college credit, and if you do well, you get a shiny certificate with your name on it. And it's recognized every year. (Clint, personal communication, March 22, 2010)

The IB courses were extremely rigorous. It was explained to him prior to entering the program that the courses would be similar to honors and AP courses, but in his opinion they were more difficult. Clint recounted the mental strain he had while in the IB program.

Personally, me, I mean, everybody, it didn't matter who you were. Everybody in the program had at least two mental breakdowns from how hard this stuff was. Personally, me, I did it three times. I got a bad grade on one of the oral essays that we sent out to Sweden, it came back; I got a 3 out of 20.

Despite the difficult curriculum in high school, Clint was number one in his graduating class. Unfortunately, his school did not recognize valedictorians, but regardless, his family was very proud of him. Sophia recalled her proud feelings:

Clint graduated number one. We were so proud of him. We had a nice celebration for him with all of our family. My side of the family, like, my mother, she doesn't really oh, she's proud of me and proud of him, but she just went to high school.

For her, she doesn't really; I want to say it's a totally different generation and thought process because for her, college wasn't that big of

a deal. And she didn't encourage me to go. Or she didn't say, you know, I don't know. I was pretty motivated. I just motivated myself to do it. But for her, and like my aunts and things, they don't really kind of understand it. (personal communication, March 22, 2010)

Clint's mother was a major contributor in helping him understand the importance of college. Though Sophia came from a family that did not value education as highly as she did, she always encouraged her son to succeed. Life's circumstances interfered in her getting her education sooner and pursuing her dream career. Her example and constant charge to her son helped him set a tone for his life. Clint spoke of his mother's sacrifice:

But I mean, as far as her specific involvement, I know for a fact that she always has wanted to be a teacher. She got her degree about the same time I moved out. She finished her degree about the same time we moved to Western Arizona. In English. She got her master's in English. And her plan was to become an English teacher. Unfortunately, due to this and that and things that I wasn't aware of and still are not when I was a little kid, that just didn't happen. (personal communication, March 22, 2010)

Sophia believes that his extended family's struggles could have been a motivating factor for her son. She highlighted a life circumstance of one of Clint's cousins:

And one thing that has been very interesting is he has a cousin who is the same age that went to the same high school. And just their different personalities, you can definitely see the different roads that they've taken. So I think that he's kind of kept that in the back of his mind. You know, "If I don't take advantage of this opportunity and do well." (personal communication, March 22, 2010)

Most importantly, Clint wanted to succeed in school for himself. He knew that as a child his accomplishments were based on meeting the expectations set by his teachers and his mother, but as he grew, things changed. Clint recalled the

moment he realized that the focus of learning could be to satisfy him and not others:

You know, “Why am I learning this way? Well, because I want to be intelligent. I don’t want to be normal.” So that’s kind of where—why I did so well. And now I realize that in that class, why I did so well with everything else was because subconsciously I realized, “You know you’re going to do something with your life. And in order to do that, you have to do what everyone else says. To make sure you go to school, take care of yourself, take care of your family around you.” (personal communication, March 22, 2010)

Academics were a priority for Clint in high school, but it was not his only strength. Early in his high school career, he discovered a love for theater. He was not an athletic type of person, though he tried that once in his sophomore year, Clint was dedicated to the arts. He recounted his first experience with acting:

So for the first year, Mrs. G, she introduced us to theater. The basics. Set design. What acting is versus what theater is. And because of that, you know, because I was in the class, she was for her dissertation, her end of the year project she had to actually produce a play. And because, you know, my grades were so good and I actually got the content, or at least acted like I did, she asked me and my friend Michael to star in the play. So the play was called “The Master Board.” It’s a little hundred-page play. And you know it was ten weeks of rehearsal, and then the actual performance. And it was fun.

But that experience kind of got me into wanting to do theater. But the only thing that you had to do to be in theater was to keep, you know, she had three levels. In order to go to theater, you had to at least obviously have a C in all of your classes. But she took it a step further and demanded that you at least get B’s and A’s in all of your classes, which, for me it was [motivating]. (personal communication, March 22, 2010)

Theater was a place to express himself. He was a natural at it and soon developed such a talent that he was a lead role in a play that a friend of his created that warranted national acclaim. His love for theater, and the GPA requirement

attached to it, was yet another motivator for Clint to do well in school. He thrived on meeting and exceeding expectations.

In his junior year, Clint had a math teacher who emphasized standardized testing. She offered extra credit for her students to take the PSAT, and so Clint took that opportunity. He also had other motivations. He wanted to take the test so he could know if he could do well on it and maybe even how successful he would be in college. As typical on the test, Clint had to fill in the racial identity box. He marked Hispanic but this was only by happenstance. Clint explained that he would sometimes choose the “other” box: “Yeah. I either put Hispanic or, depending on my mood, if I’m feeling moody, I’ll put ‘other’ because I don’t know what I am. I’m a mutt” (personal communication, March 22, 2010).

Coming to terms with his racial identity has been a process for Clint most of his life. He grew up in a majority Hispanic area, and he didn’t think he was Hispanic. He recounted the story:

When I was a little kid, no when I was like five, I’m like, “I’m not Hispanic” because where I went to school, it was, strangely enough, all Hispanic kids. But they were all like darker. They were all dark. Like, they were actually Hispanic kids, and I was White.

So when I was a little kid, I didn’t understand. So I always called myself White. When people would say “You’re Hispanic,” I would get mad at them. And I didn’t know until later on in life that, you know, if your parent is one thing and your other parent is another thing, you can kind of be in between. The whole genealogy thing. (personal communication, March 22, 2010)

Skin color caused a younger Clint to believe he was White, not Hispanic. His mother and grandmother are Hispanic by culture. They speak Spanish and cook Mexican cuisine on a daily basis. As he matured, Clint decided that he

could be both Mexican and White. When people ask his ethnicity, he answers Hispanic and Irish. But now he identifies more with Hispanic than Irish because he lives with his grandmother and speaks Spanish on a daily bases.

Reflecting on the day of his PSAT, Clint was very glad that he chose Hispanic as his racial identity. As a result of his outstanding PSAT score, he was awarded the National Hispanic Scholars Award, a scholarship of which he did not know much about. He remembered the day that he got word of the scholarship.

“Congratulations you got the scholarship. It will take into effect once you graduate and maintain your GPA.” I’m like, “Oh, cool. That will help pay for college.” It wasn’t until I graduated high school and I got another letter saying how much it would be for it. I contacted Southwest University and realized that it paid for school entirely, thank God; otherwise I wouldn’t be able to go because there really wasn’t any other scholarship that I qualified for. (personal communication, March 22, 2010)

Clint did not truly understand the significance of the National Hispanic Scholarship until Southwest University informed him of his scholarship amount. The amount of the award, in of itself, was astounding and a relief for Clint and his family. Most of his life, money had been limited, and the scholarship provided a way for him to attend college. Clint described his family finances:

And then once my mom and Mike got married, when he had a stable job and earned enough, we actually bought a small little house. And then a year or two after they got married, my sister was born. And then a year or two after she was born, Nick was—so again, money got real tight. And it continued that way due to the early economy and everything else, and the whole growing family thing until just about a couple of years ago. Probably like a year before I started college. To where, like I said, we wanted to save money for me to go to college and fix the car, that kind of thing. But we just couldn’t. (personal communication, March 22, 2010)

Sophia and her husband Mike were stressed prior to Clint receiving the scholarship. They tried to conceal their worry from Clint. They helped Clint

apply for financial aid in case he didn't receive any scholarships. Sophia explained her interaction with her son while applying for financial aid.

And applied for financial aid, which was our big thing. "Why don't you do this? And maybe you'll get something, I don't know." We weren't sure really until the very end. He was so laid back.

But I'm wondering if he decided to go to a state school because, like, my husband and I. Like, the truth is that we live paycheck to paycheck. (personal communication, March 22, 2010)

Clint's decision to go to Southwest University was a surprise to his mother. She felt that maybe the financial strain on the family associated with him attending an out-of-state school would cause Clint to choose a less expensive in-state school. She thought he wanted to attend other schools. She did not know the reason behind her son's choice.

And I don't know, it's kind of weird. But he didn't apply to many schools. I think he, I think he may have considered one or two. And I never told him, "Oh, you know, we can't afford to send you to school." Anything. I never said anything like that.

But he ended up just, I don't really know. I think that he just—he didn't—which was kind of, I kind of thought was so weird because he could have really gone anywhere and done anything. (personal communication, March 22, 2010)

Clint did base his decision to attend Southwest University on the scholarship money offered by the university. He had plans to attend a school in the northern region because of its theater department and friends who were attending there. He detailed his train of thought when choosing between Southwest University and the other school:

So you know, Southwest University was the one that said, "Come on, we'll recognize all of your, you know, all of your IB stuff. We'll give you this money." Which, the money that they were going to give me turned out to be the National Hispanic Scholarship money. And they said, you

know, “Come take a tour of our campus.” Okay. Fine. (personal communication, March 22, 2010)

Clint believes that, without the scholarship, he would not have been able to attend college, let alone his first choice school. His family was making other plans for him with financial aid, but the Southwest University scholarship offer ensured that he did not have to worry as much. Though the scholarship funds most costs associated with his education, he still has unfinanced needs. Sophia provided perspective on the amount of the scholarship: “But you know, he’s very lucky that the scholarship is paying for his tuition, his books, and everything. But he still works two jobs. Because, you know [other expenses]” .

Clint considered entering Southwest University with sophomore status because of the IB courses he passed. Therefore, he enrolled in sophomore and junior level courses during his first year. His academic load was heavy and he experienced a shock.

So, I enrolled there, and my first semester was kind of like the wake-up call. I mean, I thought I had it hard in IB. It was like, “Oh, yeah, these are college courses.” No.

I was so wound up getting my very first C in my entire life in Calc 2. That was very disheartening. But I’ve, because of all my past experiences, just kind of built itself to where I’ve been self-driven. So I’ve always just been like, “It’s college, I’ll do my work.” (personal communication, March 22, 2010)

The difference between Clint’s high school “college courses” and his actual college courses was great and almost insurmountable. He received the worst grade of his entire life and that shook him. In his frustration, Clint called his mother for some advice.

But she [his mother Sophia] explained to me the same thing that I just said. That there are many different factors about life, especially in school. You can take the same class with three different teachers and get three different grades. So it's kind of my mindset now.

And my whole thing about teaching is that you're in class and you're learning. And you're there to learn. Not to, you know, work your butt off and make sure that, you know that you can do a thousand problems in one night. You're there to learn. And the way you learn is by paying attention and doing your personal best. And as long as you keep giving your best, you're doing fine. Even if someone says you're failing, the only person you have to impress is yourself. (Clint, personal communication, March 22, 2010)

Although Clint internalizes his successes and failures, ultimately, he is accepting of outcomes when he knows he has done his best. At the time of his interview, Clint was doing exceptionally well in college, maintaining a 3.88 GPA because he is willing to commit the effort required to be academically successful.

Clint remains focused on what is important to him—academics and family. He chose not to stay in the dorms on campus but instead lives with his grandmother. This decision was not based on finances but rather life style preferences. He tends to be a very neat person who likes things in a certain order. In his opinion, and his mother's opinion, dorm life would have been too difficult for him. Clint clarified his reasons for not choosing the dorm:

I opted not to because it's better to be around family than to be around complete strangers. Plus, I don't really think I could do well with the whole dorm experience because I'm a very territorial person, and anal retentive, this has to go here. (personal communication, March 22, 2010)

Sophia was astonished that her son chose not to live in the dorms.

However, she feels that not living in the dorms was best for him.

But we were just kind of, this kind of worked out for him. And he's able to, my mom lives alone. So he's able to kind of take care of her as well because he provides her with companionship. He takes her and does

errands with her and stuff like that. And he's able to still be close enough to school that it's a ten minute drive. So it helps him with the overhead of the rent of an apartment. (personal communication, March 22, 2010)

Clint helps his grandmother with errands and provides care for her as well. This task is not overwhelming for him but is something he would probably do anyway. He is content with having a small social circle in college. Clint has never been the overly concerned with a busy social life and with his concentration on his school work and his fiancé, he finds only room for a few friends.

I'm enjoying college entirely. I don't—I'm not the average college student where like, you go, you party. I don't really care about that stuff. I'm, how did my mom explain it? She made the joke, "You're getting old at the age of 20."

That's all that I do. I go to school and I go to work. And I don't really—I don't really have too much extracurricular activities. (personal communication, March 22, 2010)

Clint and his fiancé are both on scholarships and focused on the same goal of maintaining their scholarships. They push each other everyday to get through their exhaustion.

Sophia knows the strain that Clint is under and she stays in contact with him.

Because there are some weeks he gets really stressed out with work and school and just putting in the long hours. I'll say, "Okay, maybe just work one part-time job. Scatter your scholarship money a little bit out." But with insurance and daily expenses, it seems like a whole lot of money at first, but it's not. (personal communication, March 22, 2010)

His schedule is very booked. He feels the stress building every day as his time becomes increasingly limited. His body and mind are getting worn down but he is learning to adapt.

I need a vacation bad. But between my car insurance and all of my other bills, phone bill and stuff like that, I'm helping pay for food here and then rent at my grandmas. Like I said, she lives by herself and she buys all of the groceries. I do pay her a little bit, even though she doesn't want me to. I do feel like I'm over-committed. Unfortunately, it's been getting worse progressively. Because you give 110 percent of yourself over the course of the week. You can do that for a little while, but then it starts to wear thin. (personal communication, March 22, 2010)

Clint is learning to give himself a break and not take his studies so seriously. He knows his limits and is staying within a more comfortable range.

Sophia talks to her son weekly and has always had a special connection to him. She loves his character, and he was always been a low-maintenance child. She has cherished the time that he has been in her life. Clint plans on completing his teaching degree and moving out of state. He wants to have the experience of being away from home. His travel plans make Sophia quite sad as she expressed her opinion with strain in her face:

I'm going to be so sad when he finishes college. And he says he does want to move out of state. And I'm going to miss him. I miss him when he's gone Monday through Thursday. I'm like, "Oh, I'm going to miss you every week." I'm like, "Please don't leave."

Really, like, if he moves out of state, I'll be so sad. But I understand that he has to grow and experience life. (personal communication, March 22, 2010)

Clint was inspired by wonderful teachers through his childhood and he will go on to teach high school. He will encourage others like he was encouraged and have a positive impact on the lives of the students he teaches.

Summary and Analysis of Narrative 5

Clint's mother Sophia was young when she gave birth to Clint, but she remained steadfast in her goal to complete her education. Though she took a

break because of life circumstances, mostly financial, she completed her degree and by so doing set a tremendous example for her son. By sharing words of encouragement and emphasizing his unsuccessful familial peers, she has helped him understand the importance of an education. Sophia used both direct and indirect messages to affect her son's choice to pursue of higher education.

Sophia positioned her son from an early age by making certain that he attended an art-centered preschool. She wanted him to appreciate music; therefore, like other students in the study, Clint's gained an expansive exposure to the world. He was a recognized, early in life, as gifted child who excelled when challenged. Specific teachers in his life helped shape him as a student, something he may be more acutely aware of because of his choice of professional—teaching.

As a result of the National Hispanic Scholarship, Clint was able to attend college. He believed he would not have been able to attend college without the scholarship. However, Sophia shared in her interview that she was aware of financial aid opportunities that would have helped fund his college education. The scholarship funds were pivotal to Clint's decision to attend Southwest University, even though he had other higher education plans.

Clint's first year of college had unique stresses because of his close proximity to his family. He lived with his grandmother and would often help her run errands. He was also expected to visit his family at home more often than he would have if he had attended an out-of-state university; he traveled home every weekend because of a job he held in his home town. The stress of his very packed schedule was apparent to his mother, and she was concerned for him.

He struggled academically the first semester because of the level of difficulty of some of the courses. Clint believed he was well prepared for college upon exiting high school but was mistaken. His goal is to maintain his scholarship, and he is doing that although he occasionally questions his ability to do so.

Clint's story is one of persistence because of the amount of stress he has with two jobs and full-time work schedule. Alva (1993) would categorize him as academically resilient. Gandára's (2005) position, however, would also be correct because although Clint has overcome these challenges thus far, he is still vulnerable and his academic success is fragile.

Narrative 6: Scholar Julie and Parent Colleen

Julie, a small stature young woman with tan skin and dark medium length hair, was somewhat apprehensive about the interview and concise in her speech. She grew up in Maple Valley, Washington since she was six months old. Her home town is described as picturesque and beautiful. Her mother and father met in Hawaii as Julie's mother Colleen was a flight attendant based in that area. At around five years of age, Julie's parents separated and soon thereafter divorced. Her father moved to a nearby town, and she visited him on weekends. Julie relayed that her parents' divorce did not affect her as much as it could have:

I was five when they split up. I think it was official when I was six because I turned six the summer of 1996, so that's when it was. I think it would have been harder if I was older, actually because when you're young, you don't, like, you know what's going on, but you don't really know. Like, you don't take it as emotionally hard. (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Adapting to the divorce was easy for Julie. She has a difficult time even remembering what it was like to have her parents married. Colleen reflected on the time frame of the divorce with a slightly different perspective:

Um, when she was, it's interesting, when we first told the kids, Alicia, she would have been 11, 12 at the time. And Alicia was real noncommittal. Julie verbally was just like, "No. How could you be getting a divorce, you guys don't fight. You don't argue."

There was never an inkling for her. I think the rug got pulled out from under her feet in a sense because there wasn't any strife that she could see. But we weren't, we weren't in the open about what was going on. (personal communication, April 15, 2010)

Although Julie did verbalize her disappointment about her parents' divorce, according to her mother, she still developed healthy relationships with both of them. Colleen and her ex-husband have no malice for one another and continue to communicate well.

As a young girl, Julie was the "shy, quiet, smart kid" (Colleen, personal communication, April 15, 2010). Colleen believed her daughter was sensitive and extremely observant for a child.

You know, Julie I felt was, she was astute. She was very observant of people, and, like, for example, I took her to Mexico one time, and there was a shop, I'm going to call it a shop. Like, a stall. You know a table with trinkets. You know nail polish and jewelry, bangles, earrings, all kinds of five-and-dime kind of stuff.

And the parents were working this table. And Julie was watching their children play with a hacky sack ball. Whereas my other daughter was busy looking at the jewelry, you know. And Julie was so engrossed with the kids. And she said, "Look how happy they are. They don't have anything really to play with, but look how happy they are." (Colleen, personal communication, April 15, 2010)

She was a humanitarian and was very sensitive to the world around her.

She was constantly curious about her environment and, on occasion, committed

social faux pas because of her childlike inhibitions. Colleen detailed one embarrassing example:

She also didn't have a lot of inhibitions, to a certain extent. If you had a beautiful piece of jewelry on, she'd ask you how much it was. You know what I mean? She just was just right there like, "How old are you?" (Colleen, personal communication, April 15, 2010)

Julie was an avid reader, even as a young girl. She often found herself reading for hours. Julie explained her early love for reading:

I don't know. I mean, I always liked to read. I think that's probably it because from when I was, from when I was able to read, I loved to read. I would just sit and read like, all day. And when I was little. And books that were older than my age level, kind of. So I think that helped. (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Colleen introduced her daughter to reading at an early age, and she was impressed by her auditory memory with books.

I do remember one thing from when she was a toddler. We had a book on Thumbelina. And it was one of these pop-up books. Maybe only five or six pages. Julie knew it verbatim. I maybe read the book to her three or four times and she could recite the entire thing. (personal communication, April 15, 2010)

Reading was the catalyst in developing Julie's vivid imagination in elementary school. Colleen was so impressed by her daughter's ability to create stories that were so detailed and fantastic. Colleen explained:

Oh, yeah. And came up with these stories. She wrote a poem I think, I don't know if it was her first-grade teacher, she wanted her to publish it. You know, she said, "You should send it."

And then another teacher encouraged her with writing. She wrote these fabulous stories that were so imaginative. I mean something like Avatar, where there was this family that lived under the sea. It was, and there was a bomb that went off. Now, if she heard it she'd be like, "Oh, Mom I can't believe you said that." But for her age at the time, it was really impressive. (personal communication, April 15, 2010)

Julie was strong in language art and English throughout her academic career. She was placed in a revolving-door program in which she was taken out of her regular class instruction and placed in another school for instruction in these subjects.

Julie was reserved in school and at home when it came to asking for help. She preferred to work by herself without her parents' intervention.

I still don't really like asking for help that much. I don't know why. I know that, like, math was always hard for me. Sometimes asking for help would just frustrate me even more. Like, when they were trying to explain, I still didn't get it. (Julie, personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Her shy nature was a problem for her in the classroom. She was often too timid even with simple requests. Colleen recalled how her shyness inhibited her in the classroom:

So when she needed something in school, she wouldn't ask. She wouldn't ask the teacher, you know. If she had to go to the bathroom, she wouldn't ask the teacher. I said, "No honey, you have to ask the teacher." I go, "That's important." (personal communication, April 15, 2010)

Throughout middle and high school Julie continued to do well. She enrolled in AP courses in English and literature, followed by a college writing course. She always stayed a few years ahead of her peers. She was an excellent student but would not categorize herself as an overachiever like her sister. Julie clarified her meaning behind not being an over achiever:

So in that way, I don't think of myself as—because I know I'm not the extreme. Like, I do the best I can, and I feel like I'm lucky that I'm naturally responsible for my work. You know, I do a descent job. But I don't push myself where I'm like killing myself, you know? Because that's not important to me. (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Julie was always responsible for her own work, and she did very well. This was a huge relief for Colleen, and she trusted her daughter.

Julie, I never had to tell her to do her homework, she always managed her time really well when there was some kind of project that was due, there was never, maybe once I helped her with something, and it was more artistic.

She tried taking what is it? Pottery in school. It's the easy A. Almost failed because she just doesn't have the ability. Her hands are really, sort of petite and small. And she doesn't have the ability to shape and move things. Things would fall over; I mean, oh, my goodness. She had a horrible time in that class. (Colleen, personal communication, April 15, 2010)

Although Julie was not a skilled potter, she was an excellent dancer, growing up mastering the techniques of hip hop and belly dancing. She was the president of the hip hop dance club. Her dancing first began as an opportunity for Julie to become more confident as a child but later developed into a talent.

During high school, Julie's relationship with her mother was strained because of Colleen's personal relationship with another woman. Julie was not open with most of her friends about her mother's lesbian relationship because she believed they would criticize her and she could lose friends.

Yeah. I thought they were friends [her mother and her girlfriend]. Like, it's fine for me because I'm fine with that, but a lot of other people aren't. So that was, that was hard. Yeah. Like, I told a few, like my close friends, but I didn't want too many people to know because I didn't want people talking about me. And I also didn't want to lose friends because I know my sister lost a friend. (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Julie was not affected by her mother's lesbian relationship until she was in high school. Julie began to have a difficult time with her mother's girlfriend, which added stress.

Yeah, it wasn't, yeah, the fact that my mom was with a woman, that didn't bother me at all. But who she was with, like, when I was little we got along, but during my high school years, we didn't really get along. (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Julie did not lash out because of her frustrations at home. She never participated in immature and dangerous behavior. In fact, her opinion of kids who got out of control was negative. Colleen recounted a conversation with her daughter about the kids in school:

But she saw, she had a friend that was on the basketball team. And this friend, they had been friends since they were fairly young. And she saw this friend also have friends that were on the basketball team that were partiers. And Julie said, "It's so stupid." Like, "Why are they doing that?"

She couldn't understand why do drugs? You know, it just didn't make—she goes, "You're here to learn. You know, why would you want to mess that up?" So she just had a very straight and narrow sort of thought process when she was going into high school. She hung out with, I want to say almost nerdy kids. You know, there was a gal in the band that she was friends with. She didn't really care if they were popular or not. That wasn't important to her. (personal communication, April 15, 2010)

Julie remained true to herself and focused on her grades and learning. In her junior year, she studied for the PSAT. She happened upon a study manual and decided to study the week before she took the exam. She did not know the seriousness of the exam—that her score would alter the course of her life. Julie explained her routine the day of the test,

I guess. I mean, it depends on the test. I remember that test, the PSAT. I did a practice test for it like, the week before. So I did study, you know. I did the practice test. But I didn't, like, stress out about it the night before. Like, I remember I had a sleep-over with my friend the night before. And then we got up and got Starbucks and took the test together.

And it's just weird, because I think back on that day a lot. And it's like, little did I know that it was going to alter the course of events. (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Her relaxed attitude toward the test made it even more of a surprise when she was rewarded for her score. Most importantly on that day, Julie made a decision; she

marked Hispanic on the PSAT racial identity box. It seems peculiar that this would be a momentous choice for Julie, but considering that she is only one quarter Hispanic, she often chose to mark Caucasian on her forms. She discussed the significance of that box:

Yeah. So when I was little I remember just being like, “I don’t know what to mark.” But usually I would just mark Caucasian. But I can’t remember when I started marking Hispanic.

I think it was when I was a little older and I think I realized, “Because I’m like, a quarter, that kind of makes me, I can identify myself with that if I choose to.” (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Colleen was surprised that her daughter marked Hispanic on the PSAT form. She recalled her feelings of astonishment because of the long history of Julie choosing to be White on tests of that nature

Out of that. And just the fact that she had written down, that she had checked Hispanic, really. Because my other daughter checked White. She never checked Hispanic. And then subsequently maybe Julie said that to you when Julie got that scholarship, Alicia was just so upset because she did not get that kind of scholarship. (Colleen, personal communication, April 15, 2010)

Julie’s racial identity has been something that has changed over time as evidenced by her conscious decision to identify as Hispanic on her PSAT form. Oftentimes, because of the area Julie grew up in and her cultural upbringing, she was often assumed to be White. Regarding people’s opinion of her ethnicity, she explained that most people didn’t know she was Hispanic.

Like, since I’m a mixture of different things, I’ve gotten, like, I’ve gotten, “Are you Egyptian?” “Are you,” mostly I get, “Are you Mexican?” Or, like, I’ve gotten lots of different things. But some people do think I’m just a tan White person” (personal communication, March 25, 2010).

Julie has blended in so well with her peers that even when receiving the scholarship, there were some questions as to whether she was even eligible. Her counselor took it upon herself to check Julie's racial identity upon hearing that she received the National Hispanic Scholars Award. Julie recalled that moment in detail:

I remember when I found out that, not when I found out about the scholarship, but when I found out that I was a National Hispanic Scholar, I was a junior in high school and I got pulled out of my AP Lit class because the counselor, like, told me that I had gotten that. And she wanted to verify that I was at least one-quarter Hispanic. And I was like, "Yeah, I'm a quarter." (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

As soon as Julie came home from school that day, she told her mother about the award and the counselor's inquiry about her racial identify.

Well, she came home from school and she was like, "Mom, this woman came to my classroom and wanted me to come out of the classroom. You know, she wanted to meet me. And she told me that it was because of my scoring on the PSAT, she says that I was going to be a Hispanic Scholar. And she wanted to make sure that I was Hispanic." And she goes, "As soon as I walked out of the classroom, she goes, 'oh, yeah. Okay.' Just by looking at her. 'Oh, yeah. Okay. I see. Yeah. You are. You're Hispanic.'" (Colleen, personal communication, April 15, 2010)

Although it came as a shock that Julie self-identified as Hispanic on the PSAT form, Colleen was very happy and excited for her daughter. Unfortunately, not everyone in Julie's life was quite as excited. Julie's sister felt a little bit of envy. Colleen recounted the family discussion about Julie's award:

Yeah. She's [Julie's sister Alicia] like, "Oh, I think Julie just played the system." Right? She got this benefit, and she felt like she was left out. And I said, "Honey, I never told you that you had to say White or you had to say Hispanic or anything." She goes, "Well, that's not enough Hispanic." I go, "Evidently it is. It's enough to be a quarter Hispanic." (personal communication, April 15, 2010)

In addition to her sister's criticism, Julie received some negative comments from her peers. Julie recalled one such uncomfortable experience:

I guess. Because I know one of my friends, like, was kind of like, I don't know. She would kind of rant about affirmative action. And she would be like, "No offense, like, I know you've benefited from it and I'm happy for you, but I don't think its right."

And I remember being like, "Hey, I scored good on the test. It wasn't just because I'm Hispanic." But at the same time I knew that it wasn't just my score. (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Julie stood up to her peers, but their comments had a negative impact on her. She always kind of felt like it was second-rate award. She did not believe that it was entirely affirmative action but that her scores were also a factor. She struggled with her racial identity, but it was her mother who always believed that Julie was connected to her Hispanic roots since she was a child. Colleen recalled a specific family vacation in Mexico when Julie was a child:

I feel really—you know, so Julie, she connected I think maybe through our trips to Mexico, she connected somehow with that culture. And I had both girls go to school there for a couple of days. But she [Julie] got it in the Spanish classroom, and her Spanish was dubious. I mean, that was pretty funny. But they really enjoyed it. And they enjoyed it so much they said, "Can we go back again tomorrow?" But I was like, "Sure, yeah. Okay let's do that." And it was really different for them. They had dirt floors, bars on the windows but no glass, you know, desks but no utensils. No books, no computers, nothing. The teacher didn't show up one day so they had to cancel class. That was school in this little town in Mexico. But Julie, she embraced it. And I think that through that connection somehow she claimed that as her heritage. Yeah. She claimed it. (personal communication, April 15, 2010)

Julie had a connection to her Hispanic heritage, but she still felt uneasy about being only a quarter Hispanic. She explained it best in these simple terms:

I guess I sort of, um, I have that feeling of not be White enough and not being Hispanic enough because I don't speak the language, but I don't look White. So yeah, I think that's why like it's important to me so I can

identify more with one or the other. (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Julie's school was supportive of her. They were excited to have the first National Hispanic Scholar recipient at the school. She was announced in an awards ceremony and recognized in front of her whole student body.

After Julie received notice that she was a National Hispanic Scholar, letters from universities all over the country began to arrive. Julie had her heart on Hawaii Pacific University because of the beach, weather, and atmosphere.

Colleen recalled the excitement of that time:

Well Julie was funny because she would just pile all the envelopes. She wouldn't even open them after a while. She'd just pile them. And it was up to her. I said, "You have to update the Excel spreadsheet. You know, you have to put the information in."

And I kept a, I gave her file folders to put different things in. And people kept responding, but I said, "Throw out the envelopes. Keep one so that we have the address and you know whatever." And then we narrowed it down. She really wanted to go to Hawaii. She wanted to go to Honolulu to one of the schools there. They weren't offering her a scholarship. But it's because she loves Hawaii. She loves the tropical lifestyle and all of that. (personal communication, April 15, 2010)

To Julie, not receiving any award money to go to Hawaii Pacific was disheartening, but she had already prepared herself because of the fact that there were limited funds available from her dad. Her dad, as a part of the divorce decree, was responsible for her college education. Julie and her dad spoke candidly about his financial situation.

Because I remember before I got the scholarship my dad was like, "You know, honey, I'm sorry. I know your sister—I wish I could give you the opportunity that your sister had to go anywhere she wanted, but I really don't have as much money. And it would, like, you're probably going to have to go to an in-state school to save money." So obviously I wasn't

going to throw a fit and be like, "No, I'm going out of state." (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

She was understanding of her father's financial limitations, but she still was a bit disappointed. She was reluctant to say that she sacrificed, but, in a way, she feels she did. Colleen and Julie moved forward and examined every school for what they were offering. Colleen encouraged Julie to look carefully at what the offers entailed: "And I said, 'You need to do a little research' because some of them were just a year, some of them were just a certain amount. Yeah. They were from all over. All over." (personal communication, April 15, 2010)

Ultimately, Julie decided to apply to six schools—University of Washington because it was a state school; University of San Francisco because of a small scholarship; DePaul University in Chicago because she has family there; and the University of Arizona, University of Nebraska, and Southwest University because they were offering her the National Hispanic Scholarship. The decision came down to University of Arizona and Southwest University because she was not willing to go to a university in a cold region of the country. Julie did a campus visit of both University of Arizona and Southwest University. It happened that she got terribly sick while participating in the University of Arizona overnight scholar program and so it somewhat deterred her from going to that school, but in the end, she explained that Southwest University just felt like a better fit for her.

Julie became content with her decision to attend Southwest University but it was for mostly financial reasons that she enrolled. She explained:

Even with coming here, like, the main reason I came here—I mean, I visited Southwest University and I liked it okay, but I wasn't like, oh, this is my dream school. I came because of the scholarship. And I came so that my dad and I wouldn't be in debt. And to help him since it's so expensive. So, you know, I don't want to say I sacrificed, but in a way I kind of did. (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

The scholarship affected the course of Julie's life, and she is grateful for it.

Julie explained her epiphany:

So then it affected just everything that's happened in my life, really in the past couple of years. You know, because if I hadn't have come here, obviously everything, my life would be totally different. My friends, what I'm involved in. (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Julie's father took an active role in helping her prepare for college. He had attended college and knew the type of things that she needed. He was very excited to help her, and her mother was happy for her but allowed her to do things on her own. Julie described her parents' dynamics in her preparation for college:

He went to college, my mom didn't. Not that she was any less of an advocate of going to college because she, you know, encouraged me to go. But I think he was really—just the way my dad is. You know, getting books here, like, you know, search for whatever.

You know, like, he got really into it, whereas my mom was like, "I trust you to figure it out on your own." (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Arriving on campus was full of new experiences for Julie. She moved into the honors dorms and had her first roommate. She is shy so she didn't really warm up to her roommate. She was also a bit homesick because she had a boyfriend over the summer who stayed behind in Washington. She recalled her feelings about her freshmen year:

The only thing that was hard was that I was in a relationship with a guy who lives in Seattle, like, who went to my high school. So that was hard because I felt like I wasn't totally here. Like, I was kind of somewhere

else a lot of the time so, because I missed him and I missed my friends, because I've stayed really close with my friends from back home. (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Julie's family was also missing her very much. Her father, in particular, had a difficult time letting go of his daughter. She often laughs about the first week she was away and her father's reaction:

Well, when you said first week I remember, well, there was just like a funny story that my sister and I laugh about because my dad, he's really sweet. He means really well, but sometimes my sister and I are just like, "Ah." You know, because my first week of freshman year he called me like, every day. Just like, "Hey. Just calling to check in." "Hi, Dad." And then finally I got irritated. And I was like, "Ah, you know, you don't need to call me every day." So then he got the hint and quit calling every day. (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Although she was homesick, Julie managed to do fairly well in school during her freshman year. She had one difficult class, an upper-level Spanish class that took her by surprise. She was always pretty good at Spanish in high school and when taking the language exam, she tested into a junior-level Spanish class. She was excited to complete her language requirement so she enrolled in the class. This was a mistake. She recounted her impression of the class:

It [Spanish] was really easy for me and I enjoyed it in high school. So I took the test, the online test, and I got placed into 313 or higher, so I did 314 because it fit with my schedule. And I was the only freshman in there. It was my first semester. So I was like, "Oh, my God. Shit. This is hard." (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Julie completed the class with extreme effort and was happy to receive the final grade of a C. As a result of this grade, her first semester GPA was a little bit lower, but she made up for it, making the Dean's List in the following semester.

Julie's inner drive to do well is what helps her continue to do well in her studies. Colleen believes that her daughter is capable of fulfilling her dreams.

You know, I think it's a real big deal that Julie can pull it off and get the grades that she gets. And I told her that, well, actually she told me, she wants to strive to be the best that she can be through her college years because she feels like it's her job. (Colleen, personal communication, April 15, 2010)

Her mother and father are constant supporters in her life. She talks to them weekly and is building a stronger relationship with her mother. Julie described her maturing relationship with her mother:

Well yeah, there's a certain line that I won't cross. But yeah, this year like I said, we've become much closer. Like, I've opened up to her more about personal things and so yeah, we can talk about almost anything—not quite everything.

You know, like things that are really personal that you just don't really tell your mom about. But I mean, I have divulged a lot that I wouldn't have dreamed of doing before.

And I think it's because since we're not living together now, it's just made it better because we've always had a good relationship, I think. But now that we're not living together, it's less "I need you to give me a ride here." Like, "Did you wash the dishes," or something like that.

And I know I can tell her things as almost an adult. And we can be more like friends because it's not like she's, it's not like she can do anything. It's not like she can ground me or anything. (personal communication, March 25, 2010)

Julie's open communication with Colleen is a major development in their relationship. Throughout her life, Julie has always been resistant to share a lot of things. Colleen shared her perspective:

No, you know, she didn't understand how my older daughter could share certain things about her life with me. And she goes, "Oh, I'll never be that way."

Julie is beginning to share more things. Her first year in college she was a little bit more resistant. But she has opened up quite a bit. And I can say that it's not necessarily a mother-daughter relationship solely anymore—that she actually seeks my advice. (personal communication, April 15, 2010)

As Julie matures, Colleen tries to give her the space she needs to grow. She encourages her to get involved in school and to experience new things.

You know, I rebelled from that whole, you know, force sort of—so I have to encourage Julie at this age to explore and do whatever she wants to do to be a full individual so she knows who she is and can contribute to the world what she wants to contribute. I think Julie is going to be extremely successful. (Colleen, personal communication, April 15, 2010)

Julie and Colleen understand one another and their relationship continues to change and mature. As Julie begins to open up to her mother, Colleen is then able to build a lasting and equal relationship with her daughter.

Summary and Analysis of Narrative 6

Like many of the other scholar participants, Julie exhibited an early love of reading. She expresses emotional depth and she feels great empathy for the world around her. Interestingly, Julie and her mother did not classify her as a gifted student like the other participants, but they agree that she possesses an exceptional imagination and writing ability. Therefore, Colleen focused on her daughter's social nature and was purposeful in placing her in situations that would help her become less introverted.

Julie also lived in a typical, yet not-so-typical, family circumstance. Her parents were divorced and regular visitations were maintained with her caring father. However, less ordinary was the fact that her mother was involved in a lesbian relationship. Her mother's relationship did not bother her, but the person her mother chose made her high school years somewhat of a challenge. Julie kept her mother's sexual orientation to herself and did not share it openly with her friends.

In her first year, Julie did have difficult courses including Spanish and had added pressure because of a long-distance relationship with her boyfriend from home. Despite her academic and personal challenges, she maintained a consistent academic performance across semesters perhaps as a result of her lifetime development of good study habits. In terms of the literature, Julie's story would be consistent with Gándara (2005) category of "academically fragile."

Julie's relationship with her mother during the first year of college was somewhat strained. Colleen gave Julie space to develop in the college setting. Eventually, Julie made her way back to a healthier and stronger communication with Colleen.

Narrative 7: Scholar Marcy and Parent Otilia

Only five foot tall, Marcy's family lovingly calls her "Shorty." With dark eyes, dark hair, and olive skin tone. Her large slightly downward shaped eyes highlight her contagious smile. She seems happy about the world and her place in it. Her energy feels like a girl who is becoming a woman, almost as if she is younger than her age. She mentioned that she feels she has been naïve most of her life and somewhat oblivious. Minimal with the details, she was able to concisely discuss things of importance to her, such as disappointments and tensions in her life.

Her mother, Otilia, is a passionate woman who underestimates her intelligence. She is small in stature and has a loving face. An obviously hard working and concerned mother, Otilia shows in her expression her pride and worry for her daughter. Otilia had a profound influence on her daughter's life

development as she taught her to become an avid reader and was a presence in her classroom. She prides herself on teaching her daughter the right way to do things. Otilia is what can be considered a “fact finder.” She was the one who inquired about her daughter’s schools and wanted to position her in the right environment.

A “naturally smart” student, Marcy was recognized as a gifted child at an early age. She was inquisitive and as early as two years old was asking the question “But, for why?” because she wanted to know more deeply about the world around her. Otilia taught her daughter to read early and was very picky with her instruction. She made sure her daughter correctly learned things. She also instilled in her daughter the discipline to do homework first before play.

Otilia described her daughter’s early reading obsession:

She was her second-grade teacher, really sweet lady, I remember her name was Ms. Betsy. Marcy was the first one to accomplish 200 books within I guess a month or two....So that made me feel good because like, “Wow. I’m teaching my kids to read at such an early age.” (personal communication, December 18, 2009)

Marcy, obviously a competitive child and eager to please her teachers, was the “star” student to almost all of her teachers. When asked about special teachers in her academic life, she could not recall a specific story, but interestingly enough when discussing the teachers who did not praise her or treat her special, she remembered with clarity a specific grade-school teacher:

I’m not too sure whether or not I was entirely fond of her. Like, she was a teacher, so she was automatically a good person, and she was like, okay, but I remember one time being in class and telling her ‘cause like I, I was a really ambitious child, so one day I got the idea that I wanted to learn everything in the world. And so one day I went up to tell my teacher that, I think, probably expecting support from that, and she was just kind of like, “Okay.” I guess that’s when I realized it was kind of a dismissive

topic, like, “Okay, you do that,” type of thing. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Although when describing this event, she did not describe the shock and disappointment of this moment, it became clear that it affected her and set a pattern for her academic life. This pattern of excelling and then slacking off when no one is looking is something that she continues experience through her collegiate career. This behavior can also be attributed to bad study skills that were developed at a young age because of her early exhibitions of intelligence.

She was bored in school and often had to teach herself. Marcy recalled her struggle with not feeling challenged with math: “I do remember math though and not feeling really satisfied with that at all because I ended up—because I’ve always been, I guess—a little bit ahead of the game in math” (personal communication, December 17, 2009). In middle school, Marcy was placed in the gifted program, and she felt that it was more interactive and thought provoking. However, she was still frustrated with not being challenged in school. Marcy found a way to get herself into an academically challenging environment. One of her older peers visited her middle school to present a recruitment seminar for students, and, according to her father, Marcy listened intently.

Consequently, Marcy’s desire to attend Maricopa sent Otilia on a fact finding mission to see how she could get her daughter into the school. Otilia recalled her experience:

Actually because I work for the diocese, I learned at the time that there were a lot of moms and parents there that had their kids going to Catholic school plus high school, the Catholic high school. And I thought, “Okay, well I know this one lady that her daughter,” Marcy was just a freshman

when her daughter was a senior. So I'm thinking, "Okay," and I go, "Hey, you know, can you give me some input? How do I go about to apply? Who do I go to? Who do I talk to, you know, some info, give me some insights," and she helped a lot because she said her daughter went through all four years and she gave me a lot of information about who to go to. (personal communication, December 18, 2009)

Otilia felt that her work to get her daughter into Maricopa was lucky because she knew someone who had a daughter who had previously attended the school.

However, Otilia's personality is such that if she did not have that contact, she would have found another way to pursue her daughter's enrollment in the school. She is persistent, and she expressed a great love and support for her daughter.

Marcy ultimately went to a prestigious all-girls Catholic high school, Maricopa, where she was challenged quite a bit. As a result of attending public schools for her elementary and middle school years, she felt that she was behind and spent many hours on homework. She often stayed up studying until one or two o'clock in the morning.

Marcy's character was defined in these challenges, according to her mother. She described her late hour studying with intense emotion and strain. She was concerned for their daughter's well being and knew that the consistent late-night studying and lack of sleep could not be good for her body. Otilia recalled asking Marcy about how she exactly got through the day with such little sleep. Marcy answered her mother, "Oh once in a while—I don't know. I just made it through" (personal communication, December 17, 2009).

Marcy loves a challenge. She rises to the occasion when things are difficult; however, when things are easy or tend to get more manageable, Marcy

slacks off. In high school, she went through one such period. Marcy recounted this story:

And then junior and or senior year, I had an advisor named Ms. Derner. She was pretty cool; she got on top of me. 'Cause I guess in a way I tend to slide off a bit in high school, so she kind of got on my case in terms of stepping up with my school work. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

As a result of this counselor's discussion with Marcy, she decided to do well. Marcy did work hard in school, but she believes that she never really developed the time organization skill necessary for academic success at the college level.

I kept up my GPA and stuff, but so, and then I think freshman year and sophomore year those habits of just like not studying or not feeling like I needed to study and then when I realized that I did need to study not knowing how to—not really knowing how to organize my time. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

In her junior year, she took the PSAT because that was just another standardized test that she needed to take. Going into the exam, Marcy was detached from the importance of the test. She explained that she had a history of doing well on standardized tests and that she was confident she would do well.

Yeah 'cause I remember like every year we would take some standardized tests. Like, you take something freshman year, something sophomore year, and I think it might have been junior year they took the PSAT. Like I don't study for those, like I never really thought to. I didn't know that people studied for them, so I just kinda—it was just like, a thing because I'd always scored really, really high on standardized tests and stuff. So it was just kind of a thing where I would go and I would take the test and I would be done with it. And that was that. I didn't know I would be getting a scholarship from it. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Though seemingly an overly confident student, Marcy has had a long history of people praising her abilities. She knows certain things about her academic abilities, and she is confident in those things.

In her senior year, Marcy had a lot of tense moments centered on her lack of choice related to college selection. It was assumed by her peers that “Well, you’re going to go to Harvard when you get older” (personal communication, December 17, 2009). Her peers not only had that expectation for her, but she had that expectation for herself. She was inspired by a peer mentor who was accepted to Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). She felt that she wanted to go to a place just as prestigious.

She knew little about the college application process. Her parents did not attend college. Her mother was very emotional when expressing pride in her daughter not only for attending college but for being the first in her family to attend. Otilia held back tears while explaining:

And I have to say, um, she’s the first in my family to go to college. It’s like wow. You know, my side of the family she’s the first. So that’s why I come from a big family. I have three brothers and three sisters and my sisters are always telling her, “Hey Marcy you’re the first one. We’re very proud of you. We’re very proud of you.” (personal communication, December 18, 2009)

As a result of her parent’s not having any knowledge of the college application process, Marcy sought assistance from her school counselors and peers.

Yeah the advisors, they were really helpful with that. Like they made sure every single student got in their application process and started to come to us junior year. That way by the time first semester was over, or really close to that time, we were like finished with our application process with every girl in school. Like they just made sure. Like, they were really on

top of things with that in terms of helping us. So I guess that was one of the things. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Maricopa and the counselors were invaluable to Marcy in her college application process. However, her college choice was made based on another set of circumstances.

Marcy has not had an easy life; financial difficulties plagued her family most of her life. Her financial status has emotionally impacted her and her parents and affected Marcy academically. In her senior year, while her peers were researching the colleges and deciding where to attend, Marcy was disengaged.

I was never really in that place or position to be able to go visit colleges, so I never really thought too much about exactly where I wanted to go or why you choose the college that you do, aside from the prestige and what I've heard. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

As a result of her high score on the PSAT, Marcy received the National Hispanic Scholarship. She began receiving scholarship letters from colleges in her junior year but dismissed all of them except Southwest University. When speaking about the reasoning behind her dismissing other schools, she explained:

Um, either junior or senior year. Junior year was when I started to realize that I wouldn't be, and senior year was the time that I decided, that I decided that I wasn't going to. I wasn't—not—I wasn't happy about it. But, 'cause I truthfully didn't really want to come to Southwest University at first. But, 'cause it wasn't like, prestigious in my eyes. Um, yeah. So I just applied to Southwest University. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Marcy's decision to apply only to Southwest University was based mainly on finances. Marcy explained that she was persuaded by her parents:

I think one of the biggest things was the financial reasons. Just thinking like, how would I be able to support myself. Like, I didn't really think

about that stuff, but my parents kind of brought it up in a way. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Marcy regretted her financial circumstances, and her parents felt the gravity of having to tell their daughter that she could not attend any university but would have to attend a school that was most economical.

Her parents' financial circumstance was difficult because of job uncertainty but also because they had taken out equity on their home to pay for Marcy's private education. Marcy discussed her parents' sacrifice:

I know Maricopa cost a lot of money, like I think that—that may have been one of the things that caused us to, like, I guess finances have just kind of always been a struggle, but I didn't worry too much about it.

But I guess Maricopa—having to pay that much money and stuff may have been part of the cause. Like, I'm not blaming myself or anything, but just like, it may have been part of the reason that they were struggling as much as they did. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Marcy was correct, there was no blame placed on her. Otilia expressed that they felt her private education was an important investment. With their financial options tapped out, the scholarship came as a blessing to them. The initial reaction of the scholarship was a tremendous relief for her mother. The sacrifice made for Marcy's education was apparent. There was a deep sense of love and support that existed in that monetary obligation. As a result of the scholarship, Marcy was able to attend a university, maybe not the one she wanted, but at least her parents would not have to be burdened again. Marcy recently became well aware of the impact the scholarship had in her life:

Right now, I'm—well, very recently learning or just like, just now learning how important it is that I got the scholarship. But it was just kind of a thing that I guess I was taking advantage of in a way because it was a thing I had. I had the scholarship. I had the thing that went along with it—I had the money; it was helping me get through college without having to make my parents pay anything at all, pretty much, like, more and more I'm becoming more and more grateful for it. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

This recent gratitude was a direct result of her having to appeal for her scholarship during the fall semester of her sophomore year because of her inability to keep up the GPA requirement. Marcy discussed having experienced the scare of almost losing her scholarship:

Um, deciding that I'm finally tired of not doing good in classes, not being the top student, not getting—'cause like I've had to appeal for my scholarship this semester. So it was just the continual progression of just realizing, okay, well I know I could have done this if I wanted to. But I just chose not to because, I guess, I eventually became lazy or something like that. It was just like a general progression of things. Um, but I really don't know. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Marcy was tactful with her explanation to her parents about her academic failures: “Like, ‘Oh, well this class is hard,’ or, ‘Oops, I didn’t go to this class today,’ but I don’t try to— usually I don’t try to make things seem too bad” (personal communication, December 17, 2009). Marcy told her parents her struggles and kept the conversation open ended so that she could get a words of encouragement.

“You better get on top of your schoolwork,” like when I tell them, “Oh, I didn’t do good at this class.” Well, okay it’s where I want to hear like, “You could do better in your schoolwork,” then like, I’m not really sure how to explain that. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Otilia understood that Marcy needed to keep a certain GPA to maintain her scholarship, but they were aware that their daughter was endangering her

scholarship. She often reminded her, generally, to keep up her grades to meet the requirements of the scholarship. Otilia recalled telling her daughter to keep up her grades:

Um, I think it's helped her a lot. Yeah, because I can tell. Like we remind her and I go, "Remember babe, if you fail, I mean, if you fail, you know it's like, that's it. You're not going to have it. So the only thing we ask is just please keep your grade up. Keep your grade up. And you keep this because other than that, it's going to be hard. It's going to be hard."

And now and then we do reminders, well you know, "without this scholarship it's going to be hard, but then how are you going to do it because it's going to be hard not just on you, but on us." Because it was kind of hard for us, too, while she was going to Maricopa, you know to do the tuition and everything to do it. (personal communication, December 18, 2009)

Otilia was putting needed pressure on her daughter. Her understanding was that her daughter needed her worrying eye on occasion to do well.

In addition to the pressure to keep her grades up that she received from her mother, Marcy also had a rather embarrassing but enlightening experience with her roommate: "And then I remember her asking me the question like why am I not going to school because I slacked off a lot—a lot—a lot this semester and last semester" (personal communication, December 17, 2009). This roommate reminded her of who she was academically. They were very similar in a lot of ways, including their high school GPAs, personality, and major. Marcy clearly recognized her academic mistakes when she compared herself to her friend:

Um, yeah, so it was just kind of like I disappointed myself, just kinda, I guess kinda the comparison factor, which I guess I kind of always did, like not in a downgrading or a degrading way but just like, to keep myself up there I guess. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Often in Marcy's life, peers influenced her decisions. She looked to them as examples, and having a roommate as an example of the kind of academic person she wanted to become was helpful to her.

Marcy explained that not only did her bad study habits contribute to her inability to perform well; she also believed that family financial difficulties and social changes affected her. She became preoccupied with the stress at home.

At home. Yeah. Just like, just a lot of financial struggles and just kind of seeing how that put stress on the family, I guess in a way, and so I wasn't really too happy with that.

Well I had known about it because I know, I had kind of known about it just—I think they would tell me about it or just like—they're typical little comments where you're eventually able to get an estimation of everything. So, just kind of like little comments here and there like well, just like with bills etc, etc.

Just like seeing like wow, and then just kinda thinking like maybe I shouldn't do this because maybe I should just like not ask them for money because they're already—just like little stuff like that. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Though Otilia did not discuss the family financial situation openly with Marcy, she understood that things were stressful at home. She was torn with her worries about her academics and worries about home. Marcy took a proactive approach in handling her finances well so that she did not have to ask for much money from her parents. She lived on a strict budget, which caused her mother to be proud and impressed.

Socially, Marcy was somewhat isolated during her freshmen year. She spent most of her nights staying at a friend's dorm room because she did not know her roommate. She felt that her naïve character in high school caused some problems for her in college.

As I said, I was very oblivious up until like college, like, really, really oblivious. So just seeing how some people I guess aren't as nice as I thought because my general mindset was well, you're friends with everyone, why can't you be friends with everyone? So like everyone was my friend, I didn't understand the phrase acquaintance. It was just like, I know you, and you're my friend now. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

During her first year of college, Marcy experienced varying levels of friendship and learned how to pick best friends more carefully. Marcy's social life is quiet. She keeps to her few close friends and when in a large group, she tends to not say much and just listen. Otilia appreciates her daughter's reserved nature.

Yeah, just like as far as like—she makes me laugh because she's one of those she goes freshman year, she hung out with her two friends that she went to school with, and they were like the Three Musketeers; they were always together. If they went to any like social events like parties and stuff, they took care of each other. And that's what I liked about that.

Marcy wasn't the partying type. She's one that's like, "No, not me. That's not for me; that's not for me." And they go to places to where they didn't have the parties. She likes the, like the concerts. She likes to hang out at the movies and the mall and stuff like that. (personal communication, December 18, 2009)

Although Marcy has an active, yet small, social life and a busy class schedule with a major in engineering, she still communicates regularly with her parents, especially her mother. Otilia text messages Marcy every other day and asks her how she is doing. Otilia would not have it any other way.

Marcy's transition to college was very emotional for Otilia. She expressed with tears in her eyes her experience:

And so I just remember being off of work because I knew it was like I can't go back to work because I'm going to be thinking about her, thinking about Marcy. Marcy's by herself now.

And so we moved her and I was trying not to—I'm very emotional, and I'm thinking, "Okay, we're moving her stuff back and forth, back forth;" I'm looking at my husband thinking like, "Okay, guys are strong. They don't show no feelings; they don't show no emotions." Like I'm sorry, I'm a mom. This is my baby. She is going to college.

And um, so finally she moved in and we said our goodbyes and I'm like, "Wow, this is it. My baby is here in college." But instead of thinking it as like, you know, "Don't take it so hard. It's just Tempe. She's going to be coming home," and I thought, "No, this is it. This is her life now. She's up and grown up." It's like, wow. You know, from the day she was born, the first day of school, now this. Like, wow. It was hard. It was hard.

I went home and I cried and I'm thinking like, "Wow, Shorty's gone now. My Shorty's gone." (personal communication, December 18, 2009)

Otilia felt empty inside. She knew that things would never be the same. She knew that Marcy's visits home would become less and less, even though she only lived 20 minutes away, and the visit have become less frequent. Otilia explained, "But I guess, I ,as a mom, it's kind of hard because it's kind of hard to let go of your kids" (personal communication, December 18, 2009). Otilia gets excited when her daughter comes home because Marcy is taking time away from her life to visit them.

Summary and Analysis of Narrative 7

Marcy was tested as gifted at an earlier age like most of the participants in the study. She had a desire to excel and often focused on the feedback of her teachers to evaluate her success. Marcy knew that she was an excellent student and would become frustrated when teachers treated her less than exceptional. School was easy for Marcy, and she never really needed to work hard until she self-selected into a prestigious all-girls Catholic school.

Otilia, Marcy's mother, made certain that her daughter was accepted into the Catholic school. Marcy had a strong desire to attend the school, and Otilia worked to find a way of meeting her daughter's desire. In high school, the influence of Marcy's high school counselor was apparent when the counselor challenged Marcy to improve her academic performance. She had not developed strong study habits because the school was so easy for her, and as a result, she was not putting forth her best effort.

Marcy's parents' poverty influenced the indirect messages given to Marcy to continue her education and succeed. They also constantly imparted encouraging words and practical advice to their daughter. In addition, they made sacrifices for Marcy to attend the Catholic school of her choice, even to the point of using the equity in their home to pay for it.

The scholarship provided financial relief for Marcy's parents. Otilia is acutely aware of the value of the scholarship and reminded their daughter to keep the scholarship. Although Marcy was cognizant of the effects her poor academic performance may have, she continued to underperform until she jeopardized her scholarship. Eventually, a peer who questioned Marcy's work ethic served as a catalyst for her to do better in college. She was embarrassed and began a serious assessment of her academic performance.

Marcy struggled in her first year at Southwest University and did not engage in campus activities. She lived in the dorms but was not placed in the honors dorms that housed the other National Hispanic Scholars. She matured

over the first year in her decisions related to friendships, learning to develop acquaintances as well as loyal friends.

Narrative 8: Scholar Neil and Parent Mira

Wearing a ball cap, tee-shirt and jeans when we met for his interview, Neil portrayed the image of the typical American kid. He is 5' 8", dark skinned with big medium-brown eyes and full lips. An eloquent and a good communicator, Neil explained his childhood. He grew up in San Antonio, though his father was in the military, so they moved often for a brief time. He attended schools in Texas since the first grade.

His mother Mira, a native of Panama is a deeply religious person. She considers her children to be miracles and blessings. Mira recalls reading the Bible very loudly to Neil when he was still in her womb. She named after one of the biblical prophets.

As a gifted child, his school pulled him out of traditional classes to participate in a Talented and Gifted (TAG) program, although initially his parents were skeptical of the program. Yet, they knew their son was different and special, so they allowed him to participate in the TAG program. Neil's development in the TAG program factored prominently in the development of his intellectual abilities later in life.

Elementary was pretty standard. I think maybe it was fourth or fifth grade they implemented this system called TAG, which was like for the kind of students with gifted minds. TAG stands for Talented and Gifted, or something like that. So it was like a class that I would do like once a week or something with other kids that qualified for it. It was a lot of fun... which was cool, thought provoking things. (Neil, personal communication, March 26, 2010)

Although Neil remembered with fondness the fun times in TAG, his mother, Mira recalled a time when her encouragement helped him to stay with it.

And he was in the TAG class, and one day he said, “Mom, I don’t want to be in the TAG class anymore. I want to be a normal kid.” I said, “Mijo, think about it, go to school, and you tell me later what you think about that.” “I will, but I don’t want to go back.” Because they want to—they put a lot of pressure on him to be the best student. And he came back from school and he said, “I want to stay.” He talked to somebody in the school, a teacher or something. (personal communication, March 30, 2010)

Admittedly, courses began to get more difficult for Neil. He was reading very difficult books and taking advanced courses in middle school. He felt that elementary school was fun and games, but then middle school became work for him. Although challenging, Neil stuck with the TAG program through the years.

Neil’s family life was strained during his late elementary years. Mira and Neil’s father met in Panama while he was stationed there in the military. Mira was in college at the time but decided to discontinue her studies so she could move to the United States with her husband. Mira and Neil’s father were divorced when Neil was nine or ten years old. The divorce was a difficult time for Neil, but it did not affect him as much as one would expect or as much as it affected his older sister.

I mean, when it first happened, it kind of feels like there’s a battle just to see who wins. But as time progressed, it was just whenever. There was no...So, I mean, my sister was five years older than me. I feel like she took it harder than me because she could grasp it. But I really couldn’t process exactly what was going on.

And, you know, just for example, when we were going over to my dad’s for those weekends, my sister would always throw a fit because she didn’t want to go. And I would be thrilled because I guess to go with my dad, you know. So at the time, I don’t think I really processed it all.

So it wasn't crazy, it was just, "Oh, my dad's going to be around less." So I wouldn't say that any really huge, lasting effect on anything. Just because I was too young to think about it. (personal communication, March 26, 2010)

The divorce was a significant event in Neil's life. For a few years, his father was completely out of the lives of his children. As a result, Mira became the primary caregiver for Neil and his sister. Mira stated "He missed a lot of those years. But I was there. And he was very close to me, I guess because his dad left. He was thinking maybe, "My mom is the only thing that I have." (personal communication, March 30, 2010).

Living in his mother's home the majority of the time, Neil attended schools in that area. In middle school, Mira began sending her daughter to private school. As a cafeteria manager in a public middle school, Mira did not like the influences in the public school setting. Neil recalled her decision, one year later, to send him to private school as well:

Well my mom works at a school, at a public school in the area. And, um, I went to elementary school there. You know, fifth grade. And then six grade at the middle school she worked at. But then after that, my mom decided she wanted to switch me to private school. So it wasn't necessarily in the area. It wasn't a drive or anything, but it was a school that she transferred my sister the year before me. (personal communication, March 26, 2010)

Mira remembered Neil's entrance into the private school a little differently than her son:

Because my daughter graduated in 11th and 12th grade, and she graduated from a different school, but it was a Christian academy, too. But then when she was in the 12th grade, he asked me, he said, "Mom, I want to go to the same school that Natalie's in." I don't want to pay for that. I just don't make a lot of money. And I said, "Neil, I don't have the money." I said, "Let's go over there. Let me pray, and then I'll get the application."

And we did everything. And he did, he went, they both went to the same school.” (personal communication, March 30, 2010)

Regardless of the differences in their stories, Neil and Mira agreed that the private school was a good decision for him. He excelled in elementary school and also in private school. He received numerous awards during assemblies. Mira recalled the pride she felt for her son:

And he was so close and I said, “Neil.” But when I went his graduation in elementary, I went and I sit down and they start calling Neil for this, Neil for that. Certificate. He was just, there were so many times they said Neil. And then all the parents would look at me and say, “This Neil, you have a smart son.” I say, “Well, thank you.” (personal communication, March 30, 2010)

Neil spoke of the recognitions he received in school with pride as well. He felt that it was nice to be honored for his work.

Sending her children to private school was important for Mira. She understood that the cost would be great, but she exercised faith that she would be able to do it. Neil knew that it was a sacrifice for his mother to send him to private school. He explained:

And I know that the tuition was a sacrifice for my mom. So that’s why I say she contributed a lot because year in and year out she would do what she had to do to provide for me to be going there. (personal communication, March 26, 2010)

Mira worked two jobs to try to meet her family’s financial needs. She budgeted well, and her son complimented her on her ability to make it all possible for him. Mira, remembered the pain of seeing her son struggle because of her inability to pay for new school items. She shared the following story with an emotional lump in her throat:

And the first year was, the first like maybe six month, he used to—I wasn't able to get him a new uniform. They had used uniforms, I say, "I'm going to get a used one for you now. For now. Later on Mommy will get you a new one; okay?" He said "Okay." And one day, he was getting dressed and I was feeling his waist, I said, "This is very tight. Why you never told me?" He said, "Mom, because I know you don't have a lot of—I don't want to." I said, "You know, Friday when Mommy gets paid, we're going to go get you a new one—new pants and a new shirt." (personal communication, March 30, 2010)

Holding back the tears, Mira showed in her eyes the pain of her financial struggles. Neil, however, spoke in a very understanding and grateful tone when describing the financial struggles of his childhood:

Well, I just grew up never feeling, I never asked for a lot. I never was one of those kids that you would consider as spoiled, always had what I needed. I had my job, too. So from there, I always learned not to rely, I always liked to fend for myself." (personal communication, March 26, 2010)

In addition to working in high school, Neil became very involved in school sports. He played soccer and basketball as well as running track. Sports were a big part of his life. Both of his parents would attend his games. His father, who was also an athlete, expressed pride in his son's abilities and work ethic. Being involved in so many activities put a strain on his time, but he was happy to be involved in sports.

Yeah. It was a big part of me. I loved it. And I would do it all over again in a heartbeat. The worst part was, for some sports, was when we had practices at 6:30 in the morning because we had them before school. And even when I think about it, I just enjoyed it so much. And it was a really good time. (personal communication, March 26, 2010)

Academically, Neil had ups and downs in high school. He believed that he didn't have strong study habits. He explained his concerns about his GPA and study habits:

Um, probably low threes. Just because I was just fooling around, I didn't really think of the seriousness of it all. But then came the 11th grade, you know, I don't think I got a B in my last two years. And I started working harder, and I eventually came out as the top student. So I was an honor, no doubt. Especially thinking back to how it all started. (personal communication, March 26, 2010)

Neil began his high school career on the lower side of his potential. He was disengaged and bored with learning. The decision to do well was a very conscious one for Neil. He was influenced by his mother and an astute high school counselor.

A singular experience, along with his innate understanding of his potential helped him to make the decision to improve his study habits.

No, by my school. Not like, I didn't do anything bad, like really bad, but like I say, I was just kind of a lazy kid. There were times I was just kind of indifferent. So I would say the turning point was when they pulled me in. After that point, they were like, "Neil, pick it up." You know. From there, I was like, "Well, you know, you're probably right. I probably should." (personal communication, March 26, 2010)

Having that negative experience helped Neil refocus in school. His parents did not overreact to this situation. They merely explained to him that they expected him to do better. Neil chose to apply himself in school. Later on in life, he reflected on this experience and realized how that decision changed his life. One of his school friends, who Neil felt was even smarter than him never made changes in lazy habits and ended up joining the army because college was not his priority.

Neil concentrated on his grades. He spent most of his time either studying or playing sports. When it came to standardized tests, Neil did nothing out of the ordinary to prepare. He didn't study formally with a book, note cards, or study

groups. The only preparation he engaged in was when SAT questions were posed in class. As a result of his lack of preparation for the PSAT, the National Hispanic Honor Certificate came as a surprise. His initial reaction when his high school counselor told him about the distinction of the award was, “That sounds like kind of neat” (personal communication, March 26, 2010).

Neither Neil nor his parents were aware of the significance of the National Hispanic Scholar Award. It wasn’t until his senior year when the letters from universities began arriving in the mail, detailing the amount of the scholarship award, that Neil began to understand the gravity of the seemingly insignificant test. Neil related the story:

And um, from there—once she told me [the high school counselor], “You got it, you became a finalist,” I was like, “That’s great, you know, that’s really, really good.” But I don’t think the impact of it hit me until I started receiving letters with scholarship figures on them. (personal communication, March 26, 2010)

Among the universities that contacted Neil, Southwest University offered, by far, the largest scholarship.

Um, I don’t exactly remember. I mean, I remember by far the biggest one that I remember, without a doubt, was this one [Southwest University]. Because I looked at it and I was like, wow. I think I remember opening the letter looking at the amount of the scholarship and then going online right away to look at yearly tuition to see how much of it that would cover. And I was like, “Wow, they’re going to pay for just about everything.” And so from there, I think Alabama, Texas A&M. They come from all over the place. I didn’t take too much stock in college letters because they send them to everyone. (Neil, personal communication, March 26, 2010)

Excited about the opportunity to have such a large scholarship, Neil presented the letter to his mother. He described her reactions:

And my mom was just, um, really thrilled about it because she's always wanted to get my education—always, always, always. And I know that that's still a big thing for her. (personal communication, March 26, 2010)

Mira further explained that her excitement was masking a fear for her son.

She did not want him to go so far away to school.

Well, when he received that letter for the scholarship, I said, he opened the letter he said, "Mom, \$92,000." "For four years? And \$92,000? When you apply for that scholarship," I say. He said, "I never did. I don't know what happened." And I said, "Oh my gosh, I don't want you to go too far because I want you to stay close to home." He said, "Mom, but it's a good school." I said, "I know, but just keep applying close, maybe UTSA, here in Austin, Texas." He did. He applied with all those scholarship, but he never received a good offer like he did over there. (Mira, personal communication, March 30, 2010)

Although Mira was fearful about Neil being so far from home, she was also very logical. She let him make the decision.

Ultimately, it was the amount of the award that influenced Neil's final decision. No other award letter he received came close to the amount offered by Southwest University.

But, and then Southwest University I applied to. And I got accepted to all of them. So I just laid them out. UTSA wasn't really in my thoughts because I got accepted to the others. So it was really between A&M and Southwest University. And it just turned out to be Southwest University purely on the notion of [money]. (personal communication, March 26, 2010)

Although the amount of the scholarship award relieved Neil's parents' financial stress, they both understood that the scholarship only paid for most of their son's expenses. There were still needs that were not covered by the scholarship. Neil described the tension he feels because of his parents' contribution toward meeting his additional expenses:

There's a lot kind of being in college that's kind of hard for me because my parents don't want me to work, and they like to help me out. And it's really swallowing a lot of pride for me to ask. (personal communication, March 26, 2010)

Mira sees contributing to her son's education both in high school and in college as an investment.

Um, I think it's good you know; I think it's good, especially because for a lot of things I wouldn't be able to pay. We help him with a few things. His daddy's helping him through; I'm helping him through, but we feel like it's an investment—his education. That's the way to see it. (personal communication, March 30, 2010)

When Neil needs help paying his bills, Mira helps him but tries to teach him how to budget because she is good with her finances. With Neil's financial future secure, he began his journey into his first year at the university.

Back home, Mira was having a difficult time letting go of her son. She explained:

And he was worried too because I was by myself. I said, "Don't worry about me. I go to work, and I have two jobs and when I come home, I stay maybe three hours awake, and then I take a bath and go to bed." I mean, this is my routine Monday through Friday. But I was missing him a lot. But he has to do what he have to do. (personal communication, March 30, 2010)

Mira held back tears when she thought of those lonely moments at home. She replaced missing her son with working more hours. Her son's absence from her home is necessary for his life to progress, but she struggles with loneliness. She cried as she told a story of her son expressing his loneliness while at college:

And when he came home for what's—oh, for Christmas time. One day he told me that it was hard for him to be there. He was missing home a lot. He want to come home and I said don't, I don't know what I said, but when he talked to his dad he said, "No, you have to stay." Because the only thing I was worried was, he said, "When I have a hard day, and I

come home, I don't have nobody to give me a hug like you give me a hug right now." I said, "Mijo." And then he said, "Oh," and he started crying because he was missing, you know, he was by himself. And then—but now that he came back from spring break, he doesn't talk like that anymore. I guess he feel like he have to stay. (personal communication, March 30, 2010)

Neil found the first year of college to be very exciting and shocking. The size of the campus was intimidating, but he clung to his roommate, a native Arizonian. Over time, he began to branch out and get to know more people. "But then, little by little, I started going to know people, people on my floor at the dorm, and then by that first week was kind of a shock I guess because I didn't know any one person" (Neil, personal communication, March 26, 2010). He also described feeling very excited because everything was so new:

Um, it was actually okay. I think first semester was a bit of an adjustment—not too, too much—because you got to remember that everyone else in my class was freshman, too. So to make friends, and they're in the same boat as you, and it makes it really easier. And I'd actually say last year was pretty easy, just because I was kind of wide eyed about it all. I was excited. It was my first year. (personal communication, March 26, 2010)

Socially, Neil was popular but didn't engage in irresponsible behavior. He felt that it was because he came from a Christian school and background. He didn't avoid parties, but he didn't go looking for them either. Mira reminded her son of his standards: "I say, 'Okay, no drinking.' 'No, Mom. No drinking. We're just doing something—talking'" (personal communication, March 30, 2010).

Neil was optimistic about the first year and he felt comfortable with his decision to attend the university. He decided to stay in the honors dorm and found that to be extremely helpful because most of the kids had good study habits.

He was grateful for the peacefulness of his dorm floor at night because his major, engineering, was very demanding. In addition to his desire to do well, there was the added expectation for him to maintain a 3.25 GPA to keep his scholarship.

Neil warned his parents that he would not get a 4.0 GPA, but he did promise to keep his scholarship. Neil did well academically his first year. He had one mishap with a C in an economics course, but that was due to a misunderstanding about the amount of work involved with the course. His parents have a general awareness of his grades, but not specifics. Neil explained how he approaches sharing his grades with his parents:

And I just think they have the confidence in me to let me worry about that aspect of things...Yeah. So in that sense, we don't really talk too much about that. They'll ask me how school is going, and I'll say, "Good, I have a test coming up," or, "I feel like I did well on this test," or stuff like that, but I don't talk to them about specific numbers unless it's like, "Oh, I did really well on this test." (personal communication, March 26, 2010)

Mira does trust him. They do not get too involved in his life but provide support and encouragement to him. Mira gave him direct messages about completing his education. His mother told him in plain language what she wanted him to do and accomplish:

He's very special. I always tell him, I said "Mommy has to work hard, but I want you to have a good life. You have to go to school. You have to finish. You have to graduate, and that way when you get married you have something to offer to your wife. One day she can't work because when she is having babies and all of that and you'll have something that you can offer you can provide for your family. You don't have to worry about it." (personal communication, March 30, 2010)

During his first year of college, Neil began to realize the impact his mother had on his life. One day, he called her and told her that he was writing a

paper for his English course on heroes. He went on to tell her about this baseball player he loved, but then he paused and redirected his conversation:

And the other hero for me was you. I say, “Me?” I say, “Why me?” He said, “Because you put me in a good school, you know, you obey God, what he told me to do. You didn’t know how you were going to do it, but you did it. And now I am the person that I am because of you.” And that really made me feel like I wanted to cry. (Mira, personal communication, March 30, 2010)

Mira is a humble woman. She never expected her son to express that much love for her, but it really made an impact on her, which was apparent in her gleaming smile when she recounted that story.

Neil has the financial, emotional, social, and academic support he needs. When times are difficult, he goes to who loves him—his mother. He maintains open communication with them, speaking to both of them nearly every day. Currently, Neil is developing his racial identity, which is affected by the woman he is dating who is proud of her nationality. He takes pride in his Spanish language. If he were to categorize himself, he would choose Latino. Everyday, he is learning to appreciate the world around him and is becoming increasingly homesick because his girlfriend is in Texas.

Summary and Analysis of Narrative 8

Like the other scholar participants, Neil was tested as a gifted child in his early years. He enjoyed the intellectual development he received in his elementary years. However, upon entering middle school and high school, the academic course became more difficult for him. His mother did not want him to attend public schools because of

the influence of other students, so she worked longer hours to make certain that her son attended a parochial school.

Neil grew up with his mother because his parents divorced when he was young. His father was absent for a period of time after the divorce; therefore, Neil and his mother Mira struggled financially. He began to work when he was in high school, and he became highly involved in extracurricular school activities, specifically sports related. Neil believed he didn't possess strong study skills and, therefore, slacked off in school. It was the intervention of a school counselor that made him refocus his academic priorities. This critical intervention was a key moment that contributed to his later success.

His first year of college was very exciting and was full of new experiences. He enjoyed his social life and gained a nucleus of friends during the first year. He did well academically during his first year at Southwest University.

For Neil, his first year was ideal. He did well academically and found a group of friends. However, the summer after his first year, with the addition of a new girlfriend in his home town and the extra time spent at home, he began to feel homesick.

Neil's mother imparted indirect messages about attending college. She is an example of the struggle one experiences without higher education. She also provides direct message to her son through words of encouragement.

Narrative 9: Scholar Phoenix and Parent Lily

Phoenix was raised in Glendale, Arizona her entire life. Approximately 5'6" in height with a thin build, she styles her hair modern and messy. Her eyes

are large and are accented by her small and pleasant face. She is casual in her appearance but brings some rock band style to her normalness. Seemingly nervous, Phoenix had no problem expressing her story, which surprised her.

Having been quiet, shy, and socially awkward most of her life, the academic world has been her safe haven and a place to express her identity.

Phoenix recalled experiences at home with the smart kids:

But, I don't know, I definitely—especially around middle school—I really liked it a lot because it basically helped me establish a group of friends because I was really quiet, and I think I was a little awkward and stuff. So it was all the kids that were in the gifted classes all hung out together, and our gifted teacher was also the drama teacher. And we all got into that and stuff. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Intelligence and achievement were a part of Phoenix's identity long before she began school. Her mother recalled noticing Phoenix's interest in learning even while in the womb:

I think to some degree it's just something innate. Something she was born with. That drive, that intensity. I do think, I mean when I was pregnant with them, I would, I'd make sure nutritionally, and everything, you know, I did everything healthy.

I actually played with them, pushed on my stomach and see if they'd push back. And she would actually, most of them, would shift around. She would push, I'd push. She'd push, I'd push. And I'd kind of say, "Oh, we're playing," you know? (Lily, personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Phoenix's intensity, sensitivity, and inquisitive nature were apparent in her earliest years. She learned about the world around her more intently. Lily described her daughter as "inquisitive, fascinated, wanting to just look at things, and [was] a thinker" (personal communication, December 17, 2009). Although most children show a general interest in things, Phoenix would study an object

and begin to ask questions about it. Lily explained how her daughter had a thirst for knowledge:

We went to—they happened to have a book fair near the beach, at a building, I don't remember what it was. And of course, we stopped and I said, "You guys can pick a book." And [in] typical six-year-old fashion, my oldest daughter picked out a Disney princess book and loved it. And Phoenix picked out *The Children's Book of Knowledge* and began on page one and proceeded to read it all the way through, and said, "I'm, you know, not going to skip around. I'm going to read it from front to back. You know, from beginning to end. Not skip it because I want to learn everything I can learn. I want to get all the knowledge I can get." (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

This incident exemplifies Phoenix's character throughout her life. Phoenix does not like to just learn and move on, rather she loves to learn for the sake of learning. Reading and books became almost an obsession for Phoenix at an early age. Lily helped her children develop a love and vigor for reading.

Well, basically just because I always—I was pretty quiet. I didn't really—it's not that I didn't talk to her; I just didn't talk to anybody for most of my life. But she—I don't know, I always read a lot. She always would—I know we would go to the library a lot when we were little. Me and my older sister. And I think the younger kids too. I have a few younger siblings too—always taking us to the library and stuff like that. She was always good about that—always giving us books, reading to us. She was always really good with that. (Phoenix, personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Concerned that her daughter did not communicate much, Lily had a speech pathologist evaluate her at an early age. The speech pathologist concluded that Phoenix had a very extended vocabulary, way beyond her years, but that she just had trouble articulating. Phoenix worked with a speech pathologist most of her elementary years, and her articulation improved greatly.

Phoenix's elementary school years were spent in a Catholic school. She began excelling early in school and her teachers began to take notice. They were encouraging Lily to challenge her daughter more. Lily recalled this time:

And then she did very well in school. She was in parochial school from kindergarten through fourth grade. And it was a highly competitive school. They do very well. Most of them go on to go to Maricopa, which is one of the top schools here. And at that time she—her teachers, especially her fourth-grade teacher would say, “You need to do more with her.” And I’m thinking, “What do you do with the kid? We go to the library.” I wasn’t going to put her in anything purely academic. I felt we challenged her just through reading. She read a lot; we read a lot. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Lily provided a stimulating environment for Phoenix. She believed that there were disadvantages to students being stuck in a purely academic environment, and she was unwilling to have her daughter suffer because of it. Phoenix was already struggling socially, so she wanted to make sure she was well-rounded. Lily was involved with Phoenix's educational environment. She was a home room mom and was active in Phoenix's school. Lily recalled a visit to Phoenix's school:

And I think just staying involved. Staying involved in school. I mean, I was always there with one baby or two on my hip or in the stroller at the school. And it was important; she knew education was very important. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Although Catholic school was a good place for Phoenix, the tuition expenses became too great, so she began public school. Almost immediately upon entering middle school, Phoenix was tested and placed in the gifted program called SAGE.

It's just like the advanced—we would be, during math—we'd be, we'd just be. I basically got two years ahead in math, basically. And so, yeah

because in the eighth grade, I was going to the high school nearby to take honors geometry and stuff. So yeah, I was just a couple of years ahead. And then with English, it's more we would be—during English class, we would go read and do higher level reading, basically. (Phoenix, personal communication, December 17, 2009)

The middle school gifted program SAGE, as pull-out program, benefited Phoenix in many ways. Socially, she was considered the cooler one of the smart kids. To the rest of her peers, she was less socially awkward than the others. At the same time, Phoenix found a nucleus of friends with whom she felt comfortable.

The gifted program was directed by a drama teacher and so it was centered on theater and performance. The teaching style was conducive to helping Phoenix practice social skills that she lacked and build her confidence. Although her involvement in the gifted program was positive, the structure of the school supporting the program was lacking. Phoenix recalled having a difficult time getting her schedule right: “In public school, I had some difficulty. They didn't really cater to us; they messed up our schedules a lot. I remember we had to figure it out” (personal communication, December 17, 2009).

Upon her advancement from middle school to high school, Phoenix was presented with a choice to continue public school or to attend her mother's alma mater, Maricopa Prep. “Um, she's the one that influenced me to go to Maricopa. She went to Maricopa, too. Yeah, she went to Catholic school; she went to Southwest University” (Phoenix, personal communication, December 17, 2009). It was a hard adjustment for Phoenix to go back to Catholic school. She was terribly shy and new places were very intimidating for her. Maricopa was difficult because of the demographics of the students:

Well, for high school, I ended up going to Maricopa Preparatory. And that was in central Phoenix. I ended up leaving all of those friends that I had made, so I started all over with all these other people that I was in Catholic school again. It's a really great school; I'm really glad I went there. But it was really hard transitions, I think, for me. I think it was probably the best thing that happened to me was that I went there. That was an excellent school, but it was really hard.

Because like, I was still pretty awkward and quiet. And a lot of the people there—it's pretty—it's a pretty prestigious school. And a lot of the people are pretty—basically the typical White, Scottsdale, rich student, you know. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Phoenix felt out of place in such an affluent school compared to the rest of her class, she felt disadvantaged.

Besides income differences felt, Phoenix struggled to get to school so she rode the city bus to school everyday. Phoenix recalled the embarrassment she felt riding the bus:

And before I had a car, I would ride the city bus, which was a good two hour, hour-and-a-half, two hour ride to and from school every day, which was pretty—and that was pretty hard when I didn't really necessarily like it there very much at the beginning. So it was like, I don't know.

It was hard to wake up really early in the morning, get on a giant city bus with a Catholic school girl uniform and have everybody stare at me. But it was, I don't know, it was an interesting experience. I didn't mind it. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Lily knew that her daughter struggled with riding the bus everyday, but she was confident that she would adjust. “So she was going—this quiet girl was going from public school was going back to a parochial school—and she took the city bus down. And she, she had a hard—she enjoyed it” (personal communication, December 17, 2009). The trials and joys of Maricopa was a common theme for Phoenix throughout her four years there.

Phoenix not only dealt with feeling socially awkward and financially inferior while a student at Maricopa, but she also struggled with her sexual orientation. She recalled the anxiousness and emotional state she was in during those high school years:

I mean I was like 15, 16, like I don't think any 15-year-old girl, some people do but a lot of 15-year-old girls don't really have the best relationship with their mother, I think at that age. I was really, really, moody. And I was like, I don't know. Yeah. I don't know.

Me and my mom, I guess we weren't close at the beginning of high school. I had some like emotional things. I was going to therapy. And then just the sexuality thing was kind of a thing, too. And that was kind of weird because my mom is Catholic. And that was kind of, you know, but um, I don't know it got better at the end. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Phoenix worked through her emotional phase and she began to engage in her school, after having taken it easy for a while.

Maricopa was an academically rigorous school; Phoenix's courses were designed to be challenging. However, Phoenix felt she was not being challenged in the right way. She recalled feeling frustrated:

Because my whole life, I'd been doing things, you know, doing perfectly well. And I could do well; I was taking pretty rigorous classes. From freshman year, I was taking a lot of AP classes, all honors classes. Some of those were classes I could take, and I don't know, even though it was a really great school, there's still busy work. And I got so frustrated and even if it was an easy class, I just didn't feel like applying myself because I'd rather be reading something else. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Phoenix's frustration turned into slacking. Intellectual stimulation and learning go hand and hand for her. The structure of Maricopa sometimes did not lend itself to free-spirited learning. Around her junior year, Phoenix decided to start

applying herself to her studies. The faculty and staff assisted and encouraged her to get back on track with her studies.

And so and I got—the faculty and the students are really close at that school, and I had really great teachers and stuff. And that was really—I don't know. Just, that school taught me a lot, basically.

I got really involved, especially by my senior year. I was president of a few clubs, and like Philosophy Club of Students for Social Action. I was just involved in a lot of stuff, and like, I don't know. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Phoenix was involved in school clubs, but she was a talented soccer player and musician. She decided she wanted to play soccer when she was young and she stuck with it. Lily explained:

At five, she wanted to play soccer—at four she wanted to play soccer, but you had to be five. So we, at five, we got her into soccer, and she worked on that and she excelled. She worked hard to do everything. She can be a little bit, you know, intense and a perfectionist. But she loved it and she wanted to do it, and she played until she got injured in high school. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Although Phoenix's intensity with soccer caused her to be an excellent player, she was prone to injuries. In high school, she suffered major concussions in her sophomore and junior years. The last concussion was in her junior year right before the scheduled PSAT. Her doctors had some concern for her because of the temporary loss of memory she suffered, but Lily was confident in her daughter's ability to do well: "And she can always take them [the PSAT] over again if she doesn't do well. But, her counselor felt pretty confident and I felt, she always tested well anyway, we felt she would be fine" (personal communication, December 17, 2009).

Phoenix did well academically during her junior and senior years and socially turned her life around. She made a change for the better. She had a core group of friends who had the same goals of getting accepted into the top schools. It was an exciting time for her and her mother. Lily recalled getting engaged in the college selection process with her daughter:

That was exciting, actually. I wanted her to be able to focus on doing everything she needed to do with school. So I would get books from the library and read everything I could on every school. Not just the ones that were ranked, things like colleges that change lives and other ranking—personal opinions that I can't think what they're called now the books. I would read everything to get inside reviews so we would know not just what U.S. News gives you, but also what the school, like the environment was like. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

It was an electric time. Phoenix and her friends were applying to Ivy League schools and other prestigious schools. The number of schools Phoenix applied to varied dramatically from her friends because of the application fees. Her friends were applying to 12 or more schools, and she was able to apply to five or six. The competition was so fierce that often friendships would break up because of admissions results.

Applications? That was so stressful, especially with Maricopa. Oh, my God. I remember, oh, my God, that time in school was horrible. Everyone was so on edge. Everyone was freaking out. It was one of the most stressful times in my life. That was insane. (Phoenix, personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Phoenix's top choice was Reed College. Understanding her learning style as a connoisseur of knowledge and not just repeating facts, Phoenix believed Reed would be the perfect fit for her.

Yeah, I applied to a couple of other schools. I really wanted to go to Reed College in Portland. And I got in. And that was like my dream school

since sophomore—that was basically why I started trying to do well in school because I really wanted to go there. Because I felt like, “Oh, this is a school that makes sense.” They don’t have—but they talk to you, and it’s a liberal one, like, you know. And I was really excited about it. And I got in, but like just like financial—it’s \$50,000 a year, so it’s a private school. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Phoenix was elated that she was accepted to the school of her choice. The \$50,000-a-year tuition was merely an obstacle that she was willing to overcome. She had made her decision to attend Reed College. Her family was considered middle income, and so they were supposed to be responsible for \$23,000 annual tuition for their daughter. Lily and her husband had an uncertain future because both had not completed their education, and the economy looked like it was making a turn for the worst. Lily explained, “You can’t, you know, if something happens to like my husband, what are we going to do?” (personal communication, December 17, 2009).

They were also paying for their other children’s Catholic school education. The disillusionment with FAFSA guidelines created a lot of stress for both Phoenix and Lily. Lily explained:

So you know, we’re in that gap where we don’t make enough to send her to any school that she wants, and we’re not low enough to get aid for low-income families. And I think that’s a really tough call for a lot of students. I think that’s where a lot of people drop out and not go to college. I—if their parents can’t help them for if they can’t—if they’re not quite, you know, getting that scholarship that’s going to pay a huge part of it and their parents can’t help or won’t help, what are they going to do? I mean go to work—you lose them. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Phoenix felt trapped by her circumstances, which made her very upset. With her already developed political tendencies, Phoenix became extremely agitated with her middle-class position. She passionately expressed her frustration:

So many children—like people like my mom—they don't even know about college at all. And it was like such stratification. Such a, I got so bitter about that. So upset by the way that things are. And the way that it's—people are stratified in the way that they can't—they don't have the resources to mobilize themselves out of the position that they're already in, which is, I think mobilization is education. But if you don't have the resources to know that education is that resource, then you're basically stuck in this perpetual cycle of poverty, basically. And I think it's pretty sad. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Phoenix felt that she possessed the opportunities to mobilize herself because of the tools given her through her Catholic education. However, Phoenix and Lily felt that there were many students who would fall through the gap. Phoenix persisted and became quite entrepreneurial. She began collecting donor gifts. She called many organizations and asked for sponsorships, and a friend even wrote Oprah to ask for a donation. Phoenix recounted her acts of desperation:

Um, around the beginning—like the middle of the summer. That summer after my senior year because I was working on—for the first half of the summer, I didn't even hang out. I just—every day I was working on essays for scholarships. I was working on writing letters to people for sponsorships. I was working on—try to go raise money. I was thinking I was getting pretty extreme about it. I just really wanted to go there. It seemed like a really ideal place for me. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Phoenix's efforts were focused. She was not willing to accept “no” for an answer. She wanted to attend Reed College because she knew that was the best place for her. Her parents were unable to help her. Lily spoke of the guilt associated with not being able to fund her daughter's education:

You know, so, it was something that was—made me feel absolutely horrible because I felt like I had encouraged her to find schools that best suited her personality. But I really think things worked out for the best. And knowing that if we did it for one year somehow we wouldn't be able to do it a second year. And that would have been harder for her, knowing her, to change, to adapt, become comfortable, find a place and then change would have been worse. And she's here and she's going to be fine.

You know, she's going to be fine wherever she's at, but I just really think the schools need to say, "Yeah you want to find a good match for you, but realistically you really need to look at finances." (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Lily's guilt was accompanied by frustration in the way that the Catholic school purported college selection and financial aid to be synonymous. She criticized the school for telling those girls that they should go to prestigious schools but not informing them of the financial realities.

Recognizing that her parents could do nothing more to help her, Phoenix was not offended by their inability to fund her education. She still feels that her mom might feel a bit guilty for not being able to support her going to Reed College. She expressed this with a worried expression on her face:

I don't know. Just like, because I know she knew that I was pretty upset about the Reed thing. Especially once you graduate high school, you're supposed to be excited. And I was at home the whole time working on stuff. I don't know.

I think that she probably thought I was pretty bitter at her and my father, which I wasn't. I hope that she doesn't still think that just because I was really upset. I don't know. I was under the impression, because I remember I asked her and she was like, "Well, we'll make it work." But we didn't assume that the economy would be this horrible, obviously. How it is now. And, you know, I don't blame them at all. I don't blame them at all. I think that she probably thought, I think she thought I was pretty mad at her actually, which I wasn't. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Unable to further pursue her dream, Phoenix turned to her only option—Southwest University. She remembered receiving a scholarship letter from Southwest University and so she decided to apply in July. She was one of the last students to apply. She submitted her application and within days she was accepted. Phoenix went with her mother to take a campus tour. As a result of Phoenix's late application, finding her a dorm room was tricky. But Southwest University Honor's College staff found her a room and took care of it. Lily was relieved that her daughter was able to get into the dorms.

So all three of them were able, so I was happy because I wanted her in the honors dorms. And I thought that would be important for her. It's small; it's secure, and she had a great room. She had—the wall had windows; the back wall was all windows. She ended up being really lucky. They were the old dorms. They were before the new ones. And so they're really run down; their bathrooms were around the corner, and she got one of the best rooms out of the old dorms. (Lily, personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Phoenix was all set up for her first year of college in less than a week.

What should have been a happy moment was still shadowed with the memory of her lost hope in attending her dream school. Through Phoenix's first year, there were quite a few challenges that she overcame. First, she turned out to be much more depressed about not attending Reed College than even she realized, which was highlighted by the typical college life of Southwest University that Phoenix did not picture herself a part of. Phoenix recalled the sheer shock of it all:

I don't know; I don't think it was entirely me just fantasizing about it because coming to Southwest University was really, really shocking with 60,000 people. I came from a place that there was only a thousand people in the entire school. And it was like, all of the sudden there was so many people around me; it was huge. It actually was really shocking to me even though it shouldn't have been. And I also didn't prepare myself. I was

like, “Okay, I’m in the same state that I was in before. I shouldn’t be shocked or overwhelmed.” But it was, “Oh, my God, I’m in college and there’s so many people. I don’t know anybody because all of my friends live out of state.” That really sucked. All of my friends were out of state. And I don’t know. Yeah. But it’s gotten better now. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

The lack of preparation for the college experience triggered some of Phoenix’s pre-existing anxieties around being socially awkward. The way people got to know each other during her freshmen year was to go to parties. Phoenix would attend the parties but didn’t engage in conversation with people. She remained quiet and shy, so the experience was not enjoyable. The parties and the easy curriculum, compared to Maricopa, made Southwest University feel like a summer vacation.

But it’s just like, it’s strange. It feels like an extended summer vacation. Just because I feel like I’m on summer vacation with more things to see, do because I’m just not, I’m still used to, you know, the high school timeline of going to school and having a strict schedule. And I don’t know, I think that efficiency works better with my personality, maybe. But I wasn’t used to having so much free time. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Time management became an issue for Phoenix’s freshmen year. Having the option to go to school or to not go to school was tempting to Phoenix because she knew that she could still do well either way. She tested out of a lot of courses, so she started taking upper-division courses during her freshmen year. The more rigorous curriculum did not improve her desperate desire for a challenge. She remained intellectually stagnate. Phoenix recalled her difficult first year:

Actually, it was a pretty bad year. Last year really sucked. I was pretty depressed about not being at Reed. So I was just like, and also it wasn’t a challenge. So I was hanging out a lot....Just like, I had a girlfriend at the time; we were breaking up. It was a pretty unhealthy relationship,

actually. And I don't know. It was just like, I would go to parties every so often, but I never liked parties. So I would just be really quiet at parties and not like them, basically. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

In addition to her disappointment over Reed College and the lack of intellectual stimulation at Southwest University, Phoenix was involved in a very co-dependent relationship. Her girlfriend and many others in her life were seeking her advice and looking to her to solve their problems. The stress of all of these circumstances was perpetuated because of her already sensitive and intense nature. Phoenix recalled those very dark days:

I had like some emotional problems. I've been to a couple of therapists, and I've been on anti-depressants and stuff. And I think I'm just kind of an intense person, I think. I'm pretty sensitive. I'm really, really sensitive. I get overwhelmed really easily. I'm used to succeeding. I'm really used to being good at things, too. And I'm really used to—I really feel—I don't know, I think I was just overwhelmed last year.

I was just really sad that I wasn't being challenged in the right ways. I was around people that I didn't want to be around necessarily, even though they were the only people I felt were there for me. Like I said, I was in a really unhealthy relationship that got really co-dependent because of that, and that didn't help at all. And it was just like, I don't know. I think I was really overwhelmed by a lot of the expectations that were put on me.

Throughout my whole life, I've been this person to other people where like I'm this like—you're the smart—it's really strange being—having, being told multiple times that you're the smart—that I'm the smart evident person that anybody's ever met. Multiple times by multiple people. And it's a lot of pressure. Because people expect me, because I want to change the world in a lot of ways, and people expecting that in ways that aren't even possible. And to be super influential in ways that aren't possible just because I've changed a lot of individuals, I think.

Because I can talk to individuals a lot, but I don't know, just a lot of strange expectations. And I felt like, "How am I going to—these expectations when I'm so stacked now and I feel like I've gotten less intelligent since I've been in high school. I feel like I'm a worse writer, I'm a worse you know, you know.

And when you're depressed you don't, you know, push yourself to go, you know intellectually or creatively. I didn't feel like I was creating anything. I was, because I used to paint, too, and I didn't feel like I was creating anything that was you know, substantial. And I just felt stagnant, basically. And that was probably the worst feeling for me to feel. And that would overwhelm me, and stuff, I think. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Life became like a large hole to Phoenix; she was digging deeper and deeper into a ditch, and she was being beaten by the expectations around her and her inability to fulfill them. The pressure was so immense and her anxiety was so high that Phoenix nearly succumbed to negativity, and she finally had a breakdown during her second semester.

Yeah. I was pretty, like suicidal, kind of thing. It was just—I just get really freaked out by reality sometimes. Because it's just like, a lot of things, just apart from—I or anything else exists or anything like that, it's like, I don't know.

Just the way I was so, so bitter about the way that things are in the world. The way that we're part of this capitalistic cycle that nobody can break through, and it's not going to change. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

In the depths of Phoenix's personal hell, feeling singed by the fires of depression, she sought help from the university therapist. Rising from the ashes of her life, Phoenix focused on creating a healthy environment for her new life.

But then I got rid of every unhealthy person in my life. I don't know, I just like, it just like, after snapping, I basically got all of my stuff done, I got all of my finals done. I focused and kind of recouped, and got rid of every unhealthy person because I have an unusual amount of people who were like, really dependent on me emotionally. Because I would take care of—I don't know. It was a lot of friends in general. I would take care of them a lot. And I think a lot of people got unhealthily dependent on me. And I got rid of every unhealthy person in my life. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

During the summer, Phoenix took the time to be around the people she loved and truly cared about her. “So I was basically just being around people who all really cared about me and in a really healthy way. And just reading and like, um, stuff like that” (personal communication, December 17, 2009). Phoenix’s clean sweep made room for a healthy relationship with a new girlfriend. Her family is unaware of her breakdown and is only provided minimal information regarding her girlfriend. Phoenix explained the dynamics of sharing her romantic life with her family:

But I don’t know, with my personal life I can’t really like, “Oh, hey, me and my girlfriend...” it’s awkward. It is pretty awkward still, I think. The whole—I don’t know. And so, I don’t know. Maybe it’s just we don’t really have, we have never really had one of those real issues like, you know, where it’s like, you talk about—I don’t because some people are really close with their parents. They talk about what they’re feeling and whatever, and it’s like, I don’t know. By the time usually when I visit there, it will be like, oh, I’ll go play with my siblings. And like, there’s so much to do. And then I’ll pick up in a bit, like trying to coordinate rides. If some other friends are going in that area, I’ll get dropped off and then get picked up afterwards. So it’s kind of hard to do that. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Phoenix finds it still awkward to talk to her family about her relationship with her girlfriend. Her family members are aware of her lifestyle, but she doesn’t share with them the details. When she spends time with her family, she treats it like business-as-usual and helps around the house. Lily, Phoenix’s mother, made no mention of her daughter’s sexual orientation.

Yeah. I don’t really, like I honestly don’t know; we don’t talk about it at all. It’s like not something we bring up. And my siblings don’t know at all. They don’t want them to know because I think they’re worried about—if somebody hears about it they get made fun of. And I can understand that. But they’re not in Catholic school and all that.

Just like my grandparents and stuff, like that they're really Hispanic Catholic. And my dad's family, I don't know, I don't talk to my dad about it. I like, I don't know, I have no idea. Actually I have absolutely no idea what my dad thinks about it.

But my mom basically, I had a couple of talks with her about it when I was like a junior, and I was like all right but yeah. I don't know. It just, it's a weird thing I guess. She's all right. It's gotten a lot better. (Phoenix, personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Being raised in a strong Catholic family, Phoenix has believed the ideals of her religion for sometime. In recent years, however, Phoenix was somewhat disappointed in the conservative turn of the church.

And then in our Catholic church just because, I mean, lately it's kind of gone under a more conservative change that I haven't liked, but I think there are a lot of really good ideas. And I don't know, I was raised Catholic, too, but I'm not necessarily Catholic anymore. But I still like a lot of the ideas and a lot of the doctrine, and a lot of the theology of it. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Phoenix remains reserved, even with her family. She understands her family loves her, but they communicate only every so often.

I don't really talk to my—I just don't talk to my family that much because—I don't know. For awhile, I was e-mailing my mom every so often, but like, I don't really talk that much to people. I'm really bad about keeping in touch. I don't really keep my cell phone around me too much because technology is just really strange to me. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Although they may not speak everyday, Phoenix and her mother have a good relationship. Lily felt the sadness associated with her daughter leaving and going to college.

And I missed her. She was, even though she was gone a lot because she was always busy, it was just, her being gone was just, you know, like she's like kind of—I don't know. That connection was a big one with us—and exciting. We were all excited and everyone was excited. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Lily felt that she had a special connection with her daughter. She understands her and feels like somehow she is a part of Phoenix's silent world. Phoenix knows that her family members care for her and love her.

Lily's major concern for Phoenix in the adjustment was her eating.

Phoenix is very thin, and her mother made sure she had access to food at all times.

Phoenix still uses the campus meal plan and loves it. She really takes advantage of all the perks on campus. Phoenix shared about her high life with free stuff:

I mean, I definitely have taken advantage of the all of the perks of like, I still do actually. I'm still using a meal plan even though—off campus. An unlimited meal plan was like the best thing in the world. I can eat all of the time, whatever I want, which is great. I can work out every single day at a free gym, which is great. Going to the library they have a bunch of movies that I can watch, renting books, and being able to do all of that. So I've been taking advantage of all of the resources that I have. So that's been fun. (personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Phoenix rose from the ashes of her depression and emerged a new person.

She finally understood the tensions in her life—the unrealistic expectations, the co-dependency, and the depression. She addressed the tensions and now knows that she does not want to go back to how she was living. With the support of her family always there in the background, she is moving forward, taking on new challenges, including three majors so that she can be more competitive for graduate school. She has a clear purpose and will accomplish her goals because of her new found perspective, which brings new joy to her life.

Summary and Analysis of Narrative 9

Phoenix's early exceptionality is consistent with the other scholar participants in this study. She not only had a love for reading but a thirst for

knowledge. Her mother, Lily, cultivated her daughter's desire to learn and worked with her to develop her abilities. Lily stayed involved in her daughter's early education and was a parent helper at her school.

Phoenix was identified as a gifted child in middle school and attended courses at the local high school. She had a sense of belonging with friends dubbed the "smart kids." As a result of her athletic ability and general demeanor, Phoenix was the social liaison between the smart kids and the cool kids.

High school presented opportunities and challenges for Phoenix. She enrolled in an all-girls Catholic school that was very college centered. It was a challenging environment that encouraged Phoenix to develop as a student athlete. During this time, she decided to become open with her mother about her sexual orientation. Lily had always been willing to understand Phoenix, even though she was very reserved, and therefore Phoenix felt comfortable sharing her sexual orientation with her mother. Although most of her family members know about her sexual orientation, they do not discuss it at home.

Phoenix's first year of college was very difficult. Her academic needs were not being met and she was not being challenged to the level that she would have preferred. She was depressed and the added pressure of unhealthy friendships and intimate relationships caused her to experience a breakdown. In her darkest moments, she sought the help of a university counselor who made certain her teachers gave her an opportunity for making up work and also worked with her to heal. Her family did not know about her breakdown. Phoenix's rock-bottom moment helped her to realize what was important in life, and she

developed stronger relationships with her siblings and family over the summer. She meditated and filled her life with positive relationships.

Low-Income Scholar Analysis: Within Group Themes

All five narratives of low-income students and their parents were analyzed for common themes and are presented by category and subcategory. The five major categories are: (a) academic progression, (b) racial identity, (c) scholarship award, (d) early collegiate maturation, and (e) matriarchal/child relationship progression. The major categories are the same as those of the high-income scholar group, but the subcategories vary since certain aspects of the major categories were discussed in different ways during the student and parent interviews. Following the analysis of the low-income scholar group, the similarities and differences across the high-income and low-income groups will be presented in chapter six along with a discussion of their relevance to the existing research.

Academic progression. Like the high-income scholar group, the low-income study participants showed a progression of academic success. Some of the students were regarded by their parents and/or themselves as having an innate ability to learn. A couple of the parents commented on their child's early signs of learning aptitude. Overall, mothers and students allude to a predisposition for intelligence and exceptionality. There is a belief that biology and genetics play a large role in their child's intellectual ability.

Early reading. Three of the five students spoke specifically about their early reading being an influence in their education. All three students showed

more than an interest in reading; they were enthralled by it and spent many hours reading during their childhood. Phoenix was obsessed with knowledge and wanted to know as much as she possibly could. This character attribute took her mother by surprise. Julie also shared a strong desire to read. Julie's advanced reading resulted in her excelling in English for the rest of her academic career. Reading was one way in which these students began to gain information about the world around them. These students had a love for knowledge and made learning fun for themselves.

Gifted programs. Four of the five students reported being in "gifted programs." Therefore, they showed excellent abilities that were nurtured by teachers. Phoenix and Julie had favorable experiences as they both developed a set of friends within their respective gifted programs, which was important because of their reserved personalities. Neil, Marcy, and Clint reported having some negative experiences relative to the gifted programs' instructional material. Neil remembered a positive experience with the program; however, his mother recalled a time when he did not want to continue with the classes. Marcy did not report being involved in a GATE program but had extra work given to her in class and out of class. She particularly excelled in math.

The categorization of these students into gifted programs further perpetuates the idea that they are born with an exceptional intellectual aptitude. Although not all of the scholars were categorized as "gifted," all showed the capacity to excel academically at a very early age.

Work ethic. Most of the low-income students were self-motivated and independent workers. However, a few of them had a pattern of working hard and staying engaged for a while and then putting less effort into their class work. After someone intervened such as a high school counselor or they came to the point of endangering their future, they would decide to improve academically. Clint and Julie were self-motivated and independent learners. Marcy, Neil, and Phoenix had a habit of doing well and then choosing not to do their work. Their decisions were always conscious. These students' patterns of laziness continued through college and presented a real problem when trying to maintain a consistent GPA.

Influence of teachers/counselors. In the low-income narratives, there were salient references to teachers or counselors who significantly impacted a few of the scholar participants' lives. Clint developed important critical thinking because of his elementary school teachers. Neil and Marcy had an experience with a high school counselor who helped them turn their academic life around. They both were unengaged in school and developed bad study habits; the counselor in both cases intervened and reminded them of their potential. This was an important moment in both of their lives.

Racial identity. The demographic section of the PSAT/NMSQT exam requests information about the students' racial identity. All of the students in the low-income group checked the Hispanic box for varying reasons. During the study interviews, three of the five students provided a detailed response about the PSAT/NMSQT racial identity question, and the other two students implied their

racial identity within other contexts. Three of the students were bi-racial, and two of them considered themselves to be Hispanic. The color of their skin had a large bearing on how they felt about their racial identity.

Negative peer reactions. Julie attended a predominately White high school, and when it was announced that she received the National Hispanic Scholars Award, she received negative comments from her friends at school and at home. She was upset about these comments and in most cases argued back. Even Julie's sister was upset by her award. She thought Julie was being dishonest receiving the award.

Scholarship award. The topic of income was extremely important in the low-income student interviews. Each of students discussed the impact of their limited income on their college-making decisions. The scholarship meant the difference between not going to college or going to a community college and getting a four-year college education. In addition, the lack of expendable income during their freshmen year meant they had to be extra mindful of their budget or get jobs.

Lifestyle differences. The students often referenced their economic circumstance prior to describing the influence the Southwest University scholarship had on their selection of degree-granting institution. Describing their point of reference to the researcher was an important process. As a result, their individual lifestyles and circumstances are presented.

Clint was raised by his mother, Sophia. Sophia occasionally received help from her mother, but she struggled with helping her son attend college. He had lived with heavy financial strain most of his life.

Julie was also raised by a single mother. Her mother owned a yoga studio and was an artist but never really made much money. Her father, who helped with child support, was supposed to assist with Julie's college tuition but couldn't.

Marcy's family has been plagued with financial difficulties her whole life. They often moved from place to place to find lower rental rates. Her mother and father both worked, but they could barely meet their financial needs. Though Marcy was a high achieving student at a prestigious Catholic school, which her parents paid for with equity from their home, she was unable to afford what her friends could afford during the college application process.

Neil's parents divorced when he was young and, for a period in his life, his father was totally absent. Neil's mother Mira was the main source of income for Neil's expenses. They struggled quite a bit to send him to private school, but his mother viewed it as a sacrifice that she needed to make. He was very understanding of his mother's hard work and remained a humble young man.

Phoenix's family went in and out of low-income status. She felt that she was low income especially when compared to her high school friends who had all that they wanted. Instead of applying to twelve schools, Phoenix applied to six because of the application fees. Phoenix didn't have a car, and so she took the city bus to school. The stories of these students exemplify how limited finances added difficulties to their lives.

Influence of scholarship amount on college choice. When the low-income scholars received news of the Southwest University scholarship, although some had plans to attend other universities, they decided that the award was so large that they could not decline the offer. Three of the students described great distress that they “had to” finally choose Southwest University. Whether welcomed or as a last resort, the scholarship funds meant a college education was possible for some of the students. Each scholarship recipient shared individual stories of how the scholarship influenced decisions to attend Southwest University.

Clint was convinced that if he did not receive the scholarship, he would not have been able to attend college. Julie knew that her father could not financially support her through college, so she settled for less than her dream college because of the scholarship offer. Marcy’s parents had extended their financial means and were unable to fund their daughter’s college education. Marcy’s family felt that the scholarship was a huge relief because they knew that they would be unable to support her. Neil, after growing up struggling financially most of his life, logically decided to attend Southwest University without any emotional attachments. Finally, Phoenix’s income level was the major challenge when it came to her college choice. Her father worked full-time and her mother worked part-time, but they paid for all of their children to attend Catholic school, which significantly depleted their funds. Phoenix felt like she was on the lower-end of the income scale because she did not have luxuries like other kids in her school. One of the most apparent privileges of money is the ability to attend the

school of your choice. Phoenix was unable to do that, and it was a catastrophic event in her life.

Money was the number one reason the low-income students' decision to attend Southwest University. With no real options otherwise, Southwest University's offer was integral in their ability to attend college.

Student employment. Four of the five low-income students did not work. Julie, Marcy and Phoenix lived within the budget they are allowed via the scholarship and did not mention asking for financial help from their families. One of the students, Neil, did ask for help from his family but was very uncomfortable with asking. And lastly, Clint worked two jobs to meet his financial needs. He struggled and eventually experienced the exhaustion that comes with over commitment to work and school.

Early collegiate maturation. After choosing to attend Southwest University, the scholars began their journey into higher education. The excitement of a new place was accompanied by anxiety of the unknown. Two of the students remembered feeling overwhelmed by their first encounter with Southwest University.

First impression. Phoenix and Neil discussed feelings of shock after settling into a large college setting where they didn't know anyone. The size and population of the campus was a shock for these students. Adjusting to a large campus setting presented challenges to some of the study participants.

Homesickness or separation anxiety. Two of the five students, Julie and Neil, reported having homesickness. Julie was homesick because she missed her

friends and her boyfriend. Neil, however, just could not take being away from home. Both of them considered going back home but decided to stay at the university. The emotional ties back home were difficult to manage in these two cases. When the students engage more with people back home their homesickness increased.

Social life. As Julie and Neil became more involved in campus life, they their resolve to stay increased. A large factor in making them feel comfortable, along with the rest of the scholars, was their on-campus social life. In most cases, developing a small group of friends was enough to keep them happy and engaged in student life. They were, for the most part, not interested in large social gatherings but preferred to hang out with close friends.

Marcy did not live in the honors dorms but lived instead in a dorm near some high school friends. Her high school friends were the center of her social interaction during freshmen year. Marcy was optimistic about her first-year experience, but she was often naïve about relationships. She learned the hard way in her freshman year that not everyone was a “best friend;” she could have acquaintances.

Phoenix learned rather quickly the meaning of having healthy relationships in her life. Her social circle was often made up of people who would become dependent on her. She was so many things to so many people and finally, that stress, with some other major stresses, caused her to breakdown. As a result she took the time to rid herself of unhealthy relationships.

Academic adjustment. The scholars' social adjustment had periods of challenge and so did their academic life. All the low-income scholars reported having academic challenges within their first year at college. The scholars were seemingly well prepared for the rigor of their university courses, but often old study habits or patterns of ill-motivation caused them to not meet their potential.

Clint, Julie, and Neil had academic difficulties but were better able to maintain their GPA because of their pre-existing commitment to studying and doing well. Clint received the first C in his academic career. He was surprised by this because of the level of difficulty associates with his high school courses. In a depressed state, Clint called his mom for advice. Sophia's words of advice put her son's mind at ease. She understood what he was going through and helped him know how to get through it.

Julie had a hard time in her Spanish class. She always excelled in Spanish and tested into a 300-level course but was overwhelmed immediately while taking the class. Although she had a hard time with this class, Julie made the Dean's List. She continued to work hard, which is the pattern she developed as a child. She never had the perception that she was naturally smart or that school was easy for her, so she developed excellent study skills. Julie is motivated to do well in school.

Neil did well academically during his first year of college. He had a heavy course load, being engineering major, but he only received one C in an economics class that he grossly underestimated. He made sure that his parents understood that he would not be a 4.0 GPA with the major he chose.

Phoenix and Marcy, however, did not do as well academically. Interestingly, they both went to the same Catholic high school. They reported not having the best study habits. Phoenix reported not being engaged in the coursework and falling into her prior habit of not putting her best effort into the classes. Phoenix did not feel challenged in school and therefore her attention was not on her school work.

Marcy also fell into her pre-existing underperforming study habits. She did so badly that she nearly lost her scholarship. She had to appeal for her scholarship this semester. The fear of losing her scholarship was a catalyst for Marcy to want to do better with her studies.

Personal challenges. Phoenix disclosed one of the most compelling and detailed personal challenges of the entire group. She was severely depressed and suicidal because of many situations in her life, including not being satisfied academically and having an unhealthy romantic relationship. The frustration of not being able to attend her dream college was the onset of her depression. Her hopelessness resulted in a very strained emotional state and she became suicidal. In her highly depressed state she made the decision change her life. With the help of the university therapist, Phoenix was able to postpone some of her finals and was able to get back on track.

Matriarchal/child relationship progression. The interviews were centered on the relationships of the students and their parent of their choice throughout their entire life. All of the scholars expressed a special relationship

with their mothers who they chose to be interviewed for the study. The scholars reported the impact of their mothers from their early years.

Divorced or single parents. Three of the five students had divorced or single parents. Julie, Clint, and Neil's stories of being raised by a single mother were salient, but they reported that the actual divorce of their parents did not impact them. They were all very young when their parents divorced or split-up; as a result of youth, their life situation quickly stabilized.

Indirect messages. The parents of the low-income scholars sent indirect messages to their children related to college attendance by the examples of their own lives and the hardship they faced.

Clint, Phoenix, and Julie's parents had attended college. Sophia went to school when Clint was very young. Her mother took care of Clint while attending college classes. Her determination and her struggle was a firm example for Clint to pursue his education.

Phoenix's mother attended Southwest University. She was a huge supporter of her daughter's education and was very involved in making sure that Phoenix had excellent learning opportunities.

Julie's father attended college and shared his daughter's enthusiasm for attending college while helping her with preparations. Neil and Marcy come from first-generation college families. Neil understood his mother's sacrifice and internalized it in order to motivate himself. Marcy was the first student in her family to go to college. Her family was very proud.

Direct messages. In addition to the indirect examples of parents who attended college, most of the low-income students often received direct verbal messages from their parents to do well in school and succeed. These direct parental messages helped their children make better choices for the future relative to higher education.

Marcy's parents often communicated with their daughter about maintaining good grades so she could keep her scholarship. They feared that if Marcy did not do well, she would lose her scholarship and jeopardize her chances of continuing in higher education. Mira, Neil's mother, explained to him that she wanted him to have a good life. She let him know that the sacrifices were worth it if he lived up to his potential.

Positioning. In all but one of the low-income narratives, the scholar's interviewed parent made certain things happen on behalf of her child, which accelerated the student's academic progression. Three of the students were intentionally placed in Catholic school, at a great sacrifice for their parents. One student was in public school but his mother made certain that her son was taken care of in regards to his financial plans for college. The last student who did not report an instance of her parent positioning her academically did describe how her mother was involved in her daughter's social development because that is what she lacked.

Phoenix and Marcy were both Arizona natives who attended the same all-girls Catholic school—Maricopa. Their parents were aware of the school's reputation for preparing students for admittance to good colleges, so they made

necessary sacrifices to have their children enrolled in the school. Phoenix's mother attended Maricopa as a high-school student, and she influenced her daughter to also attend the school. Phoenix recognized that Maricopa had a large impact on her future success. In addition to helping Phoenix with being accepted into Maricopa, Lily assisted her daughter with the college selection process. She knew that her daughter needed to attend a school that would suit her and so she researched everything she could about appropriate schools. Although Lily was unable to foresee that her daughter would be unable to attend the school of her choice, she made sure that Phoenix had the information she needed to make the best decision.

Marcy, however, learned about Maricopa through a friend who gave a presentation at her school. She went home to her family and let them know she wanted to go to Maricopa. Otilia went on a fact finding mission in order to fulfill her daughter's request. Otilia's daughter wanted to attend Maricopa, and so she made that happen. She asked the questions and got the information. She positioned her daughter for academic success.

Mira, Neil's mother, also intentionally placed her son in a private Christian school. She was motivated by the caliber of education of the school and the Christian-centered learning environment. Mira made sure that her son went to the school that he wanted to attend. She, too, positioned her son for academic success.

Clint attended public school. His mother was concerned about his ability to attend college because of their financial circumstances. She took the initiative to fill out the financial aid application.

Julie's progression through the school system was similar to the pattern of a high-achieving student; however, she did not self-identify as high achieving. Her mother Colleen also did not label her daughter as high achieving. Therefore, Colleen may have felt that there was no special treatment needed for her daughter. She encouraged Julie's writing abilities, but she recognized, above all else, that her daughter lacked confidence. She made a special effort to make sure that Julie was exposed to dance and gymnastics that would help her to build her confidence. This tactic worked and Julie became more socially involved.

Communication. During the first year, the students were engaged in many new things. Their communication patterns with their parents varied. Some of the students spoke to their parents often, and others did not. However, the relationship between the scholar and their mothers improved and further developed over the course of the first year.

Clint and Marcy remained engaged in their parents' lives on the weekends because of their close proximity. Clint lived with his grandmother and provided her with financial support and help during the week. He also went home every weekend to be with his family. He remained in constant communication with his family, but he felt the strain of family obligations and over commitment. Clint's responsibilities at home and his obligations to himself are sometimes competing. He gets exhausted by all he has to do in the week.

Marcy's family lives within twenty minutes of Southwest University. She talks to them daily via text-messaging or phone. In addition, she visits them often on the weekends. As a result of living close to home, she is more involved with family members' lives. Marcy has felt the financial pressures at home.

Neil and Phoenix spoke to their parents during their first year, but their communication with their parents was not frequent. Additionally, when they talked to their parents, they avoided specific topics. They engaged in the lives of their families when visiting home and were always happy to be around their loving families.

Lastly, Julie's communication with her mother changed significantly over her first year in college. Julie's has always been more reserved with her mother. Her relationship with her mother eventually developed into one characterized by mutual respect.

Sexual orientation. Communication was strained when students and parents faced sexual-orientation issues. Two of the participants in the study confided matters of sexual orientation during interviews. Phoenix disclosed that she is a lesbian, and Julie disclosed that her mother was involved in a lesbian relationship while she was growing up. Both of them spoke in detail about their experiences. Phoenix expressed feeling uncomfortable discussing with her family members specifics about her personal relationships. Her mother is aware of her sexual orientation, but they rarely talk about it.

Julie had an awkward introduction to her mother's sexual orientation. She believed that her mother's girlfriend was just a friend who lived with them. It was

not until middle school that she understood the nature of their relationship. Julie accepted her mother's sexual orientation but did not like her choice in a partner.

Phoenix and Julie chose to share intimate details of their lives, but their mothers did not mention the issue of sexual orientation during their interviews. Communications relative to sexual orientation and its impact on their relationship was nearly non-existent between mothers and daughters.

Summary of Low-Income Student Findings

There were similarities within this group that were also present in the high-income group. First, there were similar academic progressions; student participants shared an early desire for reading and enrollment in gifted programs. They were motivated learners, and their parents positioned them in schools or circumstances that enhanced the students' academic potential. Second, racial identity was a shared issue. Most of the students were biracial. Third, their low-income status and the scholarship amount influenced their decisions to attend Southwest University. Fourth, early collegiate maturation included academic and personal challenges that were similar for both student income groups. Lastly, students in both groups reported changes in their matriarchal/child relationships, specifically the development of interdependent relationships during the first year of college.

Speaking from the "I"

"The researcher must have had the experience being explored...because ultimately it is through the researcher's filters that all study materials are 'collected, processed, interpreted and expressed'" (Rendón, 2009).

I am the researcher. I was once the scholarship recipient and the student. I am now the parent. I am the filter through which the research has been collected, processed, interpreted, and will be presented in the final chapter of this study. With every student and parent narrative, I was drawn in by the mystery and connection to the human condition that I shared with each interviewee. My study became the expression of others' stories, and my filters were galvanized by my own life experiences, many which parallel those of the students and parents who participated in this study. Given this understanding, it is necessary to share my narrative. When one truly understands herself, then she can begin to understand others. I now submit my narrative, the tenth narrative in this study, which concludes the data gathering phase and provides a critical foundation for analysis of the collected student and parent narratives.

Narrative 10: Crystal Ulibarrí-Nasio, Autobiography, and Parents Ronald and Rachel Ulibarrí

I was born in Paramount, California to Ronald and Rachel Ulibarrí, their second and last child. I was welcomed into this world by my loving parents, older brother, and wonderful extended family. My parents were in their teen-age years during the Chicano power movement of the 1970s. My mother, Rachel, who was a student at East Los Angeles College at the time, was involved with protests and later began a thriving immigration business just prior to the Amnesty of the 1980s. Her mother, my grandmother, was a personal associate of Cesar Chavez. My mother knew and spoke to tens of thousands, via radio and hotel conferences, of people seeking legalization. My father, Ronald, a blue-eyed, medium brown

haired and husky young man, was a talented baseball player. His brother and sister did not value their Hispanic identity, but he always felt a sense of responsibility to his language and people. It came as a great surprise to his family that my father chose to marry a Chicana, but he knew that he wanted his children to grow up with knowledge of who they were.

In the 1950s and early 1960s, both of my parents grew up in Los Angeles at a time when Hispanics were being stripped of their language and culture in the school system. My mother was told she had an “accent” and was held back in the first grade only later to skip a grade because she was extremely intelligent. Her mother and grandparents taught her Spanish, but she spoke English at home and at school because that was what was socially acceptable. My father’s family spoke “pocho,” which is broken Spanish. When he went to visit his extended family in New Mexico, his cousins often made fun of him because he did not speak Spanish as well as they did.

My father and mother attended excellent high schools. Their parents sent them to the best schools available in the area. My mother traveled many miles to attend Huntington Park High School, which at the time was a predominately White high school. She used one of her aunt’s addresses on her records so she could attend the school. My father attended an all-boys Catholic high school. Their parents understood the power of positioning within the education system and made sure their children went to the best schools available.

My parents learned the principle of positioning first hand from their parents and later utilized the same methods with my brother and me. We went to

the best Catholic K-8 school in the Los Angeles area. My mother, prior to my brother's birth, began volunteering at that church in order to assure his position and later my position as students. The financial strain on my parents to send my brother, me, and my uncle to the same school was enormous. During the 1980s, the financial commitment was nearly \$1,000 per month. That was a large sacrifice because my parents were supporting my grandmother and my dying grandfather as well. They continued to do this every year, and I understood the privilege it was to be at the Catholic school. There were some years when I didn't get new uniforms. Oftentimes, my mother had a seamstress adjust my old uniform to fit me by switching out a button or adding fabric.

My mother recalled that I had an extended vocabulary as early as age five, including words like "imitation" and "tolerate." In Catholic school, I was on the "advanced reading" track. During first through third grade years, I received nothing but excellent marks on my report cards. However, one experience in elementary school defined my academic experience from then on.

I took a reading comprehension test in third grade and scored low. This was a fluke, most probably related to something that was happening in my life at the time that distracted me. However, Sister Jennifer, the nun teaching me at the time, did not see it that way. She decided to drop me from the highest reading group down to the lowest reading group. I was so humiliated. Out of my anger, I decided that I was going to work hard to prove myself. I became singularly focused on the reading assignments and read everything with close attention. When the next week's exam came around, I received a 100% on the test, and

Sister Jennifer had no choice but to place me back in the advanced reading group. Although I triumphed in that situation, it still left an impression on me; from then on, I felt that I was the fraud in the smart group. I believed I was the least of my schoolmates and that I really didn't deserve to be at the school. My newly found passion for excelling and hard work was the fuel that caused me to overachieve, to perform well above others' expectations of me. I continued to do well in elementary school but never received above a 3.0 GPA. The school did not believe in "giving out As" even to those who deserved it.

Around fifth grade, the L.A riots broke out and the terror was all around us. While helping our neighbor board up his sporting goods store, we could hear the mob of angry looters coming toward us. We were confined to our home for three days. As a result of the LA riots, and the Watts riots my parents lived through, they decided to move us to Riverside County, California. The sudden move happened midway through the school year and because my parents did not want to interrupt their children's schooling (my brother was in the eighth grade and I was in the fifth grade), my mother chose to drive us back and forth to the Catholic school every morning and afternoon. This drive was over 70 miles one way. She was determined to make sure my brother graduated eighth grade with his peers.

When we moved to Riverside County, the public high school in the area had a reputation for being a "ghetto" school. My mother said, "I just took us out of the ghetto; I am not sending my kids back." She researched the necessary steps to transfer us to a better school a couple towns away. We transferred and

continued in that school district through high school. The school district had a predominately White demographic with high-income and upper-middle income families being the norm.

In middle school, I received the first 4.0 report card of my life. I was shocked and elated. I maintained that GPA every semester during middle school. I was placed in advanced math courses and was in pre-algebra in seventh grade, then algebra in eighth grade.

My transition to high school was easy. My brother and two other cousins were attending the high school, and my father worked as a campus supervisor at my high school during that time. I was in the “smart kid” track, and so when the counselors planed my schedule, I received all the courses necessary for me to competitively enter a four-year university. I earned nothing less than a 3.83 GPA during my high school yeas with a B in one class, either science or math. In my junior and senior year, I began stacking my course load with AP and honors courses. My GPA was inflated, and I soared passed my cohorts who decided to “take it easy” their senior year. By the end of senior year, I was in the top 10 of the students in my class. In addition to excelling academically, I was a talented athlete and a highly involved leader at school and in the community. I even went as far as becoming the youngest member on the board of trustees for a center created for underprivileged and motel teenage girls founded in Orange County. I was precisely following my mother’s mantra, “Don’t just kill them, slaughter them.” With my pre-existing insecurity of testing constantly on my mind, I made

sure to over achieve so that my qualifications would be so irresistible that no school would ever turn me down.

As a result of my reputation and purposefully developed relationship with the school counselors, I was called into the office by a caring high school counselor who personally handed me the first application for the Gates Millennium Scholarship. I felt it was an honor for her to seek me out, and I filled out the lengthy application. My mother, on the other end, was contacting counselors at my chosen universities and building relationships with the schools' scholarship offices. She was busy talking to the counselors and other university representatives about me and acquiring necessary information and application materials. My parents even hired a scholarship consultant for a one-time visit of \$300 to teach us how to search for scholarships. The consultant provided us a comprehensive scholarship booklet. I filled out 40 applications for scholarships at universities across the country.

In March, I had not received any scholarship award, so my mother, grandmother, and I decided to travel to Brigham Young University-Provo to plead my case. We knew that I would qualify for financial aid because my parents were struggling with their business at the time, but my mom wanted to secure a scholarship for me. We traveled 11 hours in our "reliable" car and walked into the multicultural student services office on campus. We met with the first available counselor, and I showed him my resume. I sold my qualifications to him; although he made no promises at that time, he handed me a need-based scholarship application. We filled out the application and returned the next day.

When I went to turn in the application, he pulled my mother, grandmother and me into the room and told us that there would “no longer be blue collar workers in our family” and that I qualified for their Leadership Scholarship, which was more money than we had hoped for. This was an answer to prayers and, in our minds, I was set.

After high school graduation, we were making plans for my departure. My mother and I were in the JC Penny department store selecting clothes that I could mix and match to get me through my first year of college. We had a small budget and wanted to make sure I had all that I needed for the snowy weather. My father called my mom’s cell phone while I was in the changing room and asked to speak to me. He told me I received a letter from Gates Millennium Scholars. I knew I was a finalist for the scholarship but had put it out of my mind because the competition was so tough. I had no idea what it was going to say and asked my dad to read it to me. He began “Dear Crystal Ulibarrí, Congratulations! You have been selected as a Gates Millennium Scholar.” I was so excited. We were jumping up and down. My dad went on and read the rest of the letter then paused. He nearly screamed “they are going to give you \$13,000 dollars. There is a check here.” I was shocked and asked him if that was for the year. He said “No it’s for the semester; you will receive another check next semester.” I fell to my knees and cried. My mother didn’t know what happened and confirmed it with my father; she joined me on the floor and embraced me. We both wept. Needless to say, I got all the clothes I needed and some I just wanted that day! It was a miracle.

The drive up to Brigham Young University for my first year of college was full of inspirational talks. My mother told me the struggle she had because she did not receive her education. She told me her famous phrase, “Education is the great equalizer, Crystal. Once you are educated *no one* can take that away from you.” We arrived at the dorms and unpacked my things. My mom, a former interior designer, made my room comfortable and beautiful. I had everything I needed, including a plant and humidifier for my asthma because she wanted to make sure I took care of myself. My mother stayed about three days getting me all settled in, and my father flew in to drive back with her. Saying good bye to them was the hardest thing I ever had to do. I had no family in Provo, Utah. I was a recent member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which helped me to know that I would find good friends soon. As I watched my parents drive away, I stayed strong but cried all the way back to my dorm. I felt absolutely and completely alone. I was so scared. I didn’t know what to do, so I just put a smile on my face and made friends. I learned the layout of the campus and walked my class schedule the day before school started. I embarked on my higher education journey.

The first year was very exciting. I never had a problem making friends, so I was able to build friendships quickly with the girls on my dorm floor. I was very outgoing and a risk taker, so I attracted girls like me who were loud, funny, and flirty. I got along with my roommate, but she was from Minnesota and liked folk music and I was from California and liked hip hop music. We talked a lot but did not have the same group of friends. Through the semester, she became the

only friend I would have as I soon found out that those other girls did not have the same goals or standards that I had. I let them all go and focused on the person I wanted to become. I got closer to God and prayed often about what I wanted in life.

My first semester at college, I had a challenge in science. I decided I wanted to complete my general education requirement right away and took physical science and zoology in the same semester. I struggled so much in zoology that I hired a private tutor two times a week to help me and studied four hours a day. All this work raised my F to a D-. I was so worried that one day, full of tears, I called my dad. He had returned to college when I was in high school and had received his teaching credential the year before I entered college. He told me, "Crystal, you don't have to stay in that class. You can always drop it." I didn't know that you could drop classes. I thought you had to stay in them no matter what. I took his advice and dropped the class and ended up doing very well that semester.

Overall, I adapted well to university life. I continued to speak to my parents everyday, and I soon got over being homesick. I believe that going away to college was the best decision of my life because it was in that moment of complete isolation that I learned I could truly do well on my own. I filled my time with good things and moved forward with added strength. I took the teachings of my parents and their efforts to position me into the right places seriously and made sure to gain the full benefit of their hard work.

Chapter 6: Discussion of the Findings and Implications of the Study

“As I review their lives, I see my own. I am their story, and they are mine. I am forever connected to these nine students, and the impact they had on me will remain with me as I strive to create change.” (Ulibarrí-Nasio, personal journal entry, April 28, 2010)

The purpose of this study was to expand the literature relative to an understanding of high-achieving Hispanic students. Chapter two identified several theories and studies that contributed to the existing body of literature on high-achieving scholars. Some of those studies were quantitative and others were qualitative. Scholars such as Rendón (1992) and Rodriguez (1982), as well as scholars, wrote about their graduate experiences via personal reflections of their academic progression and assimilation. Those studies that sought to understand high-achieving students often described student participants’ experiences using questionnaires and surveys that inquired about specific points in time, such as high school or college experiences. Many of the high-achieving scholars in previous studies made reference to their family or parents being a large influence in their educational pursuits. However, the parents were rarely interviewed or, if they were interviewed, it was in the context of a program such as the Puente Project. Lastly, the only article written about the National Hispanic Recognition Program Recipients (later named National Hispanic Scholars) was in 1988, which was a quantitative. Therefore, not been much has been recently written about these high-achieving scholars.

This study attempts to fill in those gaps in the literature and updates the existing research on National Hispanic Recognition Program Recipients or

National Hispanic Scholars. Utilizing an oral history approach, the nine National Hispanic Scholars interviewed for this study, representing two income groups, were given the opportunity to tell their story in symphony with their mothers. The mothers provided a wealth of knowledge that allowed me to gain insight into the meanings related to certain powerful events in the students' lives. The matriarchal/child relationship throughout the student's lifetime was described, and I learned much about the dynamics of support within that relationship. As I asked questions relating to early childhood through early collegiate maturation, the students and mothers described the students' academic progression as well as their experiences related to receiving the scholarship, making the decision to attend Southwest University, and their early collegiate maturation. All of the narratives were unique, but there were themes within and across all income groups that are significant to understanding more fully the high-achieving Hispanic scholar.

In this final chapter, I will first synthesize the themes according to similarities and differences across and within income groups and display the data in tables. I will then present a discussion of the key findings according to each thematic category and describe how the findings add to the existing literature in particular fields of research. I will conclude by presenting the implications of this study as well as recommendations for future research.

Overview of Chapters Four and Five

In chapters four and five, five major categories were identified with several sub-categories. Chapter four is comprised of the high-income analysis,

and chapter five is comprised of the low-income analysis, thus presenting the major themes as related to the specific income group. This process is referred to as the within-group thematic analysis. The within-group themes were reported in chapter four (high income) and chapter five (low income). The purpose of this present chapter is to identify the similarities and difference of both income brackets. This process is referred to as the across-groups thematic analysis. The across-group themes are consolidated and presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Similarities Across Groups

Key Findings	High Income/ Low Income
1. Academic Progression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Students were engaged in early reading. b. Students were placed in “gifted programs.” c. Most students were self-motivated and independent learners.
2. Racial identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Most students were bi-racial and often chose “other” as their racial identity on standardized forms. b. Race was determined by skin color and “look.” c. Students (and some parents) received negative peer reaction to the scholarship because of affirmative action issues.
3. Scholarship Award	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The amount of the scholarship had a large influence on the students’ decision to attend Southwest University.
4. Early Collegiate Maturation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Students experienced overwhelming first impression because of size of university and new experiences. b. Students often felt homesick, with a few of them wanting to transfer back home c. Students enjoyed a small and simple social life. d. Students had academic challenges within their first year that varied from mere frustration to more severe outcomes.

Key Findings	High Income/ Low Income
5. Matriarchal/ Child Relationship Progression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Most of the students' parents were divorced when the students were in their elementary years. The students reported that the divorce did not have a significant impact on their life. b. Parents conveyed indirect and direct messages to student about attending college. c. Parents intentionally "positioned" their child so they could benefit from better schools or special circumstances that could ensure their academic success. d. The parents, too, were positioned in their life and were living examples of the power of "positioning." e. Student/parent communication improved, but most students were non-specific with their parents regarding their academic and social lives.

Discussion of Table 4

In Clewell and Joy's (1988) study, student participants showed a similar pattern as depicted in Table 4. The researchers found that the National Hispanic Recipient Program winners (a) resembled the income level of their White counterparts, (b) were academically prepared for the university, (c) had a good command of English and Spanish, (d) were academically challenged in college but did well, and (e) were involved in extracurricular activities. The demographics of the Hispanic scholars have only slightly changed over the past twenty plus years.

The National Hispanic Scholars in this present study were likely to have been high income or, if not high income, have attended predominantly White schools. They have an academic progression that tracks them into the right courses that ensure them of being academically prepared for the university. All of

them were academically challenged their first year in college but remained on scholarship with a 3.25 cumulative GPA, which could be consider “doing well” in college. Although there were a couple of students who were on the borderline of losing their scholarship, they still managed to maintain it. The one major difference is that most of the scholars in the study did not speak Spanish or, if they did speak Spanish, they were still trying to develop proficiency.

As previously noted, the high-income and low-income students in this study were very similar to the Hispanic students of 20 years ago. The National Hispanic Scholars at Southwest University have significant similarities across income groups. They showed a similar academic progression with early reading and participation in gifted programs, which were central to their intellectual development. Most of the students racially identified as bi-racial. They experienced racist remarks from their peers at school or at home because of the imbedded racial identification aspect of this merit scholarship. These comments caused some of the students to consider the scholarship as second rate. The amount of the scholarship was the key to their decision to attend Southwest University. They were very similar in their early collegiate maturation including being homesick; having academic challenges; living a quiet social life; and consistently, although non-specifically, communicating with their parents.

Finally, the most significant finding of similarities is that both income groups benefited from the positioning efforts of their parents. In high-income students, their mothers made sure the students were considered Hispanic or that they were provided the opportunity to apply for race-based scholarships. In low-

income students, the mothers made certain that their children attended the best schools available to them, primarily in the form of parochial schools. The intentional placement of their children in advantageous situations was key to the students' academic success. A few of the parents were recipients of positioning by their parents; seemingly the practice of positioning was learned from their parents and applied to their children. Having identified the similarities of both income brackets, this across-groups thematic analysis now turns to the differences in the areas of academic progression and scholarship award (see Table 5).

Table 5

Differences Across Groups

Key Findings	High Income	Low Income
1. Academic Progression	a. Students referred to counselors or teachers as information givers who were not particularly motivating or encouraging.	a. Students credited teachers and/or counselors for their assistance in motivating and encouraging them.
2. Scholarship Award	<p>a. Most students were not in a high-income status their entire lives. They shifted from middle income to high income over the students' life span, mostly because of parents' divorce.</p> <p>b. Most students worked because they "elected" to contribute to their miscellaneous expenses.</p> <p>c. The scholarship was a "perk" to attend Southwest University but the student still had other real options.</p>	<p>a. Students reported having lifestyle struggles while growing up that persisted through their freshmen year of college.</p> <p>b. All but one student did not work and simply lived within budget.</p> <p>c. The scholarship was the difference between not going to college or attending a state school or community college.</p>

Discussion of Table 5

The National Hispanic Scholars varied in two major categories: academic progression and scholarship award. With regard to the academic progression, the low-income scholars were unique in their specific discussion of motivating and encouraging teachers or counselors. Often the teachers or counselors described in the low-income students' narratives challenged the scholars to do better academically or think outside the box. The teachers and counselors had positive impacts on these students and were considered pivotal in each of the students' lives. The high-income students did recognize the efforts of their teachers and counselors, but they perceived them as a way to gain information about necessary steps for college.

The majority of student participants were from divorced families, but the difference was that high-income students' mothers, because of their education, were often able to secure high paying employment positions. The low-income students' financial challenges, on the other hand, persisted through high school and often college. Astoundingly, the high-income students were more likely to work than the low-income students. The high-income students worked because they didn't want to "depend" on their parents and wanted to feel a sense of responsibility. Most of the students in both categories did not work and lived within their budget. Some received assistance from their parents on a monthly basis.

Lastly, the meaning placed on the scholarship was very different for the high-income scholars and the low-income scholars. However, both groups saw

the scholarship as valuable and significant in their lives. The high-income scholars were more likely to view the scholarship as an opportunity to “pay” for their education. It was an added benefit to them but was not their only means for attending school. Conversely, low-income students viewed the scholarship as their “only” option. Often the low-income students had plans to attend another university, but because of their financial difficulties, were not able to do so. The Southwest University scholarship provided resources for them to obtain an education.

Academic Progression

Miller (2005) as well as Morgan and Ramist (1998) defined the patterns of achievement among high-achieving scholars. They reported the AP and SAT scores of the students in their studies and found a lower percentage of students of color succeeding within these definitions. While examining students’ lives to gain an understanding of their high school aptitude is important, each student possesses a long academic history. Therefore, focusing solely on the high school experience does not reveal the whole picture. The students in this study, along with their parents, were asked to describe the students’ academic preparation over their lifetime. I discovered that these high achieving scholars, across all income levels, exhibited academic excellence as early as pre-kindergarten. Placing value on pre-kindergarten education is consistent with Gándara’s (2005) recommendation that there be a systemic effort to improve the intellectual rigors of preschool and kindergarten programs that serve Hispanic students. These young students can gain valuable skills such as reading comprehension that will

prepare them to enter programs such as GATE and other academically advanced tracks in the future.

Additionally, it must be understood that although academically advanced students might seem to progress well through their elementary and middle school grades, they may tend to develop bad study habits if the academic environment is not challenging enough. These poor study habits often persist through high school and college. The students in both income groups reported enjoying courses that were interactive and thought provoking. Building the critical thinking of the students is the purpose of many of the gifted programs, but all gifted programs are not the same. Therefore, some high achieving students do not remain engaged in the learning process.

Racial Identity

Prior to the study, I assumed the National Hispanic Scholars would be Hispanic identified. I expected there would be some bi-racial students, but I had the perception that by very definition of the National *Hispanic* Scholars that the students would be strongly linked to their Hispanic racial identity. However, this was not the case in the study. Most of the students in the study were bi-racial, Hispanic and White. By definition, being bi-racial does not mean that the students are not racially identified, but it does present a confusing situation because of institutions' insistence on mono-racial categories. Students are intersectional and have varied identities across many "categories" such as race, income, and sexual orientation. The institution often categorizes the students in

monolithic categories and does not view them as complex individuals who are capable of subscribing to numerous and differing college subcultures.

The exposure of the university's mono-racial way of thinking was described in Calleroz (2003). She believed that universities do not allow for bi-racial students to exist comfortably with their shared identities but were asking the bi-racial students to identify with one race or the other.

Calleroz (2003) interviewed 11 bi-racial students and found that their racial identity was partially developed by the messages of their parents and also the perceptions of their peers. I submit that this was true with the students who participated in this study. The students, more often than not, shared their parents' racial identity.

In addition, the scholars referenced their skin color several times in the narratives. Those students who were bi-racial and had light complexions were less likely to be viewed by their peers as Hispanic. Furthermore, these students were more likely to select the category of "other" on the demographic sections of exam forms.

Regardless of the students' carefully selected racial identity, once they were "exposed" to their peers via the scholarship announcement, they sometimes experienced microaggressions. Racial microaggressions are "subtle, innocuous, preconscious, or unconscious degradations and put downs" (Yosso, Smith, Ceja & Solorzano, 2009). These microaggressions were present in this study as verbal criticism from family and friends and occurred across income groups. Most commonly, the negative reactions would downgrade their accomplishment with

rants of affirmative action. As a result, some of the students felt that the scholarship was second rate, and a few of them developed coping strategies such as calling themselves National Scholars instead of National Hispanic Scholars.

Scholarship Award

The purpose of this study was to examine the idea of race and income as being synonymous. Often in the literature, and in everyday language, we replace income specific circumstances and subscribe them to racial groups. This practice perpetuates stereotypes and suggests that certain groups are predisposed to live within certain income brackets.

This study exposed the different places of privilege and lived experiences within each group, low-income and high-income. All student participants, whether high-income or low-income, experienced a period of economic transition and struggle. Those students who self-identified as high income felt the strain of finances at the beginning of their life, which was likely the result of their parents' divorce. They saw their mothers go to work; however, because most of their mothers were educated, they were in the position to receive higher paying jobs. Conversely, the low-income students reported in their narratives very direct examples of poverty that persisted throughout their lives, including utilizing public transportation, being unable to afford school uniforms, and moving from home to home to try and find a better monthly rent.

Paulson and St. John (2002) conducted a comprehensive study in which they described low-income and high-income students according to certain characteristics such as; parental education level and first-generation status. They

found that low-income students' mothers had less education, were first generation, and chose schools near home. When comparing this study with Paulson and St. Johns's study, I determined the findings were somewhat consistent in the precisely discussed ways. The low-income students were more likely to have mothers with less education. However, there were only three students in the study who were first generation to this country, and two of them were considered low income. I do not believe this to be a strong enough support to conclude that my study findings lines up with Paulson and St. Johns's findings.

Paulson and St. Johns (2002) reported student participants who are working, and they found that the highest percentage of working students were those of low-income status. However, this finding was not evidenced in my study. In fact, the low-income group had higher instances of non-working students and those living within budget than the high-income group. The uses of money earned from employment by students in this present study were consistent with Paulson and St. Johns's assertion that high-income students do not have to necessarily work and utilize their earnings for miscellaneous expenses.

Both groups in this present study reported that the scholarship was the key factor in their decision to attend Southwest University. However, the meaning attached to the scholarship amount was different between the high-income and low-income groups. The high-income students viewed the scholarship amount as a "perk" or incentive to attend Southwest University; some of them believed that it would be nonsensical for them to choose to attend anywhere else because of the amount being offered them. Though parents in both the low-income and high-

income groups were supportive of students making independent decisions about college selection, there was the feeling among most of the high-income students that they were “electing” to attend Southwest University.

The low-income students either surrendered to the idea of attending Southwest University or saw it as a Godsend. Those students who surrendered to the idea of attending Southwest University were the students who were unable to attend their dream schools that were either prestigious (Reed College and Carnegie Mellon University) or luxurious (Hawaii University). After understanding their financial circumstance, which in all cases was made clear to them by their parents, the low-income students made the decision to accept the scholarship and attend Southwest University. Although their decisions were logical, three of the students still felt some underlying resentment that they did not share with their parents. In other words, if the students had the same offer at the university of their choice, they would have chosen the other school instead of Southwest University. Fortunately, over the course of their first-year experiences, all of the low-income students realized the opportunity the scholarship represented and were grateful for it. Those students who viewed the scholarship as integral in their ability to attend college also had plans to attend other universities but abandoned those plans willingly when the scholarship was presented.

Early Collegiate Maturation

Once enrolled in at Southwest University, the low-income and high-income students experienced the first year in very similar ways. The students felt

initial shock and were overwhelmed during their first week of living in the dorms and making new friendships. The students were more outgoing and socialized with other students, but maintained small and simple social lives. Most students participated in the Honors College and benefited from the small group of like-minded students in their classes. In addition, the Honors College provided the validation (Jalomo & Rendón, 2004) that they needed. The Honors College provided special dormitories as well as counselors and teachers that furnished mentorship and academic stimulation.

Although the students had an engaging environment, they still had academic and sometimes personal challenges that threatened their ability to persist. All students reported having a difficult time academically during their first year. Some of the students made the conscious decision not to do well, falling back on old patterns of laziness, while others were so unengaged with classes, that they put little effort into the courses.

Ultimately, the students either adjusted their major or suffered through the semester earning the lowest grade in their academic careers. In one case, the student was so depressed by her lack of academic motivation, as well as other relationship factors, that she had to seek the university counseling staff for help. The university provided her with support and gave her extra time after the completion of the semester to complete her academic work.

The students were resilient but vulnerable. Gándara (2005) found that the high-achieving students in her high school study followed the college attendance path and were, by all intents, going to persist, but because of factors outside their

control, they did not persist. Thus, the high-achieving student's future is fragile "hanging by a thin thread of hope" that nothing will go terribly wrong in their extended families, or in school, that will dash their pursuit of academic success" (p. 3). I submit that the students in my study were resilient, yet vulnerable. Some of them had enormous personal and academic challenges that threatened their academic success, but they found comfort, mainly in their parent(s) and some help from peers and university personnel. Had those extra supports not been available, the students would likely have dropped out of college or worse.

Matriarchal/Child Relationship Progression

This study contributes the most to family research and understandings of the matriarchal/child relationship progression in the context of the student's academic progression over time. In high-achieving scholar literature, as well as college choice literature, students, and most specifically Hispanic students, credit their parents as being their strongest influence. Although the literature has described the experience of the student and/or parent, it is usually done in connection with a program. The National Hispanic Scholars program is a nationwide merit-based scholarship funded by universities. It is the longest existing Hispanic scholar recognition program with the most widely accepted definition of high achievement—the PSAT/NMSQT. Thus, this group is an appropriate sample from which to glean understanding about the experiences of high-achieving Hispanic scholars and their parents throughout the scholars' academic progression.

Ceja (2004) described the indirect and direct messages utilized by Latino parents to inspire, motivate, and encourage their children to pursue and succeed in higher education. The parents in this study had little formal education, but they were able to communicate through their words (direct messages) and their examples (indirect messages), the value of higher education.

Providing further support for Ceja's (2004) theory, the parents in my study, across both income categories, utilized indirect and direct messages to encourage their student to pursue and persist in higher education. The examples of student participants' mothers going back to college or their fathers attending college sent a strong indirect message that education was important. Also, communicating with their children about how to take advantage of every opportunity and to do their best academically were direct messages that inspired the students to push forward and excel.

Power of Positioning

"You're the captain of your own ship. I'm just the navigator. I can plan the map for you and tell you which way you need to go, but everybody decides their own course." (Gloria, Stephanie's mother, personal communication, April 6, 2010)

As a result of the unique opportunity to interview both the student and the parent, I learned about an additional aspect of parental encouragement called "positioning." Positioning is defined as the purposeful and deliberate acts taken by parents with the intention of placing their children in schools, environments, or situations that will increase their chances for academic success. In harmony with indirect messages and direct messages, positioning can assist in eliminating obstacles and finding openings for the student. Parents, or mothers as highlighted

in this study, are the navigators of their child's ship. They lead the way and help them steer. However; it is the students' decision to follow parental direction. Also, there is no guarantee that a student who is well positioned will be academically successful. In this study, positioning enhanced the students' likelihood of academic success, but was not a guarantee of such.

Nearly all mothers in my study used positioning to assist their child. Three of the low-income parents pressed through financial limitations to ensure that their children attended the best available parochial school. For example, Mira, a native of Panama, secured a position for her son in a Christian school. She worked two jobs during his high school years to make sure he remained in the private school. Christine, Gabrielle's mother, a high-income parent, made sure her daughter was considered Hispanic on official records, even from the time of her birth, in order to increase her daughter's chances for scholarships. Then again, in an effort to increase scholarship options, Dorothy, Angelica's mom, removed her daughter from an honors academy so her daughter could be ranked with her classmates. Additionally, Dorothy went through various channels to secure the National Hispanic Scholarship for her daughter. In each of these examples, it is evident that every movement was intentional and resources were used with careful attention to the desired outcome of ensuring their children's college education.

Positioning began as early as pre-kindergarten and did not end until the student was enrolled in the university. Parents were conscious of their efforts on behalf of their child, but the child was somewhat unaware of the work associated

with this positioning. In addition to the wealth of knowledge that is gleaned by understanding the power of positioning, it is interesting to note that there may be a multigenerational effect. In a few of the stories, the parents of the scholars sometimes described their own parents positioning them for success. For example, Christine's father, the San Antonio Mexican who wanted his children to experience the world, traveled with his daughters and sons to instruct them about the world around them.

Although the place and type of school are important, they are not the only considerations in the process of positioning. Parents can assist their child in any income bracket or school district by staying involved and seeking the best that particular school has to offer, as well as preparing them for college admissions and scholarships.

Connection to cultural capital literature. The term “positioning” can be set against the background of a larger school of thought—cultural capital and funds of knowledge. As explained in the literature review, Latino families are often seen as not valuing education and not having the necessary resources to gain the capital required to help their children. In this study, high-income and low-income mothers utilized cultural capital resulting from their prior exposure to college. Those mothers who lacked formal higher education preparation magnified their cultural capital by identifying the funds of knowledge available within their immediate sphere of influence that might help them support their children's pursuit of higher education. The low-income families did use cultural capital for the purpose of advancing their children into higher education.

Therefore, this study calls into question Bourdieu's (1986) assumption that cultural capital is ascribed only to the dominant culture. The low-income mothers not only used their personal cultural capital, but they were successful in navigating obstacles by accessing knowledge and resources within their spheres of influence in order to position their children for success in higher education.

Structural positioning meets parental positioning. When considering the term positioning in a broader context, a case can be made that the institution itself practices positioning in order to enhance the likelihood of attracting high achieving Hispanic scholars. In this study, the students often referred to the many letters and invitations they received from Southwest University. The scholarship offer letter, which detailed the award amount of \$92,000, was referred to in several of the scholar narratives. These narratives clearly indicated that the scholarship award made an impression on the student recipients. The university was described as intentional and deliberate in their advertisement of their programs when recruiting these high-achieving Hispanic students.

Many of the scholars in this study took advantage of the spring and summer campus tours made available to them as a direct result of their distinction as National Hispanic Scholars. They were introduced to the opportunities available to them via the university's honors college. Most of students were impressed with the honors college because of the resources available to them through an entire college dedicated to scholars like them. The honors college became an additional reason to attend Southwest University. Conversely, there

were a few students who were disillusioned by the honors college and had a difficult time adjusting to racially homogeneous dorms and subpar facilities.

Although university personnel did not directly contribute to the students' academic progression or positioning, as executed on their behalf by the students' mothers, university personnel did intentionally place the institution directly in the path of these students. In other words, parental positioning merged with university positioning when the scholar was identified as a perspective National Hispanic Scholar. The preparation of both parties—parents and university personnel—increased the likelihood that the students would accept the scholarships.

Discussion

This study focused on the stories of nine high-achieving Hispanic scholars. I was the tenth story because of my researcher responsibilities associated with analyzing the data. As I looked through the window of my experience, I was able to explore themes related to academic progression, racial identity, scholarship award, early collegiate maturation, and matriarchal/child relationship progression. When looked within, I found the key to my success and the success of many of the scholars in this study was “positioning.” Our academic success resulted from the carefully and lovingly crafted plans and efforts of our parents. We still had a choice to follow their navigation or not because we were, in all senses of the word, “captains of our own ship.” But because we chose to follow our parents' lead, we became more successful than we would have ever been without their support and guidance. I thank my parents, my

mother and my father, as well as all the mothers in this study that influenced their children and guided them toward success.

Implications for Policy

“Like Ruiz (1997), I believe that a group of people can theorize to develop a new set of agreements to guide transformational change...A small but critical mass of individuals can create what Gladwell (2000) calls a tipping point, a boiling point when an idea, trend, or social behavior, like an epidemic, bursts into society and spreads like wildfire.” (Rendón, 2009)

I agree with Dr. Rendón that transformational change can occur in the university and society. Embedded within the narratives of each of this study’s Hispanic scholars are nuggets of information that will help the university. The fortunate part is that those nuggets are easily found when we think of these students in terms of large university policy and social change. This study’s findings have implications for policy makers, including College Board representatives, recruiting universities, high school counselors, and entities educating parents.

College Board. The target population for this study was a select group of scholars identified by the College Board as a result of their high scores on the PSAT exam. The College Board is responsible for disseminating information on all qualified Hispanic students to U. S. universities and colleges. Valuable information about this student population can be gleaned from this study’s findings that could directly benefit the College Board. First, the College Board is lacking in the area of marketing the PSAT/NMSQT, the National Hispanic Recognition Program, and scholarship opportunities. All of this study’s student participants, both high income and low income, received the award more by

happenstance than intentional preparation. Many of the students were not even aware that the National Hispanic Recognition Program existed, and those who were aware had received information casually from a teacher or counselor.

Consequently, the number of students preparing for and participating in the PSAT/NMSQT is less than would be expected if the program was properly endorsed and advertised. Therefore, it is my recommendation that the College Board increase their advertising efforts through the dissemination of information to high school counselors and the general public about the PSAT/NMSQT and scholarship opportunities.

Recruiting universities. This study described in detail the influence the scholarship amount had on the students' decisions to attend Southwest University. The higher the scholarship amount, the more likely the students were to attend the university. Thus, Southwest University out-recruited their competition because of the amount of the scholarship, and proportion to total cost that it covered was extremely competitive with all other universities. Students from both the high-income and the low-income groups were impressed by the \$92,000 scholarship amount. The scholarship amount was an especially strong factor in the decision making process of low-income students. All students were highly influenced by Southwest University's commitment to attracting and financially supporting its National Hispanic Scholars.

Although the scholarship was a great benefit to the scholars, there was some concern, especially by the low-income students, about the effect of the scholarship's fixed award amounts. With annual tuition increases, the

scholarships' impact lessened. With fixed scholarship amounts, more students experience the financial strain associated with annual tuition and fee increases. In the case of the students whose parents contribute to their allotted monthly income, it may not immediately affect them, but with an uncertain economy, they, too, may be required to carry the load of unmet financial needs while pursuing their college education.

High school administration and counselors. Although some responsibility for PSAT/NMSQT advertisement has already been recommended to the College Board, further discussion about the essential role high schools and high school counselors have in this process is appropriate. In this study, on a few occasions, students spoke specifically about the impact that their high school counselors had in their lives. Nearly all interactions were positive with one case of a high school counselor being unavailable and aloof toward a student problem. As such, high school counselors can have an influence on students' college decisions, but more importantly, they represent accessibility to valuable information about the college search and application process as well as funding opportunities.

High school counselors should take an active role in disseminating college information to students. The PSAT/NMSQT and its consequential opportunity for scholarships, is a test that needs to be emphasized in all high schools. Nearly all of the students in this study had no prior knowledge about that National Hispanic Scholarship. They received the award, and later the scholarship, largely based on happenstance. Making information of the PSAT/NMSQT more readily

available may assist many students gain access to much needed scholarship opportunities.

Entities educating parents. The theory of positioning is very powerful. Educating parents about positioning will heighten awareness and establish a foundation of understanding amongst educators and parents. Parent involvement groups such as the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) or other centralized groups like the Puente Project would better serve their constituents by including positioning as an essential part of their mission and vision. Entities educating parents should study the theory of positioning and assist parents in understanding their role in influencing their child's life. Although there is no guarantee that their children will choose to follow their careful navigation, they are enhancing the likelihood of their child's academic success.

Implications for Future Research

This study was instrumental in filling the gap in the literature relative to high-achieving Hispanic scholars, family, income, and matriarchal/child relationship progressions. However, there are some fundamental questions that can still be answered in future research, including:

1. How does the theory of positioning, identified in this study, span into a multigenerational model?
2. What does this study look like duplicated in other populations, such as middle-income Hispanics, other racial groups, or other National Merit Scholars and National Achievement Scholars?

3. How can the theory of positioning be expanded to include more groups of people?

Designing research to answer these questions will help to expand the literature on high-achieving student of all racial backgrounds and the matriarchal/child relationship progression. There is a wealth of knowledge still available for eager and willing young researchers within this field of study.

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APPENDIX A

BACHELOR'S DEGREES CONFERRED BY DEGREE-GRANTING
INSTITUTIONS BY RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUP AND SEX OF
STUDENT: SELECTED YEARS, 1976-77 TO 2001-02:
PERCENTAGES FOR TOTALS CATEGORY

Year	Percentage Distribution of Degrees Conferred						
	Total	White Non-Hispanic	Black Non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Asian/Pacific Islander	American Indian/Alaska Native	Non-Resident Alien
1976-77 ¹	100.0	88.0	6.4	2.0	1.5	0.4	1.7
1978-79 ²	100.0	87.3	6.6	2.2	1.7	0.4	1.9
1980-81 ³	100.0	86.4	6.5	2.3	2.0	0.4	2.4
1984-85 ⁴	100.0	85.3	5.9	2.7	2.6	0.4	3.0
1986-87	100.0	84.9	5.7	2.7	3.3	0.4	3.0
1988-89 ⁵	100.0	84.6	5.7	2.9	3.7	0.4	2.7
1989-90	100.0	84.4	5.8	3.1	3.7	0.4	2.5
1990-91	100.0	83.5	6.1	3.4	3.9	0.4	2.7
1991-92	100.0	82.9	6.4	3.6	4.2	0.5	2.5
1992-93	100.0	81.7	6.7	3.9	4.4	0.5	2.8
1993-94	100.0	80.3	7.2	4.3	4.8	0.5	2.9
1994-95	100.0	78.8	7.5	4.7	5.2	0.6	3.2
1995-96	100.0	77.8	7.9	5.0	5.5	0.6	3.2
1996-97	100.0	76.8	8.0	5.3	5.9	0.6	3.3
1997-98	100.0	76.1	8.3	5.6	6.1	0.7	3.3
1998-99	100.0	75.6	8.5	5.8	6.2	0.7	3.2
1999-2000	100.0	75.1	8.7	6.1	6.3	0.7	3.2
2000-01	100.0	74.5	8.9	6.2	6.3	0.7	3.2
2001-02	100.0	74.2	9.0	6.4	6.4	0.7	3.2

¹ Excludes 1,121 men and 528 women whose racial/ethnic group was not available.

² Excludes 1,279 men and 571 women whose racial/ethnic group was not available.

³ Excludes 258 men and 82 women whose racial/ethnic group was not available.

⁴ Excludes 6,380 men and 4,786 women whose racial/ethnic group was not available.

⁵ Excludes 1,400 men and 1,005 women whose racial/ethnic group was not available.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Higher Education General Information Survey (HEGIS), "Degrees and Other Formal Awards Conferred" surveys 1976-77 through 1984-85, and Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), "Completions" surveys, 1986-87 through 1998-99, and Fall 2000 through Fall 2002 surveys. (This table was originally prepared in August 2003.)

Note. For years 1984-85 to 2001-02, reported racial/ethnic distributions of students by level of degree were used to estimate race/ethnicity for students whose race/ethnicity was not reported. Data for 1998-99 were imputed using alternative procedures. Detail may not sum to totals due to rounding.

APPENDIX B

BACHELOR'S DEGREES CONFERRED BY DEGREE-GRANTING
INSTITUTIONS BY RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUP AND SEX OF
STUDENT: SELECTED YEARS, 1976-77 TO 2001-02: NUMBERS
FOR TOTALS CATEGORY

Year	Number of Degrees Conferred						
	Total	White Non-Hispanic	Black Non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Asian/Pacific Islander	American Indian/Alaska Native	Non-Resident Alien
1976-77 ¹	917,900	870,688	58,636	18,743	13,793	3,326	15,714
1978-79 ²	919,540	802,542	60,246	20,096	15,407	3,410	17,839
1980-81 ³	934,800	807,319	60,673	21,832	18,794	3,593	22,589
1984-85 ⁴	968,311	826,106	57,473	25,874	25,395	4,246	29,217
1986-87	991,264	841,818	56,560	26,988	32,624	3,968	29,306
1988-89 ⁵	1,016,350	859,703	58,078	29,918	37,674	3,951	27,026
1989-90	1,051,344	887,151	61,046	32,829	39,230	4,390	26,698
1990-91	1,094,538	914,663	66,375	37,342	42,529	4,583	29,616
1991-92	1,136,553	941,663	72,680	41,087	47,428	5,228	28,467
1992-93	1,165,178	952,194	78,099	45,417	51,481	5,683	32,304
1993-94	1,169,275	939,008	83,909	50,299	55,689	6,192	34,178
1994-95	1,160,134	914,610	87,236	54,230	60,502	6,610	36,946
1995-96	1,164,792	905,846	91,496	58,351	64,433	6,976	37,690
1996-97	1,172,879	900,809	94,349	62,509	68,859	7,425	38,928
1997-98	1,184,406	901,344	98,251	66,005	71,678	7,903	39,225
1998-99	1,200,303	907,245	102,214	70,085	74,197	8,423	38,139
1999-2000	1,237,875	929,106	108,013	75,059	77,912	8,719	39,066
2000-01	1,244,171	927,357	111,307	77,745	78,902	9,049	39,811
2001-02	1,291,900	958,585	116,624	82,969	83,101	9,165	41,456

¹ Excludes 1,121 men and 528 women whose racial/ethnic group was not available.

² Excludes 1,279 men and 571 women whose racial/ethnic group was not available.

³ Excludes 258 men and 82 women whose racial/ethnic group was not available.

⁴ Excludes 6,380 men and 4,786 women whose racial/ethnic group was not available.

⁵ Excludes 1,400 men and 1,005 women whose racial/ethnic group was not available.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Higher Education General Information Survey (HEGIS), "Degrees and Other Formal Awards Conferred" surveys 1976-77 through 1984-85, and Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), "Completions" surveys, 1986-87 through 1998-99, and Fall 2000 through Fall 2002 surveys. (This table was originally prepared in August 2003.)

Note. For years 1984-85 to 2001-02, reported racial/ethnic distributions of students by level of degree were used to estimate race/ethnicity for students whose race/ethnicity was not reported. Data for 1998-99 were imputed using alternative procedures. Detail may not sum to totals due to rounding.

APPENDIX C

SCHOLAR RECRUITMENT VERBAL SCRIPT

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Caroline Turner in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies in the College of Education at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to describe and narrate the in-depth experiences of both National Hispanic Scholars and the parents they seek guidance from the most, with particular interest in the relationship of the student and parent in the context of the student being a National Hispanic Recognition Program recipient across high-income and low-income brackets.

I am recruiting individuals, both you and the parent from whom you seek the most guidance, to interview and record a history of your experiences prior to receiving the scholarship (childhood and childhood aspirations), when receiving the scholarship, and after receiving the scholarship as well as a description of your current relationship with your parent in the context of the achievement and university experience. The interview will take approximately an hour and a half. In exchange for your and your parent's interview, you will receive \$40 in compensation for your time.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you would like to participate in this study please email csulibar@asu.edu or if you have any questions concerning the research study, please call me at (951) 834-3092.

APPENDIX D
SCHOLAR PRE-SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE

Date: _____

Participant: _____

1. Are you 18 years of age or older?

2. How do you racially identify?

3. Would you consider your parents income high income, middle income, or lower income?

4. Which parent would you consider was most involved in your decision to go to college?

5. How might I be able to contact this parent so that he/she may be able to participate in this study?

APPENDIX E
SCHOLAR INFORMATION LETTER

Date_____

Dear _____:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Caroline Turner in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies in the College of Education at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to describe and narrate the in-depth experiences of both the National Hispanic Scholar and the parent he/she seeks guidance from the most, with particular interest in the relationship of the student and parent in the context of the student being a National Hispanic Recognition Program recipient across high-income and low-income brackets.

I am inviting your participation, which will involve an interview lasting about an hour and a half that will record a history of your experience prior to receiving the scholarship (childhood and childhood aspirations), when receiving the scholarship, and after receiving the scholarship as well as a description of your current relationship with your parent in the context of the achievement and university experience. In exchange for your and your parent's interview, you will receive \$40 in compensation for your time. You have the right not to answer any question and to stop the interview at any time.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. You must be 18 or older to participate in the study.

Your responses to the interview will be used to further the known literature on high-achieving Hispanic students, which will better inform policies concerning this population. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

Your responses will be anonymous and any identifiable information will be changed. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name will not be known.

I would like to audiotape this interview. The interview will not be recorded without your permission. Please let me know if you do not want the interview to be taped; you also can change your mind after the interview starts, just let me know. The interview tapes will only be handled by me or those on my committee. Tapes will be kept in a locked cabinet. I will keep the tapes for a period of three years and then the tapes will be destroyed.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the research team at: Caroline.Turner@asu.edu or Crystal.Ulibarri@asu.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

APPENDIX F
PARENT INFORMATION LETTER

Date_____

Dear _____:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Caroline Turner in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies in the College of Education at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to describe and narrate the in-depth experiences of both the National Hispanic Scholar and the parent he/she seeks guidance from the most, with particular interest in the relationship of the student and parent in the context of the student being a National Hispanic Recognition Program recipient across high-income and low-income brackets.

I am inviting your participation, which will involve an interview lasting about an hour and a half that will record a history of your experiences prior to your child receiving the scholarship (their childhood and childhood aspirations), when receiving the scholarship, and after receiving the scholarship as well as a description of your current relationship with your child in the context of the achievement and university experience. In exchange for your and your child's interview, your child will receive \$40 in compensation for your time. You have the right not to answer any question and to stop the interview at any time.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. You must be 18 or older to participate in the study.

Your responses to the interview will be used to further the known literature on high-achieving Hispanic students, which will better inform policies concerning this population. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

Your responses will be anonymous and any identifiable information will be changed. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name will not be known.

I would like to audiotape this interview. The interview will not be recorded without your permission. Please let me know if you do not want the interview to be taped; you also can change your mind after the interview starts, just let me know. The interview tapes will only be handled by me or those on my committee. Tapes will be kept in a locked cabinet. I will keep the tapes for a period of three years and then the tapes will be destroyed.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the research team at: Caroline.Turner@asu.edu or Crystal.Ulibarri@asu.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

APPENDIX G
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Scholar Interview:

1. Tell me about your childhood.
 - a. Where did you live?
 - b. Where did you go to school?
 - c. How were your parents involved in your schooling?
2. Tell me about your relationship growing up with the parent you have chosen to participate in this study.
 - a. What about any other family that might have influenced you?
 - b. Did any other person influence you in your school work?
3. Tell me about your middle school and high school experience. How was school for you?
 - a. How did your parent influence you during this time?
4. What made you decide to attend college?
 - a. What motivated and inspired you to pursue higher education?
5. Tell me about how you received that National Hispanic Scholarship.
 - a. How did you prepare yourself to get this scholarship?
 - b. How did you hear about it?
 - c. What was the process of getting it?
6. What did it feel like to get the scholarship? Tell me your initial reaction.
7. How did your parents, family, and other influential people feel about the scholarship upon hearing that you received it?
8. How did the scholarship affect your life?
 - a. How did the scholarship affect your family's life?

9. Tell me about your first year in college. Describe important experiences from your first week, first class, and first social experience.
10. Describe who you would share your successes and shortcomings with during your first year.
 - a. Did you discuss grades with your parents?
 - b. Did you discuss your social life with your parents?
11. Describe your relationship with your parents now (specially, the parent you chose to participate in this study).
 - a. Has anything changed since you have been at college?
 - b. Are your parents still as involved as they were previously?
12. What and who helps you to succeed in school now?

Parent Interview:

1. Tell me about your child's life growing up.
 - a. Where did you live?
 - b. Where did he/she go to school?
 - c. How were you involved in his/her schooling?
2. Tell me about your relationship with your child as he/she grew up and the influence you have had on him/her academically.
 - a. What about any other family that might have influenced him/her?
 - b. Did any other person influence him/her in school work?
3. Tell me about his/her middle school and high school experience. How was school for him/her?

4. What helped your child to make the decision to attend college?
 - a. What motivated and inspired him/her to pursue higher education?
5. Tell me about how he/she received that National Hispanic Scholarship.
 - a. How did he/she prepare themselves to get this scholarship?
 - b. How did he/she hear about it?
 - c. What was the process of getting it?
6. What did your child feel when he/she received the scholarship? Describe his/her initial reaction.
7. How did you react when hearing about the scholarship?
8. How did the scholarship affect your child's life?
 - a. How did the scholarship affect your family's life?
9. Tell me about your child's first year in college. Describe important experiences from his/her first week, first class, and first social experiences that you can remember.
10. Describe who you feel your child shared his/her successes and shortcomings with during your first year.
 - a. Did he/she discuss grades with you?
 - b. Did he/she discuss their social life with you?
11. Describe your relationship with your child now.
 - a. Has anything changed since he/she has been at college?
 - b. Are you still as involved as you were previously?
12. What and who helps your child succeed in school now?

APPENDIX H

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD EXEMPTION LETTER

To: Caroline Turner
ED

From: Mark Roosa, Chair
Soc Beh IRB

Date: 02/09/2009

Committee Action: **Exemption Granted**

IRB Action Date: 02/09/2009

IRB Protocol #: 0811003486

Study Title: "Scholarship Kids" High Achieving Hispanic Students: Stories of Student and Parent

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(2) .

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Crystal Ulibarrí-Nasio was born in Paramount, CA on July 13, 1982 to Ronald and Rachel Ulibarrí. She and her brother, Dr. Matthew Ulibarrí, attended elementary school at St. Mathias Catholic School in Huntington Park, California. Her family moved to Sun City, California in December, 1992 following the Los Angeles riots. She then attended Shivela Middle School and Murrieta Valley High School in Murrieta, California. While in high school, she was involved in two varsity sports, served as president of several clubs and a youth leader for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. She graduated from high school in 2000 with a California Scholastic Federation and Golden State Seal on her diploma. She was then awarded the Gates Millennium Scholarship and the Brigham Young University (BYU) Multicultural Leadership Scholarship. She went on to attend BYU where she distinguished herself as a researcher with a specialty in race and ethnicity in higher education. She conducted her own research in the spring of 2003 with funding from the University of Utah Center for Higher Education Research and presented her research to the American Education Research Association in 2004. She graduated with honors from BYU in 2004 with a major in psychology and a minor in sociology. She went on to attend Arizona State University where she received her masters in education in December 2005. In that same month, she married her sweetheart, Toafa Nasio. After the completion of her master's degree, she immediately began her doctoral program. While in graduate school, she was a research assistant for several professors on campus, including her mentor, Dr. Caroline Turner. She later began to build her skills in policy analysis and program development. In spring 2007, Mrs. Ulibarrí-Nasio, completed her doctoral coursework and residency requirements and moved back home to California to welcome the birth of her daughter Naomi. She then launched her consulting business to help families and adult learners navigate through admissions, financial aid, scholarships, and other higher education processes. She quickly established a professional reputation and began consulting for several school districts and is a resource for the Riverside County Superintendent. Mrs. Ulibarrí-Nasio is in the process of writing a grant to fulfill her dream of teaching parents nationwide to position their children from their early years for college success.