

LIVED EXPERIENCES OF LOW SOCIOECONOMIC MILLENNIAL GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS

by

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B.S., University Wisconsin-LaCrosse, 2002

M.S., Kansas State University, 2005

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

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Department of Special Education, Counseling, and Student Affairs
College of Education

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Abstract

The characteristics and needs of college students across the United States are ever-changing. As Millennial generation students, born between 1982 and 2003 (Howe & Strauss, 2000), attend college, unique characteristics are present. Commonalities within the Millennial generation have been identified; however, socioeconomic status can impact a student's ability to demonstrate these characteristics of the Millennial generation (Ramsey, 2008). Socioeconomic status still remains the greatest predictor of college aspirations but can prohibit some Millennial students from the opportunity to attend college (Greene, Huerta, & Richards, 2007).

This qualitative study investigated the lived experiences of low socioeconomic Millennial generation college students. Bourdieu's (1977; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, 1990) Cultural Capital Theory was used as the framework to address four research questions regarding knowledge of college, academic experiences, types of support, and collegiate involvement. Research questions were developed utilizing a phenomenological methodology consisting of two semi-structured interviews with open-ended interview questions as the primary data source.

Through the analysis of the participant interviews, themes of their lived experiences as a low socioeconomic status Millennial generation college student emerged. Participants shared that their families lacked knowledge and information about college although they encouraged and supported them and understood the importance of a college degree. Although the educational experiences of the participants varied, most encountered challenges transitioning from high school to college. The most important educational experience for the participants is obtaining a college degree, greatly impacting their future. Although self-supportive for most of their lives, attending college is possible through the financial support of the 21st Century Scholars Program. This financial support and the support of their collegiate friends going through similar experiences have been important. Involvement in collegiate

activities was important for the participants' future careers, relationships, and learning; however, they sought these opportunities on their own.

This research supports and encourages student affairs practitioners to enhance and improve the services and support provided to low socioeconomic status students in the college community. In addition, this study supports the need for more research related to socioeconomic status within higher education as well as reexamining student development theories to take into consideration socioeconomic status.

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“Some people come into our lives and quickly go. Others stay for a while, leave footprints on our hearts and we are never the same.” -Unknown

Thank you to all for leaving footprints upon my heart.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The characteristics and needs of college students across the United States are ever-changing and current college students are no different. The arrival of Millennial generation students, those students born between 1982 and 2003 (Howe & Strauss, 2000), to college campuses has resulted in drawing attention to the unique characteristics of this generation. In particular, the characteristics observed in the Millennial generation of students is different from that of any previous generations. Scholars speculate that even more drastic changes within and among Millennial generation students are still to come (Nicoletti & Merriman, 2007; Woodall, 2004). Although there are various reasons for the changes and despite the mix of students on college campuses, as McGlynn (2005) noted, the influx of Millennials is especially significant as a result of their sheer numbers. With nearly 70 million people in the Millennial generation population, this group will rival the 76 million strong Baby Boomer generation and will dwarf the Generation X population of 41 million (O’Rielly, 2000). Not only is the Millennial generation unique in its size, Howe and Strauss (2000) have also noted unique characteristics, including increased parental protection and involvement. As a result of this increased parental involvement, many parents have earned the reputation of being a “helicopter parent,” because of their constant “hovering” (Glass, 2007) over their students during college. Regardless of the negative connotations that accompany “helicopter parents,” parents of Millennial students have been, and will continue to be, involved in their children’s education (Coburn, 2006; Glass, 2007; Wartman & Savage, 2008).

As the Millennial generation grows and matures, the increase in parental involvement may continue to be a unique facet of this generational cohort. In response to the change in parental involvement seen on college campuses today, administrators have moved away from serving “in loco parentis,” or in place of the parents, to developing a more collaborative relationship (Henning, 2007). These more collaborative relationships are referred to by Henning (2007) as “in consortium cum

parentibus,” working with the parents. The change in the dynamics of parent, student, and administrator relationships and increased parental involvement in college are characteristics never before seen in other generational cohorts. These differences distinguish Millennial students from their generational predecessors (Atkinson, 2004; DeBard, 2004; Glass, 2007; Howe & Strauss, 2000; Newton, 2000; Nicoletti & Merriman, 2007) and present challenges to the university community.

Despite some commonalities identified within the Millennial generation, including higher financial affluence, increased involvement in organizations and clubs, and increased parental involvement in education (Coburn, 2006; DeBard, 2004; Elam, Stratton, & Gibson, 2007; Jacobson, 2003), it has been noted that socioeconomic status can impact a student’s ability to access these common characteristics of the Millennial generation (Ramsey, 2008). As in past generations, socioeconomic status still remains the greatest predictor of college aspirations, and for some Millennial students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, this can prohibit them from being afforded the opportunity to attend college (Greene, Huerta, & Richards, 2007). Low socioeconomic class students are still underrepresented and are being accepted and attending college at lower rates than their higher socioeconomic peers (Baker & Valez, 1996; Carnevale & Rose, 2003; Hofferth, Boisjoly, & Duncan, 1998; Oldfield, 2007; Rowan-Kenyon, Bell, & Perna, 2008), despite the best efforts of many through programs and affirmative action initiatives. With socioeconomic status also influencing test scores (Duncan & Magnuson, 2005), only one-third of low socioeconomic youth are accepted to college with only 15 percent of those ever graduating with a degree from a four-year institution (Bedsworth, Colby, & Doctor, 2006). Even if they are accepted to college, students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds tend to choose to enter the workforce instead of attending college more often than their higher socioeconomic peers (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2001; Ingels & Dalton, 2008).

Socioeconomic status, despite being one of the most widely studied constructs in the social sciences and knowingly impacting students’ chances of attending college, is a point of disagreement for

many scholars as they work to determine whether socioeconomic status is representative of economic class or social status and prestige (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002). Duncan and Magnuson (2005) combine both of these characteristics to describe socioeconomic status as referring to one's social position as well as privileges and prestige that derive from access to economic and social resources. Operationally defined in terms of a quantification of family income, parental education, and occupational status (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; White, 1982), socioeconomic status has been seen to impact students in a variety of ways once enrolled in college. The impact that a family's socioeconomic status has upon a student continues to be seen from the time of enrollment through interaction within the academic environment (Berger, Milem, & Paulsen, 1998; Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999; Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Lareau, 1987, 2000, 2003; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Lareau & Weininger, 2003; McDonough, 1994, 1997), as well as in a state of prolonged adolescence, or what Arnett (2000a; 2000b) describes as "emerging adulthood."

Emerging adulthood, characterized as a time allowing a student more ability for change and exploration of different life choices or directions (Arnett, 2000a, 2000b), is becoming a more common experience amongst youth in America. When Arnett (2000a) identified "emerging adulthood" his research included adolescents from a variety of economic backgrounds and although he has noted in some of his work that all adolescents have the ability to engage in emerging adulthood (Marantz-Hening, 2010), in other research, he has identified "emerging adulthood" as a period of life exploration restricted to certain cultures at certain times. Often, students who are in a state of emerging adulthood take on some of the responsibilities of independent living, but leave others to their parents, college authorities, or other adults (Arnett, 2000a). When considering parent and student relationships, Arnett (2000a) cautions that social class is an important part of this relationship as it may impact students' ability or opportunity to engage in emerging adulthood. Students from middle class or upper class backgrounds tend to have more opportunities for exploration (e.g., mission trips, unpaid internships,

and extended schooling) than their lower socioeconomic peers (Arnett, 2000a). Higher socioeconomic status students also invest their time and energy in different ways once on a college campus. Most choose to work with faculty, to study, or to be involved in extracurricular and co-curricular activities (Walpole, 2003). College students from lower socioeconomic status backgrounds, as compared to their higher socioeconomic peers, tend to spend more time investing in economic capital, including jobs, paid internships, or money making ventures, as a result of need (Walpole, 2003). Because these students are from lower socioeconomic status backgrounds, often their family cannot provide support or assistance. Therefore, students from lower socioeconomic status backgrounds stop depending upon their family for assistance much earlier than their higher socioeconomic status peers (Walpole, 2003). Since lower socioeconomic status students do not have access to the same financial resources or social connections, their time is focused on increasing their economic capital, thus decreasing the amount of time they have during adolescence to explore and discover interests, ultimately limiting opportunities and experiences before, during, and after college.

The potential influence of socioeconomic status on the college experience of Millennial students and involvement of their parents is not only evident in the idea of emerging adulthood as described by Arnett (2000a; 2000b), but also through Bourdieu's (1977; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, 1990) Cultural Capital theory and framework. Bourdieu (1977), combined with the continued work of McDonough (1997), has identified various types of cultural capital (embodied, objectified, and institutionalized) (Bourdieu, 1979; 1987; Lamont & Lareau, 1988). In addition, this framework can also be used to explore the impact that one's socioeconomic status has upon the acquisition of these various types of social and Cultural Capital. Within the Cultural Capital framework, Bourdieu (1977) refers to social capital as the ability to access resources, knowledge, and information that is gained through social connections and relationships. Often the amount and type of social capital one is able to attain is a direct result of socioeconomic status. Those from higher socioeconomic status backgrounds tend to have more access

to money, social connections, and interaction with people of higher affluence than people from lower socioeconomic status backgrounds (Bourdieu, 2005). Additionally, parental involvement during school has been conceptualized (Coleman, 1988; Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2003; Lin, 2001a, 2001b) as a form of social capital in that this involvement provides some students access to social networks, resources, and information not available to all students.

Utilizing the Bourdieun (1977; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, 1990) framework of Cultural Capital, Lareau, her colleagues, and others (Berger, Milem, & Paulsen, 1998; Hossler et al., 1999; Lamont & Lareau, 1987, 1988, 2000, 2003; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Lareau & Weininger, 2003; McDonough, 1994, 1997) have researched the impact of both social and Cultural Capital within educational settings. Results of this research indicate that low socioeconomic status students, as compared to their higher socioeconomic status peers, engage in different behaviors while in grade school and high school, and when applying for college. Some of the differences seen in the behaviors of the lower socioeconomic status students were directly related to the information and knowledge they received from their parents within the home. While at home, the parents would tell their children how to interact with their teachers or peers at school (Lareau, 1987, 2000). The research provides insight into ways socioeconomic status creates differences in educational experiences for students. In addition, the research provides a foundation for future inquiry into the way that college students from low socioeconomic status families gain access to and use different forms of social and Cultural Capital.

Need for the Study

Through previous research, it is clear that students' socioeconomic status impacts their ability to go to college and is the greatest predictor of their college aspirations (Greene et al., 2007). Additionally, students' socioeconomic status impacts their timing and development into adulthood (Arnett, 2000a; 2000b) and their relationship and interactions with their parents (Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Lareau, 1987, 2000, 2003; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Lareau & Weininger, 2008). For Millennial generation students,

socioeconomic status continues to impact their experiences in college and plays a role in their development but can also be influenced by the prolonged support and involvement of their “helicopter parents” (Glass, 2007). Although parental involvement in education, financial affluence, and increased involvement in organizations and clubs (Coburn, 2006; DeBard, 2004; Elam et al., 2007; Jacobson, 2003) are unique characteristics observed in the Millennial generation, not all students are able to access these aspects of the Millennial generation as a result of their socioeconomic status (Ramsey, 2008). For students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, with fewer economic resources and less Cultural Capital, their interactions with faculty, parents, and other students are different (Hossler et al., 1999). The differences in interactions and economic resources may also result in different college experiences for Millennial students from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

Although extensive research utilizing a Cultural Capital framework has been conducted about the experiences of low socioeconomic class students in elementary and high schools (Berger, Milem & Paulsen, 1998; Hossler et al., 1999; Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Lareau, 1987, 2000, 2003; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Lareau & Weininger, 2003; McDonough, 1994, 1997), there are few qualitative research studies about the college experiences of students from low socioeconomic class backgrounds (Walpole, 2003). With the introduction of Millennial students, with unique needs and challenges, it is important to continue to assess the ways that students’ socioeconomic status impacts their collegiate experience. Students’ socioeconomic status could impact their ability to engage in emerging adulthood, acquire social and Cultural Capital, influence the role that parents and administrators play in their educational experiences, and impact their access to and interaction with campus resources. The information from this study can also be used by college administrators, faculty, and staff to assist in addressing the unique needs of not only Millennial generation students, but also college students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds, about which there is currently limited information (Walpole, 2003).

Through creating a better understanding of low socioeconomic Millennial generation college students' experiences, this research will seek to assist college administrators and faculty not only in addressing the unique needs of this group, but also in the future development of campus resources. As there continues to be disparities seen in the overall college enrollment and graduation rates for low socioeconomic students (Astin, 2004; Baker & Valez, 1996; Carnevale & Rose, 2003; Hearn, 1984; Hofferth et al., 1998; Oldfield, 2007; Rowan-Kenyon et al., 2008; Walpole, 2007), understanding trends in the experiences of these students could lead to providing more appropriate guidance and support ultimately creating higher enrollment and graduation rates for lower socioeconomic status students. Additionally, it is important to understand how to support students from low socioeconomic backgrounds while in college and help them to persist to graduation. Graduation from college is an important accomplishment as once individuals successfully graduate from college they tend to be overall better citizens, choosing to be involved in civic leadership, voting, and community development (Bowen, 1977; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). College graduates are also less likely to be involved in criminal activity (Bowen, 1977; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991) and contribute in a positive way to their community. Ultimately by better understanding this population of students and their experiences, more economically diverse college campuses can be created in addition to developing responsible and engaged community members.

Statement of Problem

As low socioeconomic status Millennial generation students continue to attend college, the impact these students will have upon student affairs, college administration, and faculty cannot be ignored (Coomes & DeBard, 2004; Lowery, 2004; Wilson, 2004); yet, there is limited research about this generation. Although Howe and Strauss (2000) have utilized historical events to support their characteristics described in *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation*, as Brooks (2000) stated, "This is not a good book, if by good you mean the kind of book in which the authors have rigorously sifted the

evidence and carefully supported their assertions with data It's stuffed with interesting nuggets" (p. 9). DeBard (2004) also noted that although Howe and Strauss (2000) are referenced in numerous research articles, they did not actually perform research themselves, but utilized popular perceptions and perspectives of people in order to develop characteristics of the Millennial generation. There have been few qualitative or quantitatively based studies conducted with Millennial generation students that have researched their unique lived experiences and there is little known about these students.

In addition to the need for more information about Millennial students, there is often confusion about socioeconomic status and race (Zweig, 2006). These notions about class and race have led many researchers to research socioeconomic status as it relates to a particular race. However, in the United States, two-thirds of all poor and low socioeconomic status people are white (Zweig, 2006); therefore, more wide-ranging research is needed about all of the low socioeconomic status people within the United States, especially those Millennials enrolled in college.

With some of the unique characteristics of the Millennial generation being impacted by socioeconomic status, the experiences of low socioeconomic Millennial students in college will provide a new perspective for college administrators and future research. Through better understanding the experiences of Millennial college students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, college administrators have information needed to develop and create programs and support networks. With the development of programs and services in college, these programs will address the needs of students from low income backgrounds and what Walpole (2007) has identified as a shrinking population on campus.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study is to gather information and learn about the lived experiences of low socioeconomic status Millennial generation college students to create a better understanding of potential themes that might emerge from the students. The central phenomenon to

be explored in this study is how low socioeconomic Millennial generation college students obtain, gather, and develop social and Cultural Capital and then translate and use that information while in college. In addition, researching the interactions that low socioeconomic Millennial generation college students have with both parents and college administrators will assist in further describing the impact that socioeconomic status has upon their collegiate experiences.

Creating a study of this nature will allow low socioeconomic college students to have their experiences documented as several researchers feel more information is needed about this group of students (Paulsen & St. John, 2002; Rowan-Kenyon et al., 2008; Walpole, 2007). Not only will this study provide more information into the college experiences of low socioeconomic students, it will also provide information to determine if trends seen and observed in American grade schools in regards to the Cultural Capital transmitted from parent to child (Lareau, 1987, 2000, 2003; Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Lareau & Weininger, 2003) are still present when these students reach college. Finally, this research will seek to describe the interactions that low socioeconomic Millennial students have with their parents once they reach college. As it has been noted, much of the information about these interactions had only been gathered from students of middle and upper class socioeconomic status families (Elam, Stratton & Gibson, 2007).

Research Questions

The research questions to be addressed in this qualitative study focus on the experiences of low socioeconomic status Millennial students prior to entering college, their interactions with parents and college administrators during college, and the experiences of low socioeconomic Millennial students while at a Research University.

1. How do low socioeconomic status Millennial generation college students gain information about the social, cultural, and academic norms of college life prior to arriving on campus?

2. What are the academic experiences of low socioeconomic status Millennial generation college students?
3. What support systems do low socioeconomic status Millennial college students have while in college?
4. What does involvement (e.g., organizations, jobs, internships) outside of the classroom consist of for low socioeconomic status Millennial college students? Why have they chosen to be involved in these particular activities?

Definitions of Terms

1. *Cultural Capital*. Cultural Capital is operationally defined and referred to as a system of attitudes, preferences, behaviors, and attributes, such as language skills and mannerisms, that are derived in part from one's parents and passed along to their children (Bourdieu, 1977, 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, 1990; Lamont & Lareau, 1988). These attitudes, behaviors, and attributes are then reinvested for social profits and, in part, help to define one's social class standing (Lamont & Lareau, 1988).
2. *Low Socioeconomic Status*. Although socioeconomic status is a difficult criterion to determine and as Barratt (2006) stated, "suffice it to say that no classic definition of SES exists" (p. 3), in other research studies, socioeconomic status has been determined by using a combination of family income, parental education, and occupational status (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; White, 1982).

For this study, low socioeconomic status will be determined by family income being at or below the United States government standards for Low-Income and Poverty levels (United States Department of Education, 2011; United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2011). These federal levels are determined by taking into consideration the family size, location of residence, and annual family income. If a family meets these low income or poverty standards, the children in the family

are then eligible for inclusion in the free and reduced lunch program or inclusion in federally funded TRIO programs.

For this particular study, low socioeconomic students will be identified as students participating in the 21st Century Scholars Program, a program funded by the State of Indiana for low income students. In addition, some of the 21st Century Scholar students are also a part of the Groups Program, a federally funded TRIO program, and they will also be potential participants for this study. To be included in the 21st Century Scholars Program, the family must reside in the state of Indiana and the family income must be at or below the federal income levels for either National Poverty Guidelines or National Low Income levels which would qualify the student for federal or free or reduced price lunches during their K-12 education (State of Indiana Government, 2011).

Although the educational background of a participant's parent or guardian will not be used to determine socioeconomic status, it is important to note that, "Poor families are those in which the parents are on welfare; most of these families are high school dropouts or graduates" (Lareau & Horvat, 1999, p. 40). This is in contrast to middle class families in which at least one parent has a college degree and is employed in a professional or managerial position (Lareau & Horvat, 1999).

3. *Millennial College Student.* A Millennial college student is defined as a student, born between 1982 and 2003 (Howe & Strauss, 2000), and currently enrolled in college coursework. As described by Howe and Strauss (2000), Millennial students also have graduated from high school in the new millennium. These students have been identified as having unique characteristics and attributes not seen by previous generations (Atkinson, 2004; DeBard, 2004; Glass, 2007; Howe & Strauss, 2000; Newton, 2000; Nicoletti & Merriman, 2007).
4. *Emerging Adulthood.* Emerging adulthood is identified as a period of prolonged adolescence during which people in their late teens and early twenties, directly after leaving secondary school, engage in exploration, experimentation, and change while still having the emotional and financial support of

their families (Arnett, 2000a, 2000b). This period in life is characterized by the allowance of more time for an adolescent to explore different life choices or directions (Arnett, 2000a, 2000b). Often adolescents or students who are in a state of emerging adulthood, take on some of the responsibilities of independent living, but leave others to their parents, college authorities, or other adults (Arnett, 2000a).

5. *Research University*. One of the Carnegie Classifications, a framework that has been used for the past four decades to recognize and classify universities. Under the Carnegie Classification, a Research University is one that has very high or high research activity and granted at least 20 doctorate or research degrees during the year of assessment (Carnegie Foundation, 2011).

Limitations of Study

Participants of this study were first and second-year college students enrolled at a Research University in Indiana. These participants were also a part of collegiate programs designed to assist students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds. Results may not be generalizable to other populations. Despite all participants being a part of the 21st Century Scholars Program, it is important to note that without using members of a program designed to assist students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds, completing this study might not have been possible. Accessing low socioeconomic status students from the general college population could be difficult as there continues to be disparities seen in the overall college enrollment and graduation rates for low socioeconomic students (Astin, 2004; Baker & Valez, 1996; Carnevale & Rose, 2003; Hearn, 1984; Hofferth et al., 1998; Oldfield, 2007; Rowan-Kenyon et al., 2008; Walpole, 2007). Although this is a limitation, use of students from this program was necessary for the completion of the study.

In addition, this study utilized a generation of people in which the results may not be generalizable to other generational groups or even other individuals within this generation. By using a group of students who are already enrolled in college, there is the potential for a different level of

parental involvement from that of students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds not enrolled in college. Given the lengthy college admissions process, often students enrolled in college have received some type of parental support and therefore the results may not be generalizable to other low socioeconomic status families. This study also is only looking at socioeconomic status as influencing students' experiences and does not take into account other factors such as race or gender, which may impact the results ability to be generalizable to other populations (Lareau, 2003). Also, the results are limited by the willingness of the participants to share openly and honestly during the interviews.

The findings of the study are also limited by minimal racial and ethnic diversity among the participants and therefore are not representative of all low socioeconomic status Millennial generation college students. Although not a part of the criterion sampling, two of the eight participants identified as part of a minority group. The other six participants all identified their race as white. Despite this, the racial and ethnic diversity of this study is representative of the larger university population, a predominately white institution.

Finally, the criterion sampling required that all participants were of low socioeconomic status as determined by family income levels as documented on the participants FAFSA. Three of the participants had information on their FAFSA that required additional clarification from the participants to better understand their overall family income as described in Appendix K. The researcher then determined the participant's eligibility for the study based upon the information on the FAFSA and additional participant clarification. It was determined by the researcher that the three participants met the spirit of the study to document the lived experiences of low socioeconomic Millennial generation college students, but is still a potential limitation of the study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of Millennial generation college students of low socioeconomic status backgrounds. In particular, this study will gather information about Millennial generation college students' experiences prior to entering college, interactions with parents and college administrators, and their experiences while in college. This review of literature focuses on three areas related to this study. First, the literature related to the research about generations and the Millennial generation of students, in particular, is examined. As the Millennial generation is one of the largest in history (Glass, 2007; Howe & Strauss, 2000, 2003; Nicoletti & Merriman, 2007; O'Rielly, 2000), the literature will help to establish the unique traits and characteristics, experiences, and parenting of this generation as well as emphasize the need for further research about this population of students. In particular, the unique characteristic of increased parental involvement will be addressed as continued parental involvement has been seen during students' college career (Coburn, 2007; Henning, 2007; Wartman & Savage, 2008), often earning these parents the title of "helicopter parents" due to their constant "hovering" or involvement in their children's lives (Glass, 2007).

Second, literature about the developmental shift of today's youth identified by Arnett (2000a, 2000b) as "emerging adulthood" was examined to further establish the unique characteristic of a delayed transition into adulthood more commonly observed in recent generations of youth. In addition, the literature on "emerging adulthood" will be used to develop a connection between the increase of parental involvement in the lives of today's youth, the challenges that result from increased involvement, as well as establishing a relationship between continued parental involvement and socioeconomic status. Erik Erickson (1968) believed that industrialized societies allow for a prolonged adolescence and an extended period of identity development while Arnett (2000, 2001) points to some

of the sweeping demographic changes that have taken place in the United States over the past half century as contributing to the change in the development of youth. Arnett (2000a) also notes that social class, most commonly related to socioeconomic status, may play an important role in the ability of students to engage in prolonged adolescence. In addition, much of the research that Arnett (2000a) has performed on emerging adulthood has utilized a largely white, middle class, American majority population (Arnett, 1998, 2000a, 2001) further emphasizing the need to research the experiences of college students from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

In the final section of this chapter, the literature about the impact that a family's financial resources, social class, socioeconomic status, and cultural resources has upon access to college, college stratification, and parental involvement, as seen in the K-12 environment, is presented. Utilizing a Bourdieuan framework (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990, 1994; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, 1990) helps to provide insight into the impact that monetary resources plays in educational attainment (Coleman, 1988; Duncun & Magnuson, 2005; Epstein, 1984; Hofferth et al., 1998; Hossler et al., 1999) and therefore also provides an understanding as to the role of social class in educational experiences and attainment (Walpole, 2007). Each social class of people, as identified by their socioeconomic status, possesses economic, social, and Cultural Capital which parents often pass along to their children through attitudes and behaviors (Bourdieu, 1977; Coleman, 1988; Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Lareau, 1987, 2000) which can ultimately impact the overall experiences and success of children. The Bourdieuan framework and the research that has used this framework helps to establish a link between socioeconomic status, parent-student interactions, and the transfer of cultural and social capital from parent to student in addition to the need for more research within this area of higher education (Bell & Perna, 2008; Rowan-Kenyon et al., 2008). Higher education research has only given limited consideration to the impact and role of socioeconomic status and social class but it has long been

evident that class plays an important role in education and attainment and needs to be further researched to better inform educational policy and practices (Paulsen & St. John, 2002).

Millennials: The Newest Generation

It is important to learn about generational theory as it helps one to better understand generational trends and changes seen within society (Howe & Strauss, 1991). In, *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584-2069*, Howe and Strauss (1991) defined a generation as "a given cohort group, in which all members are born in a limited span of consecutive years, approximately 22 years, and whose boundaries are fixed by peer personality" (p. 60). A peer personality of a generation described by Howe and Strauss (1991), includes collective attitudes about family life, sex roles, institutions, politics, religion, lifestyle, and general outlook on the future. The attitudes and beliefs held by a generation are also seen in generational behaviors and trends. Although generational trends will not describe every person in a generation, these trends will help to better understand the behaviors and characteristics displayed by the majority of people within that population and offer a more solid basis for personality generalizations than categories such as sex, race, religion, or age (Howe & Strauss, 1991). Gathering generational perspectives and characteristics, and exploring a generational groups' peer personality can provide student affairs professionals with tools and information to better understand students from different generations and better inform policy and practices (Coomes & DeBard, 2004). As generations are cyclical in nature, the current generation tends to be impacted by the generation(s) that precedes them (Howe & Strauss, 1991) and can also assist student affairs professionals with information on how to work with parents of Millennials.

Millennials are not only the newest generation to enroll in college and enter the workforce, but are also often the children of the Baby Boomer generation and are second only to the Baby Boomers as the largest population in history (Glass, 2007; Howe & Strauss, 2000, 2003; Nicoletti & Merriman, 2007; O'Rielly, 2000). The Millennial generation, of close to 70 million people, will certainly rival the Baby

Boomer generation with a population of 76 million and will dwarf the Generation X population of 41 million (O’Rielly, 2000). This generation is also considered the most affluent, educated, and diverse generation in history (Atkinson, 2004; Howe & Strauss, 2000, 2003). *The American Freshman: National Norms for Fall 2002* (Sax, Lindholm, Astin, Korn, & Mahoney, 2002), a survey of college freshmen, found that there were changes in the college demographic population from the 1998 survey. Compared to the 1998 survey, in 2002 college students were less white (75.8 percent, down from 82.5 percent), wealthier (45.2 percent of parental income above \$75,000 per year, compared to 25.1 percent in 1998), and more ambitious (more than 75 percent of first-year students surveyed indicated that they planned to pursue a degree past a bachelor’s compared to only 66 percent in 1998) (DeBard, 2004; Sax et al., 2002).

In addition to being the most affluent, educated, and diverse generation, the Millennial generation has been referred to as a unique generation, a “great generation” of people displaying characteristics not seen before in other generational cohorts again supporting the great differences observed in Millennials from that of their predecessors (Atkinson, 2004; DeBard, 2004; Glass, 2007; Howe & Strauss, 2000; Newton, 2000; Nicoletti & Merriman, 2007). Not only do other people view the Millennial generation as unique, but 68% of Millennial generation students agreed that their generation was unique and distinct (Pew Research Center, 2007).

Millennial Characteristics. When identifying this generation of students and their distinct characteristics, there are seven that Howe and Strauss (2000) have used to describe the Millennial generation. The seven are being special, sheltered, conventional, stressed, group oriented, confident, and frequently engaging in team work. Although all of the characteristics Howe and Strauss (2000) use to describe the Millennial generation allow insight into understanding this generation, two of these characteristics, being special and sheltered, are especially important to understand when working with Millennial students and their parents. DeBard (2004) describes how college campuses are beginning to see indications of these two characteristics, being special and sheltered, have been present for most

Millennials throughout their entire lives. Instead of just receiving a trophy for winning, Millennials have been accustomed to being rewarded simply for participating and being a part of the group in order to not hurt anyone's feelings and make each person feel special. Emphasizing the importance of group and team work in addition to building confidence among Millennial youth has also been key in making them feel special and distinguishing this generation from others. Another way for the parents of Millennials to show their children just how special they are is to shelter them and keep them from harm's way (DeBard, 2004). This generation has been a part of the most sweeping safety movements in the United States (Howe & Strauss, 2000, 2003), and they have not only been protected by their parents, but have also been protected through government imposed regulations on consumer safety (McGlynn, 2005).

In addition to the characteristics described by Howe and Strauss (2000, 2003), technology has greatly impacted Millennials as it serves a central role in their lives and is interwoven into their everyday activities with close to 20% of this generation using computers between the ages of 5 and 8 (Glass, 2007; Oblinger, 2003; Nicoletti & Merriman, 2007). This increase in the use of technology is also seen in the increased use of cell phones and email that also allows parents to more easily communicate with their students (Merriman, 2007) on a regular basis to ensure their safety. The increased ability to communicate can also be seen in that Millennial students disclose significant amounts of information to their parents about sex, drugs, and alcohol, far exceeding the amount of information that Millennial's parents shared during their adolescence (Wartman & Savage, 2008). Junco and Mastrodicasa (2007) found that students reported speaking to their parents on the phone an average 1.5 times daily and 57.6% of the time it was the student who initiated the call. Most of these conversations the students had with their parents occurred while the parent was either at home or on the road (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007). Based on data from the 2007 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), 7 out of 10 college students noted that they often interacted with their parents (Wartman & Savage, 2008)

about a variety of topics. Howe and Strauss (2000) also found in their surveys with Millennials that they felt their parents are “in touch with their lives” and are “easy to talk to” (p. 187).

Historical Events. Contemporary historical events, including the Columbine school shooting in Colorado, the Oklahoma City Bombing, the Rodney King beating and riots, and the O.J. Simpson murder trial, have been identified as events that greatly impacted the Millennial generation (Howe & Strauss, 2000; Nicoletti & Merriman, 2007). These historical events, many that occurred during Millennial’s youth and adolescence, have shaped their perceptions and beliefs about the world in which they live as well as their personal safety. In a survey conducted only a few short months after the Columbine school shootings, Howe and Strauss (2003) found that older teens in high school wanted an increase in school security by a two-to-one margin, while younger teens also wanted an increase in school security, but by a larger, four-to-one margin. Not only did Columbine impact Millennials, but the terrorist attacks and events of September 11, 2001, has created a resurgence of patriotism among many in this generation in addition to this group becoming more socially minded (Glass, 2007) and more involved in the world around them.

Many of these historical events that Millennials experienced at a young age may also have impacted a shift that has been seen since the late 1990’s in parent and college student relationships (Wartman & Savage, 2008). In her 2006 survey of mid and senior level student affairs professionals at doctoral universities, Merriman (2007) found that 93 percent of respondents had seen an increase in parental involvement in the past 5 years. Among many student affairs professionals, a leading cause for the increase in parental involvement was in response to historical events and parents’ continued concern about their children’s safety (Merriman, 2007). Despite being referred to as “helicopter parents” as a result of their constant “hovering” and involvement, this generation of parents has been and will continue to be involved in their children’s education (Coburn, 2006; Glass, 2007; Wartman &

Savage, 2008) and this involvement of parents continues to be a unique part of Millennial generation youth.

Millennial Parent Involvement. The Millennial generation is unique not only in the characteristics identified by Howe and Strauss (2000), but also in that they are the most wanted generation, as they were conceived during a time when birth control and abortions were widely available, and also in a time when families made a conscious effort and decision to have these children (Glass, 2007). In addition to parents intentionally being able to choose when to have their children, many families have chosen to have fewer children and have those children later in life. Choosing to have children later in life has allowed families the opportunity to provide greater resources to their children, including parents with a college degree, two-parent incomes, and overall more time dedicated to raising their children (Atkinson, 2004; Glass, 2007; Howe & Strauss, 2000). This dedication and continued involvement of parents in the raising of their children can be observed well into their college career (Henning, 2007) often reinforcing the sheltered characteristic of this generation identified by Howe and Strauss (2000).

For many middle-class Millennials, not only have they been sheltered by their parents, these parents have spent countless hours scheduling their activities and events and taking them to sports and music practices while also providing them with constant direction, support, and cheerleading (DeBard, 2004; Coburn, 2006; Elam et al., 2007; Jacobson, 2003). Many Millennials also consider their parents role models and embrace the involvement their parents have in their lives (O'Briant, 2003). This involvement can also be seen during the college application and selection process as many Millennial parents assist their children in reviewing college websites and view books, scheduling of campus tours, and accompanying them on campus tours (Coburn, 2006). Although this support and involvement from family may be common for most Millennials, it is important to note that for children from a lower socioeconomic status, contemporary childhood may look very different as tasks, such as paying rent,

putting food on the table, and protecting their children in unsafe neighborhoods, are challenging for parents with scarce economic resources, and a lack of family or community support (Lareau, 2003). Even though some parents may struggle to be a part of their children's lives, others play a very active role and, as a result of increased parental involvement, there has been a shift in the way that colleges and universities work with parents. College staff and administrators are moving away from "in loco parentis," or serving in place of the parents, to developing a more collaborative relationship described by Henning (2007) as "in consortium cum parentibus."

These shifts seen in the parental involvement in the lives of incoming college freshmen may point to many important challenges, as well as opportunities, for colleges and universities across the country (Sax, 2003; Wartman & Savage, 2008). Increased involvement and interactions among Millennials and their parents has become more of a concern to college administrators, professors, and staff. College administrators are concerned and question whether being sheltered by parents has superimposed providing direction to students which could leave them directionless and unable to critically think when liberated by the college experience (DeBard, 2004). Merriman (2007) also shares her concern and stated:

College has traditionally been a transition to adulthood, with campus life and academic experiences providing students with knowledge, tools, and challenges that create a sturdy foundation on which students build their personal and professional lives. But that foundation is eroding because parents are the ones now wielding the tools—such as problem solving, resourcefulness, critical thinking, and exploration—and responding to those challenges. Parents are diminishing the learning opportunities that higher education purposefully presents to students. (p. N23)

There are many mixed beliefs about Millennial students as they have been described as "directionless" despite the many benefits and opportunities of advanced technology, safety initiatives,

and increased parental involvement making the students feel special (DeBard, 2004). Even though they might be viewed by some as directionless, they show strong commitment to achievement, while at the same time, demonstrate a declining commitment to studying and homework (Sax, 2003). With so many contradictory descriptions of this generation of students, more research would help to better understand these students who are arriving on college campuses.

There have been few qualitative or quantitative research studies conducted with Millennial generation students to explore the perceived characteristics of their generation and their unique lived experiences. Although Gage (2005) performed a qualitative study utilizing Millennial and G.I. generation students, those born between 1901 and 1924, her focus was on investigating the cyclical nature of generations to see if there were similar perceptions about leadership qualities and characteristics. Gage (2005) found similarities between the two generational groups, but did not investigate the unique characteristics assigned to the Millennial generation by Howe and Strauss (2000). In addition, Ramsey (2008) researched the variations of Millennial characteristics among college undergraduate students and the impact that those characteristics had upon recruitment and retention satisfaction. In this study, Ramsey (2008) found that there were statistically significant differences in the way that Millennial students perceived themselves as compared to the way that they perceive their Millennial generational peers on 6 of the 7 characteristics described by Howe and Strauss (2000). Therefore, Millennial students in the study did not feel that they portrayed the Millennial characteristics, but did feel that their generational peers ascribed to many of them. On the characteristic of being sheltered, Ramsey (2008) did not find statistically significant between how individuals perceived themselves and their peers. Millennial students acknowledged the increased involvement of their own parents, but also identified increased involvement by parents in the lives of their generational peers. This research assists in further supporting the observations by college personnel that there is more parental involvement.

As the Millennial generation descends on college campuses, the impact that these students will have upon student affairs, college administration, and faculty cannot be ignored (Coomes & DeBard, 2004; Lowery, 2004; Wilson, 2004); yet, so little is truly known about this generation from research. Although Howe and Strauss (2000) have utilized historical events to support their characteristics described in *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation*, research has not been performed to better understand if these characteristics are actually traits of this generation. DeBard (2004) also noted that although Howe and Strauss (2000) are referenced by numerous people in research articles, they did not actually perform research themselves, but utilized popular perceptions and perspectives of people in order to develop their characteristics of the Millennial generation. Additionally, it is cautioned by DeBard (2004) that,

The characteristics they have listed as core personality traits of the Millennial generation are commonly cited in the press, and these traits do seem to represent a compelling set of descriptors worth using in this text. However, there is an ironic caution that must be issued in using Howe and Strauss in this regard, one that they themselves have acknowledged. Being Boomer-generation parents of Millennial-generation children, their central optimistic premise that this will be the “next great generation” is all too typical of Boomer parents’ description of them. (p. 34)

Ramsey (2008) also noted that the generational characteristics described by Howe and Strauss (2000) were developed without examining or giving consideration to how diverse groups of people from this generation might respond differently. Although it may seem that a majority of Millennials on college campuses display some of the characteristics described by Howe and Strauss (2000), Schein (1992) and Smircich (1993) recommended caution when using descriptions of generations because as a result of the cyclical nature and reinforcement of cultural trends, people often tend to believe and represent behavior that is expected of them by others. Since the Millennial generation has been the

focus of many discussions on college campuses, more research needs to be conducted to learn about the characteristics and interactions with their parents as continued parental involvement has been seen during students' college career (Henning, 2007; Wartman & Savage, 2008).

There is not a clear understanding of the Millennial generation or their lived experiences and if they do in fact demonstrate some or all of the seven characteristics identified by Howe and Strauss (2000) as being unique to this generation. In particular, the characteristic of increased and lengthened parental involvement well into college has been noted by various student affairs professionals (Coburn, 2006; Glass, 2007; Henning, 2007; Wartman & Savage, 2008). Knowing more about the experiences of this generation and interactions with their parents will better inform the practices of college personnel across the United States.

Emerging Adulthood: Impact of Extended Parental Involvement

College administrators have identified a change marked by the involvement of parents in their Millennial college students' lives and the move from "in loco parentis" to "in consortium con parentibus," noted by Henning (2007). Similar to college administrators, Arnett (2000a) has also identified a change that he sees as a link in the development of today's youth with that of continued parental involvement which he describes as "emerging adulthood." Emerging adulthood is identified as a period of prolonged adolescence during which people in their late teens and early twenties, directly after leaving secondary school, engage in exploration, experimentation, and change while still having the emotional and financial support of their families (Arnett, 2000a, 2000b). Arnett (2000a) also added that emerging adulthood is neither adolescence nor young adulthood but is theoretically and empirically different and distinct from both. Erikson (1968) believed that industrialized societies allowed for more of a prolonged period of adolescence and an extended period of identity development. Additionally, Erickson (1968) found that industrialized societies provided a psychosocial moratorium for young people "during which the young adult through free role experimentation may find a niche in some section of his

society” (p. 156). Sweeping demographic changes that have taken place over the past half century in the industrialized United States have also made the late teens and early twenties a distinct period of the life course (Arnett, 2000a).

Over the past few decades, there has been a shift in American societal norms. Most notably, the decision of parents to delay marriage and child rearing has allowed some Millennial students to have an extended period of adolescence. The decision to delay starting a family is impacted by many parents’ need or desire for more education and money or completion of all schooling, around the age of 25, prior to getting married and start up a family (Arnett, 2000a). Additionally, entrance into adulthood is identified by American majority culture youth as “learning to stand alone” and becoming a self-sufficient individual (Arnett, 1998), often marked by the transition to starting one’s own family and declaring independence from parents. This trend in the delay of starting a family can be seen in many of the Baby Boomer parents of Millennials who have meticulously planned and decided to wait to have children until later in life (Atkinson, 2004; Glass, 2007; Howe & Strauss, 2000). Once individuals are married and start to have children, they are constrained by their roles in the marriage and the responsibilities of their role as a parent and provider (Arnett, 2000) and can no longer engage in the exploration and experimentation of emerging adulthood.

Financial responsibilities might force some to move more quickly from adolescence to adulthood and self-sufficiency, but financial resources also play a role in the ability to explore and experiment during emerging adulthood. As an adolescent, the amount and type of family financial resources that one has could play a role and impact the ability to engage in this exploration and period of self-discovery identified as an important aspect of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000a).

Opportunities for those in the minority culture also tend to be less widely available than for those of the majority culture in industrialized countries (Morch, 1995). Arnett (2000a) also has acknowledged that one’s socioeconomic status and social class may impact and be more important than one’s ethnicity in

determining if one has the opportunity to engage in emerging adulthood. Adolescents in the middle class or higher class have more opportunities for exploration, a marked part of emerging adulthood, than their peers who are members of the working class or below (Arnett, 2000a). It may also be that working class adolescents do not have fewer, but different opportunities for exploration than their higher class peers. For those from working class families, experiences have more emphasis on work explorations and less emphasis on education compared to their middle class adolescent counterparts (Arnett, 2000a).

Emerging adulthood may not be a universal period of exploration and experimentation, but one that only exists in cultures that postpone entry into adult responsibilities and roles until well after the teenage years, most likely in countries that are highly industrialized or post-industrial (Arnett, 2000a). Schlegel and Barry (1991), in a study of 186 traditional non-Western cultures, concluded that adolescence as a life stage is virtually universal; yet, a period of further exploration past adolescence before adulthood is not a part of all cultures. For most of these non-Western cultures, the end of adolescence is most closely related to the age of marriage within that culture (Schlegel & Barry, 1991). Within economically developing countries there also tends to be a distinct cultural split between the emerging adulthood experiences of adolescents from urban and rural areas. Youth in urban areas of countries like China and India are far more likely than their peers in rural areas to have a period of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000a). Urban youth tend to marry later, go to school longer, and have a wider variety of occupational and recreational activities in which to participate (Arnett, 2000a). In contrast, their rural peers often have few choices in occupations, limited mostly to agriculture, marry earlier in life, and receive far less schooling or educational preparation (Arnett, 2000a).

Based on Arnett's (2000a, 2000b, 2001) work, it appears that financial resources impact one's ability to participate in the exploration, experimentation, and continued parental involvement that characterizes emerging adulthood. In addition, Arnett (1998, 2001) has been able to identify

characteristics of emerging adulthood in the United States; however, most of his research that has been conducted with students about their perspectives on emergence into adulthood, and has been conducted with white, middle-class samples which he used because they represented the American majority culture (Arnett, 2001). Additionally, this population was utilized because, as a group, they set most of the norms and standards in addition to holding most of the positions of political, economic, and intellectual power (Arnett, 2001), leaving the experiences of lower socioeconomic status, non-majority youth and adolescence unexplored. Since financial resources impact one's ability to explore and experiment during emerging adulthood and the trend of extended parental involvement is seen among the Millennial generation of college students, learning more about the experiences of Millennial low socioeconomic status youth, who may not have such opportunities, is an area that needs to be researched. The concept of emerging adulthood helps to better illustrate the experiences of majority youth, while also serving as a link to the impact that financial resources may have upon their experiences and the involvement of their parents in their lives. It is important to understand the experiences of low socioeconomic, non-majority youth and interactions with their parents, as well as the influence that parental resources have upon students' overall college experience.

Financial, Cultural, and Social Resources

With the knowledge that Millennial parental involvement appears to be increasing on college campuses across the nation, and that Arnett's (2000a; 2000b, 2001) period of emerging adulthood is influenced by financial resources, it is important to better understand the impact that socioeconomic status has upon Millennial college students. In addition, learning more about low socioeconomic status Millennial college student experiences and student-parent interactions has been identified as an area in which additional research is needed (Wartman & Savage, 2008).

To better understand the impact of financial resources, it is important to further describe socioeconomic status which is used to quantify the amount of financial resources available to a person.

Duncan and Magnuson (2005) described socioeconomic status as referring to one's social position as well as privileges and prestige that derive from access to economic and social resources. Similarly, Bradley and Corwyn (2002) described socioeconomic status in terms of family income, parental education, and occupational status. Differences within socioeconomic status and the impact of financial resources have been seen to impact not only educational opportunities, but also communication, access to health care, safe neighborhoods, involvement in service activities, and infant mortality (Duncan & Magnuson, 2005; Webster & Worrell, 2008; Williams, 1998). Higher education research has only given limited consideration to the role of socioeconomic status and social class, although it has long been evident that class plays an important role in educational attainment (Hossler et al., 1999) and student experiences and should be considered when developing and examining educational policies (Paulsen & St. John, 2002; Rowan-Kenyon et al., 2008; Walpole, 2007). Understanding the experiences of low socioeconomic class students is not only important to inform policies, but there is growing concern that college campuses are not as diverse economically as they should or could be and that the impact of parental resources continues to disproportionately influence lower class students (Astin, 2004).

Financial Capital. Socioeconomic status still remains the greatest predictor of college aspirations (Greene, Huerta, & Richards, 2007). Consistent with Arnett's (1998, 2000a, 2001) findings, students from lower socioeconomic classes tended to enroll in college following high school far less than their higher socioeconomic peers, choosing instead to enter the workforce (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2001; Ingels & Dalton, 2008). Parental influences are recognized as an important factor in determining a student's access to college, and in particular, that of parental financial resources impacts one's ability through various means (Hofferth et al., 1998; Sil, 2007). Parents with abundant monetary resources work to secure enrollment in prestigious colleges for their children as they know and believe it will help their children secure and attain job success and a higher social status; yet, parents of low social classes are not as involved in their children's college selection with a lack of financial resources often being a

hindrance to admission opportunities (McDonough, 1994). Higher socioeconomic status families are able to pay for more college applications, on average 10 more than low socioeconomic status families, private tutors, and independent consultants in order to help prepare their children for college entrance exams and essays (McDonough, 1994). In addition to the overall differences in access and admission to college, it has also been found in a longitudinal study by Astin (1993) that students who are enrolled at a college that has a majority of the students from higher socioeconomic status backgrounds, receive more educational benefits than those students enrolled in a college with lower socioeconomic status students (Astin, 1993).

Despite numerous programs and affirmative action initiatives being implemented since the 1970's to increase enrollment of low income and social class students in the United States, this group of students is still underrepresented on college campuses with a larger proportion of high socioeconomic students being accepted and attending college (Baker & Valez, 1996; Carnevale & Rose, 2003; Hofferth, et al., 1998; Oldfield, 2007; Rowan-Kenyon et al., 2008). With socioeconomic status influencing test scores (Duncan & Magnuson, 2005), only one third of low socioeconomic youth are accepted to college with only 15 percent of that group ever graduating with a degree from a four-year institution (Bedsworth et al., 2006). The impact of economic resources has also been seen among minority individuals as Walpole (2007) found that high socioeconomic African American college students performed better in the classroom than their low socioeconomic African American peers. This disparity in achievement seen within colleges based upon class and race is described by Ladson-Billings (2006, 2008) as an educational debt, seen in the academic achievement gap of disadvantaged students and their peers, and is an issue that everyone collectively has to become involved in changing.

Disproportionate access to college has been impacted by the system of repayable loans and the amount of loans offered to lower socioeconomic status students as this system does not provide the same type of financial access to a college education for these students in comparison to their higher

socioeconomic status peers (Baker & Velez, 1996; Dynarski, 2000; St. John & Starkey, 2005).

Additionally, changes in financial aid policy have become problematic for many lower class students, impacting their interest and desire to pursue college (Baker & Velez, 1996; Dynarski, 2000; St. John & Starkey, 2005). Financial aid plays a key role in access to higher education and is the biggest factor in enrollment decisions for low income students (Doyle, 2008). Astin (2004) also found that colleges are more stratified based on socioeconomic status than 30 years ago. In addition, Walpole (2007) noted that the attendance rates for low socioeconomic college students is 30 percent lower than their more advantaged peers, again emphasizing the importance of learning more about this shrinking population of college students' experiences. In general, the nature and relationship between socioeconomic status, access to college, and collegiate experiences, especially for low socioeconomic status students, is an area where more research is needed (Wartman & Savage, 2008).

Cultural and Social Capital. Not only are financial capital and resources important factors for college student success, the acquisition of cultural and social capital is also influential. French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1990, 1994) developed a theoretical framework that employed the concepts of Cultural Capital, social capital, and habitus to explain the ways in which individual choice works to reproduce the existing social structure within society. In Bourdieu's framework, Cultural Capital is referred to as a system of attitudes, preferences, behaviors, and attributes, such as language skills and mannerisms that are derived in part from parents and passed along to their children (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, 1990; Lamont & Lareau, 1988). These attitudes, behaviors, and attributes are then reinvested for social profits and in part along with socioeconomic status, help to define one's social class standing (Lamont & Lareau, 1988). Additionally, a person's habitus, or perceptions about possible and appropriate action that one should take in a particular setting to achieve a particular goal, is also learned through social class interactions (Bourdieu, 1977). Within the Bourdieun framework, acquiring Cultural Capital is most beneficial for its ability to be converted into

other potential and is most often used in the pursuit of educational and occupational gains (Walpole, 2007). Based on this framework, middle and upper class individuals, from high socioeconomic statuses, tend to have the most desired and valued forms of cultural capital (McDonough, 1997). This framework also provides an understanding of how individuals and organizations interact and how dominant groups acquire and retain dominance within society (McDonough, 1994).

Bourdieu (1986) also discussed the impact of social capital and defined it as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition” (p. 248). The amount of social capital that a person may gain through relationships and social networks depends upon the size of one’s networks in addition to the economic, cultural, and social capital that individuals within the network possess (Bourdieu, 1986). Therefore, families from higher socioeconomic statuses are able to provide more social capital, interactions, and relationships within and between parent groups, schools, and teachers that often results in more positive outcomes for their students (Coleman, 1988; Sil, 2007). Coleman (1988) noted an observation that when social capital is created, it is often passed onto subsequent generations, similar to the way Cultural Capital is passed along, continuing a family’s rise and dominance within society. The idea of social capital also helps to better understand how relationships between parents, children, and other individuals can influence the development and success of children in the educational setting (Coleman, 1988). Although social capital and relationships are viewed as being important and can provide information about various facets of the college experience, income is still viewed by some as the most important resource in that without financial capital, other types of resources and capital are hard to acquire (Hofferth et al., 1998). It is also important to note that Bourdieu (1977) did not believe that there were significant differences between the types of capital, but that all types of capital could be converted into another form rather easily and result in the continued acquisition of capital for benefits (Nash, 1990).

Although there are many unique theoretical frameworks (e.g., Financial Nexus, Culture of Poverty, Critical Race Theory, and Human Capital Theory) that could be used to understand the impact of economic resources upon students and their educational experiences, Bourdieu's (1977) theoretical framework of Cultural Capital provides insight into how economic inequality is perpetuated over time. Even though Bourdieu's framework is often misunderstood by scholars as to the ability and way that the forms of Cultural Capital can be interchangeable, the framework has been used in various educational settings to examine, analyze, and understand the sociology of education (Nash, 1990). Despite the misunderstanding that has accompanied Bourdieu's (1977) Cultural Capital framework, Nash (1990) noted that, "The relevance of this for the sociology of education is obvious: in modern societies the school has become the most important agency for the reproduction of almost all social classes" (p. 432).

Through the development of this framework, Bourdieu (1977), believed that because the dominant elite have the power to define what is valued and what is not valued within society, this group continues to retain power. This power can often be seen within educational settings with students from particular backgrounds being more or less successful in school (Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Walpole, 2007). In addition, Bourdieu's (1977) framework has been significant in higher education research as it explicitly focuses on explaining social class, including socioeconomic status, and how educational institutions can be a venue where reproduction of these social classes and economic resources occurs (Walpole, 2007). Given the use of Bourdieu's (1977) framework within educational settings and implications for research in higher education, it is an appropriate framework for this study of low socioeconomic class Millennial generation college student experiences. As Hearn (1984) noted, the academically and socioeconomically rich continue to get "richer" while the academically and socioeconomically poor, continue to get "poorer." This may explain the decreasing enrollment in college of lower socioeconomic class students. Bourdieu's framework has been used within educational settings in both qualitative (Horvat et al., 2003; Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Lareau, 1987, 2000;

McDonough, 1994; Walpole, 2007b) and quantitative (Walpole, 2003) research studies, making it one of the more versatile and frequently used theoretical frameworks. Despite being frequently used by educational researchers, Bourdieu's (1977) framework has not yet been used as a framework to investigate the lived experiences of a particular generation of college students.

Parents and the Impact of Cultural, Social, and Financial Capital. Regardless of whether it is income, social capital, or Cultural Capital that has an effect upon parents' involvement and therefore students' experiences, numerous benefits of parental involvement have been identified. Some identified benefits of increased parental involvement include improved student behavior, improved student achievement, more positive attitudes toward school, improved homework scores, and lower absenteeism (Hoover-Dempsey & Bassler, 1987). Additionally, there has long been a belief that a family's economic resources, socioeconomic status, and social class standing play a role in parent-teacher relations in pre-college educational settings (Hoover-Dempsey & Bassler, 1987). Utilizing the tenants of Bourdieu's (1977; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, 1990) theoretical framework, Lareau (1987) conducted a qualitative study in two different elementary schools to determine if the attitudes, behaviors, and networks that Bourdieu discussed were present within an educational setting. In addition, Lareau (1987) utilized schools with white families of different socioeconomic statuses to see if financial resources impacted parents' interaction with and involvement in their child's education. The research of Lareau (1987) is important as it highlights the impact of socioeconomic status, forms of capital, and resources upon parents and students within the American education setting. In addition, the amount of financial resources available greatly influenced the way in which parents felt that they could interact or participate in their children's education. Knowing more about Lareau's (1987) study assists in better understanding how the availability of resources impacts the way in which parents feel comfortable interacting in their children's K-12 education.

Lareau (1987) conducted interviews with parents and teachers from two different schools; Colton, with many low socioeconomic status families, and Prescott, with many high socioeconomic status families. These interviews took place over a two-year period and Lareau (1987) found that there were differences in the involvement of parents based on their socioeconomic status. Those from higher socioeconomic status backgrounds interacted with and challenged their children's teachers far more often than the parents from low socioeconomic status backgrounds. The perception of higher socioeconomic status parents was that they had just as much, if not more, education and knowledge as their children's teachers and, therefore, felt comfortable challenging and questioning the opinions and beliefs of the teachers. A Prescott father described his view of teachers by stating,

I don't think of teachers as more educated than me or in a higher position than me. I don't have any sense of hierarchy. I am not higher than them, and they are not higher than me. We are equals. We are reciprocals. (Lareau, 2000, p. 112)

Another Prescott father, and small business owner, described his comfort with confronting teachers and principals when they were wrong by stating,

I am...accustomed to dealing with authority figures and not being concerned about it. If the mayor of the city walks into my store, I don't get all concerned about it. It is, "Hi, how are you." It is not a big deal. I suspect that in this community, especially with people who are in positions of authority themselves, they think nothing of going to somebody else who is in a position of authority and talking to them fact to face and saying, "You are wrong." (Lareau, 2000, p. 113)

This, however, was not the case for the lower socioeconomic status parents as they believed and looked to the teacher to be the expert source of knowledge and information. This often resulted in the parents agreeing with most of teachers' decisions (Lareau, 1987, 2000). One mother from Colton explained it to Lareau (2000) as follows:

A teacher goes to school for a long time. They know a lot more than a regular person. I don't consider myself stupid, but I'm not extremely smart or intelligent. I could not go into a classroom and teach a class and expect them to come out knowing as much as the teacher teaches them. So I rely on the teacher's opinion a lot more than my own. (pp. 110-111)

Parents who were more involved and interacted more frequently with their child's teacher, were often from higher socioeconomic backgrounds, had a better understanding of the student's educational development, and were able to work with their student outside of the classroom, often at home. In contrast, low socioeconomic status families view school as a job and believed that once the school day was finished, similar to a job, the learning stopped (Lareau, 1987, 2000). Colton parents were far less comfortable working on assignments with their children and, therefore, seldom discussed school when at home. It was also observed that parents with more schooling and more administrative jobs tended to also have more social class standing and networks within the community that provided them with a social advantage. Prescott parents were far more likely to receive information about their child and issues that were present at school had more connections with others around them. These connections were then often used by parents to further enhance their children's educational success (Lareau, 1987, 2000).

Lareau's (1987, 2000) findings suggest that socioeconomic status, social class position, and class culture become a form of Cultural Capital within the school setting as suggested by Bourdieu (1977) and Bourdieu and Passeron (1977, 1990). Despite Lareau's (1987) findings, a criticism of her study is that she only interviewed white families making these limited results from this study hard to apply to other minority racial and ethnic groups. Additional studies (Hoover-Dempsey & Bassler, 1987; Sil, 2007) of grade school families have found similar differences in the willingness, education, and knowledge of parents to interact with their children and the educational process based upon socioeconomic status. From these studies, it is evident that the social and Cultural Capital that a family possesses, often

dependent upon their financial capital, does get passed along to their children and impacts not only the parents' amount of interaction within the educational setting, but also the children's educational success. With knowledge that financial, social, and cultural resources, as defined by Bourdieu's (1977; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, 1990) framework, have an impact upon elementary education and parent interactions, more research needs to be performed to learn if similar experiences are present in the lives of college students.

Summary of Literature

Literature supports that there is a new generation of students, Millennials, on college campuses today, that have uniquely different experiences, needs, and expectations of their collegiate experience than previous generations (Atkinson, 2004; Glass, 2007; Howe & Strauss, 2000, 2003; Newton, 2000; Nicoletti & Merriman, 2007). It is hard to know about the unique experiences of Millennial college students as little research has been conducted (Brooks, 2000; Gage, 2005; Ramsey, 2008). However, one of the unique aspects of this generation that has been identified is the way that students interact with their parents and other support networks during their college experience. Most notably is the trend of "helicopter" parents (Coburn, 2006; Glass, 2007; Wartman & Savage, 2008) who continue to stay connected to their children even after they graduate from high school and enter college. Reaching into and beyond the start of students' college experience, prolonged parental involvement, identified by Arnett (1998, 2000a, 2000b, 2001) as emerging adulthood, continues to impact various aspects of student's college experience.

Although some students have the opportunity to engage in emerging adulthood, this experience has been seen to be one afforded most often to those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. Although adolescence is a universal life stage (Schlegel & Barry, 1991), the financial resources of families greatly impacts students' ability to be supported by their parents for an extended period of time (Arnett, 2000a). With money comes the opportunity for students to engage in a prolonged period of

adolescence and discovery while still having the support, both financially and emotionally, of their parents. Students from lower socioeconomic status backgrounds are not afforded the same type of opportunities, networks, and emotional and financial support as a result of their socioeconomic status (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990, 1994; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Although not researched in detail by Arnett (1998, 2000a, 2000b, 2001), the experiences of lower socioeconomic status students during adolescence may be drastically different, making their collegiate experience different from that of their higher socioeconomic status peers. There is a gap in research in regards to the experiences of low socioeconomic status Millennial college students.

Given the gap in research of low socioeconomic Millennial college students, Bourdieu's (1977, 1990, 1994; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) theoretical framework of Cultural Capital can provide a basis to better understand the way in which attitudes, beliefs, and social norming are passed from generation to generation. The use of Bourdieu's framework is also appropriate given that it has been most commonly used in educational settings to examine the perpetuation of disparities between economic classes. Additionally, literature supports that a family's financial resources, including social and Cultural Capital, impact one's ability to apply, enroll, and graduate from college (Astin, 1993; Greene et al., 2007; Hofferth et al., 1998; McDonough, 1994; Sil, 2007). Previous research that utilized a Bourdieuan framework has provided insight into the impact of socioeconomic status on educational experiences (Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Lareau, 1987, 2000, 2003).

Through Lareau's (1987, 2000) work, differences were observed in the way that parents from different classes interacted with teachers. It is not clear from Lareau's (1987, 2000) research if or how the amount of available economic resources impacts parents and if, in turn, that impact is passed along to their children within the collegiate experience. As noted by Bourdieu (1977), classes with the most power continue to perpetuate dominance through interactions and connections to attain educational and occupational gains (Walpole, 2007). Social class differences within the pre-college educational

setting can be seen very clearly through the work of Lareau (1987, 2000) and her colleagues (Horvat et al., 2003; Lamont & Lareau, 1988; McDonough, 1994). In addition, the impact that social class has upon the socialization of students and their interactions with others has also been clearly seen through research (Horvat et al., 2003; Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Lareau, 1987, 2000; McDonough, 1994). A gap in the research exists in understanding how college students of lower socioeconomic statuses are influenced by their family's cultural and social capital and if that also influences their interactions with parents, faculty, or others. Therefore, this study will explore the lived experiences of Millennial generation college students of low socioeconomic statuses to develop themes about their experiences.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the college experiences of Millennial generation college students from low socioeconomic class family backgrounds. In addition, the experiences of these students prior to attending college were explored to provide insight into how they have made sense of their life experiences. It was anticipated that the personal experiences, challenges, and obstacles revealed in this study can inform higher education practices to better serve the growing Millennial generation of students. In addition, the results of this study are intended to assist college administrators and student affairs professionals in providing useful and meaningful information to create resources, support groups, and assistance to low socioeconomic Millennial generation students as they choose to join the collegiate community. In seeking to understand the experiences of low socioeconomic status Millennial college students, this study addressed four research questions:

1. How do low socioeconomic status Millennial generation college students gain information about the social, cultural, and academic norms of college life prior to arriving on campus?
2. What are the academic experiences of low socioeconomic status Millennial generation college students?
3. What support systems do low socioeconomic status Millennial college students have while in college?
4. What does involvement (e.g., organizations, jobs, internships) outside of the classroom consist of for low socioeconomic status Millennial college students? Why have they chosen to be involved in these particular activities?

This chapter includes discussion of the study's research methodology. The following topics are addressed: (a) rationale for qualitative research design, (b) description of research sample, (c) overview

of research procedures, (d) data collection, (e) analysis and synthesis of data, (f) ethical considerations, and (g) issues of trustworthiness.

Rationale for Qualitative Research Design

Qualitative methodology implies that the researcher is interested in studying people within their natural settings and attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena through the meanings that they give to those experiences (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 2009). Understanding, or *verstehen*, refers to the unique human capacity to make sense of the world in which people live (Patton, 2002). This understanding also provides insight into the meaning that people have constructed, the way that people make sense of the world around them, and the experiences that they have within the world (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 2009). Creswell (1998) stated that qualitative research provides a “complex, holistic picture” (p. 15) of the multiple dimensions of a problem or issues and helps to achieve an understanding of the dimensions (Merriam, 2009). Through these multiple dimensions, qualitative research also displays a significant level of complexity.

A qualitative methodology was selected for several reasons. First, the qualitative research questions in this study sought to explore the *how* and *what* of student experiences (Creswell, 1998). In this particular study the researcher sought to discover *how* low socioeconomic class Millennial students interpret their college experience and *what* meaning they have attributed to their experiences. This helped in the discovery of how the worlds of low socioeconomic Millennial college students are constructed and the variables that have impacted the creation of these worlds. Through the research questions, the following was gathered from the participant in relation to their low socioeconomic status: the way in which experiences are interpreted, how worlds are constructed, and the meanings attributed to experiences. Second, the topic of this study needed to be explored. Walpole (2008) identified a need for more research to be completed about the experiences of low socioeconomic college students. Additionally, Brooks (2000) and DeBard (2004) noted the need for research about Millennial students

and, in particular, qualitative research. There have been few qualitative research studies that have used Millennial students. The needs of low socioeconomic class Millennial college students is one specific area in which exploration is needed. As a result of the knowledge gained from this research, theories may need to be reexamined to see if they are relevant to this population of students or if new theories need to be developed that will better describe the experiences of low socioeconomic class Millennial students. By using a qualitative methodology, the process was also inductive and allowed the researcher to gather data, and from this data formulate concepts, ideas, or theories instead of deductively testing existing theories (Merriam, 2009). Third, the intent of this research study was to provide a detailed view of the college experiences of low socioeconomic class Millennial students as one does not currently exist. Adding to this detailed view, qualitative research allowed the researcher to understand the multiple interrelationships among dimensions and allowed these relationships to develop through the course of the study (Patton, 2002). Fourth, utilizing an insider perspective, also known as an emic (Merriam, 2009), allowed for the study of individuals in their natural setting, and provided a more detailed, rich account of their experiences. Seidman (2006) acknowledges the importance of research in the natural setting and stated, “the primary way a researcher can investigate an educational organization, institution, or process is through the experience of the individual people, the ‘others’ who make up the organization or carry out the process” (p. 10). Fifth, qualitative research is used when writing allows the researcher to engage in storytelling as a form of narration (Creswell, 1998). Through the process of telling the participants’ stories, the researcher became engaged in their experience through the narration and brought them into the study. By utilizing writing and narration, qualitative inquiry is richly descriptive and provided the researcher with words, pictures, and context rather than the numbers used in quantitative research (Merriam, 2009). Through the qualitative method of writing used to tell a story, in-depth descriptions of the experiences of low socioeconomic status Millennial college students were created. Finally, as Creswell (2009) noted, many researchers are

increasing their use of a qualitative research perspective as it “provides an overall orienting lens for the study of questions of gender, class, and race (or other issues of marginalized groups). This lens becomes an advocacy perspective that shapes the types of questions asked, informs how data are collected and analyzed, and provides a call for action or change” (p. 62). As the purpose of this study was to collect information about the experiences of low socioeconomic class Millennial students, a qualitative research perspective was most appropriate.

Qualitative Framework

Using a qualitative framework, the research topic was explored through the methodological lens of phenomenology, described by Husserl (1913) as a study of how people describe things and experiences through their senses. In particular, the epistemology of a hermeneutic phenomenological perspective was most appropriate for this study as it “is a systematic attempt to uncover and describe the structures, the internal meaning structures of lived experience” (van Manen, 1990, p. 10), searches to understand what it means to be a human (van Manen, 1990), and is always anchored in the *lifeworld* (van Manen, 1990). The structures that were studied included socioeconomic status and how one’s socioeconomic status influenced the acquisition of Cultural Capital as described by Bourdieu (1977, 1990, 1994; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, 1990). Hermeneutic phenomenology provided a unique direction for research as the focus was on the *essence* of a particular experience or phenomenon (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006). Meaning was sought about the essence and phenomenon of being a Millennial generation college student of low socioeconomic status. In addition, Moustakas (1994) identified a primary aim of phenomenological research as “to determine what an experience means for the persons who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it” (p. 13). A hermeneutic phenomenological approach allowed the participants to answer the questions directly, thus providing rich, descriptive information from the emic.

This research used a framework that illustrates the socially constructed process, based upon socioeconomic status, that determines social class position and class culture that is then developed into a form of Cultural Capital within the school setting as suggested by Bourdieu (1977; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, 1990). Bourdieu's theoretical framework of Cultural Capital provided insight into how economic inequality is perpetuated over time. According to Bourdieu, the dominant elite have the power to define what is valued and what is not valued within society. Through defining what is valued, a dominant group retains power and continues to do so over time. This inequality of power is a characteristic which can often be seen within educational settings and can impact the educational process. When there is a power differential within education, it can influence students from particular backgrounds being more or less successful in school than others (Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Walpole, 2007). As Hearn (1984) noted, the academically and socioeconomically rich continue to get "richer" while the academically and socioeconomically poor, continue to get "poorer."

Bourdieu's (1977) framework has been significant in higher education research as it explicitly focuses on explaining social class reproduction as mediated by educational institutions (Walpole, 2007a). Researchers have utilized Bourdieu's framework in various qualitative research studies conducted in K-12 classrooms (Horvat et al., 2003; Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Lareau, 1987, 2000; McDonough, 1994; Walpole, 2007b) providing detailed information about the impact of Cultural Capital within educational settings. As a result, the Cultural Capital framework was appropriate for this study of low socioeconomic status Millennial generation college student experiences.

This research study used interviews as the method to collect information from participants. Most often, qualitative research utilizes interviews with open-ended questions (Creswell, 2008, 2009) that seek to probe and yield in-depth responses by participants about their "experiences, perceptions, opinions, feelings, and knowledge" (Patton, 2002, p. 4). Open-ended questions in qualitative research allowed the participants to respond through their own experiences without the constraints of past

research or the perspectives of the researcher (Creswell, 2008). An advantage to conducting interviews was that they allowed the participants to provide historical information at the same time the researcher maintained control over the line of questioning (Creswell, 2009). Interviews also provided the most consistent way for participants to make meaning through their language (Seidman, 2006). The importance of utilizing interviews with a small number of people was for the participants to describe the meaning of the phenomena they have experienced (Creswell, 1998). Given that the focus of this study was to learn about the lived experiences of low socioeconomic Millennial college students, interviews provided the participant an opportunity to share a historical perspective of their experiences, at the same time sharing their perceptions, opinions, and feelings about their experiences.

This study utilized the phenomenological method of a semi-structured interview protocol with open-ended interview questions as the primary data source. Interviewing a participant allowed the researcher to place behaviors into context as well as provided insight to understand a participant's actions (Seidman, 2006). In addition, interviewing provided the researcher great depth about the participants and the phenomenon of study (Patton, 2002). Semi-structured, open-ended interview questions consisted of a "set of questions carefully worded and arranged with the intention of taking each respondent through the same sequence and asking each respondent the same questions with essentially the same words" (Patton, 2002, p. 342). This type of interview protocol was useful to the researcher to minimize variation in the questions posed to interviewees (Patton, 2002). In addition, probes, additional follow-up questions to gather more depth about a response, were a part of the interview guide to reduce the need for interviewer judgment during the interview (Patton, 2002). Since qualitative research is ideally flexible (Patton, 2002), the details of the interviews and specific questions used were changed during the interview process to accommodate the changing conditions or emerging themes of the study in progress; however, the questions were based on the interview guide and potential probes.

The question construction and interview process for this research study was guided by Seidman's (2006) in-depth interview structure. This interview structure was based in phenomenology and used the previous work of Schuman (1982) as a basis for what is known as the three-interview series (Seidman, 2006). Although adaptable to a range of topics and issues, this interview structure is most commonly used when researching the experiences of "contemporary people" (Seidman, 2006, p. 15). The goal of this interview structure was to have the participant reconstruct his or her experiences within the topic of study through the series of interviews with each participant. Through the use of a series of interviews, "people's behavior becomes meaningful and understandable when placed in the context of their lives and the lives of those around them" (Seidman, 2006, pp. 16-17).

Schuman (1982) and his colleague Dolbeare originally designed a three-interview series to allow both the participant and interviewer to align experiences and place them into context. The task of the interviewer in the first interview of the series is to place the participant's experience in context by asking the participant to tell as much as possible about themselves up to the present time (Seidman, 2006). This interview is referred to as a focused life history in which the participant is asked to reconstruct early experiences. The second interview in the series, also referred to as the details of experience (Seidman, 2006), concentrates on the concrete details of the participants' present lived experiences. The final interview, also referred to as the reflection on the meaning (Seidman, 2006), focuses the participants to reflect upon how they have made sense or meaning of their experiences.

In this study the basic tenants of the three-interview series were used as a guide for the interview process, but were modified by the researcher. This interview series was developed with tasks to be completed at each step in the process and Seidman (2006) has expanded upon the original method allowing for modification of the process. The original method of three separate interviews was modified to two separate interviews by the researcher. Even with this modification, the critical element was that the researcher had more than one contact with the participants. With the importance of

contact in mind, the researcher combined the goals of the first interview, that of their life history, and second interview, the details of their present experiences. The primary reason for the modification was the difficulty that students, who themselves are still going through the early stages of their own personal development and making meaning of their experiences, to distinguish between past experiences and present meaning (Torres, 2011). Younger undergraduate students tend to have lower levels of cognitive maturity and to develop learning abilities at a slower rate than their older peers (Gadzella, Stephens, & Baloglu, 2001; Justice & Doman, 2001), making it difficult for younger students to process, distinguish, and learn from experiences. Given the difficulty in this distinction for younger undergraduate participants, there was the possibility for significant repetition in responses during the first two interviews. This repetition during the first two interviews could have negatively affected the participants' willingness to continue in the study and have resulted in some selecting to leave the study prior to completion.

During the first interview, participants were asked to reconstruct early experiences while also providing concrete details about those experiences. In addition, the participants were asked to provide concrete details of their present lived experiences. Probes, questions that asked the participant to further clarify and give concrete details about an experience, were used to ensure that the participant provided both past thinking and present thinking about the experiences. The goal was to gather information about how past experiences have impacted their current way of thinking and how that has impacted their present experiences. All of this information from the first interview provided a detailed account of how participants' have given meaning to past and present experiences.

The final interview, reflection on the meaning (Seidman, 2006), worked to focus the participants to reflect upon how they have made sense or meaning of their experiences. Prior to leaving the first interview, participants were asked a probe to encourage them to reflect upon particular experiences they have had while in college that will impact their future. This encouraged participants to start to

make meaning of their experiences prior to the final interview. Through making meaning of their experiences, the interview questions required the participants to look at how different factors in their lives have interacted to bring them to their present situation, while at the same time, looking at their present experience in detail and the context in which it occurs (Seidman, 2006). The first interview provided a foundation of details of the participants' experiences which helped to illuminate the second interview in the process (Seidman, 2006).

When developing interview questions, Patton (2002) identified six categories of question options that can be asked of people on any given topic. By utilizing these six categories to develop interview questions, it ensured a range of coverage to gather rich data from participants. These six categories of questions are behavior/experiences, opinions/values, feelings/emotions, knowledge, sensory, and background. The six categories have been developed into a matrix by Patton (2002) that also utilizes the categories of past, present, and future as described and identified by Seidman (2006) in the three-interview series.

Although the matrix was not used, the six categories designed by Patton (2002) were used as a basis for developing interview questions and protocol. Results from a review of the literature and subsequent development of research questions, served to inform the development of interview questions through the inclusion of questions that were related to all six of Patton's (2002) categories. The researcher worked to create interview questions that would be used during the first interview that would aid in describing past and present experiences of the participants. This process was again repeated for the second interview to gather information about the meaning making of those experiences. After reviewing all of the questions with a skilled qualitative researcher, it was discovered that many of the questions overlapped and that there was the potential that participants may cover more than one question focus area during the course of a response. Since there is the potential for overlap, the researcher then worked to combine similar questions for each interview and developed

interview questions that will gather information from several question focus categories at the same time. The researcher used an iterative process of defining questions beginning with Patton's categories. After an expert review of the interview questions multiple times, they were refined and checked for understanding and coverage.

Combining categories of Patton's (2002) work also reduced the overall number of interview questions. By reducing the overall number of questions in each of the two interviews, the goal was to allow participants the opportunity to describe, explain, and give context to personal experiences while still focusing the interviews with the research questions in mind. An interview guide for interview one can be found in Appendix A and the interview guide for interview two can be found in Appendix B.

The Research Sample

In qualitative research, it is important to utilize purposeful sampling techniques as these techniques "develop an in-depth exploration" (Creswell, 2008, p. 213) and provide for the most *information-rich* cases and the most information about the phenomenon of interest (Jones et al., 2006). Purposeful sampling is also useful for quality assurance (Creswell, 1998) as it assists the researcher in gathering a sample that has most likely experienced the phenomenon of research. Criterion-based sampling was used in this study as the criteria established for the sample can most directly link the characteristics, variables, and qualities to that of the purpose of the study (Jones et al., 2006). Based on the focus of this study, specific criteria for participants were developed.

The research sample was to be composed of a minimum of 7 participants. Although there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry, it is suggested to use minimum samples that are based upon expected reasonable coverage of the phenomenon and if more are needed, then more participants can be added to the sample (Patton, 2002). Similarly, when conducting phenomenological research there is an in-depth emphasis on the phenomenon and, therefore, a more narrow range of sampling is preferred (Creswell, 1998; Jones et al., 2006). Creswell (1998) suggested that for a

phenomenological study utilizing in-depth interviews, there can be as many as 10 individuals. For this study, a total of 8 participants made up the research sample.

Utilizing qualitative research techniques, in-depth interviews were conducted with traditional-aged, first-year and second-year college students from low socioeconomic backgrounds at a large research institution. First-year and second-year college students were selected as they theoretically have the closest connection with their parents, and may be able to provide rich information about the Cultural Capital passed on from their parents. As Lareau (2008) noted, the informal knowledge that parents have about how colleges work and the deployment of class-based resources can make a crucial difference in the experiences of the students.

The recruitment of participants was completed by using a professional staff member at the research university. This professional staff member works in the 21st Century Scholars Program, a program that provides support services for college students from low socioeconomic backgrounds in the State of Indiana. This staff member sent the same email from the researcher two different times to students from the 21st Century Scholars Program at Indiana University. The first email sent solicited participation from several participants, but not enough to meet the researchers desired sample size; therefore, the same email was sent again in hopes of soliciting more participants. Prior to sending the emails, the researcher worked with the staff member to tailor the distribution of the emails only to students who potentially fit all research criteria. In particular, the staff member filtered all 21st Century Scholars who also were first-year and second-year students and the email was sent to these students only. Although the initial solicitation of participants was to students in the 21st Century Scholars Program, these students could also have been participants in other programs that serve low income students (e.g., Groups Program). Only one participant of the research study was a 21st Century Scholar as well as a Groups Program participant. The researcher conducted a preliminary interview with potential participants to gather information and by using this information, determined if the participants

met the criteria for the sample. A total of 19 potential participants contacted the researcher and completed the preliminary interview to determine eligibility. Of the 19 potential participants, 9 initially met all of the criteria for the research study, but after the completion of the first interview, it was determined that one potential participant no longer met the criteria. Therefore, of the 19 potential participants, 8 completed two interviews with the researcher. The criteria and rationale for each criterion for the sample follow:

- Student from a family of low socioeconomic status. Although socioeconomic status is a difficult criterion to determine and as Barratt (2006) stated, “suffice it to say that no classic definition of SES exists” (p. 3), socioeconomic status is the characteristic of interest in this research study. To determine if a participant was from a low socioeconomic background, government guideline charts for poverty and low income thresholds were used. This chart for national poverty levels is included in Appendix C and the chart for national low income levels is included in Appendix D. Given that most college students do not have an income, their family income was used. Based upon family income, the US government uses both poverty and low income as monetary levels referring to the lowest level of socioeconomic status within the United States.
- First-Year or Second-Year Student. This study sought to better understand the college experiences of students prior to attending college and those soon after they arrive at college. Since first-year and second-year students, as classified by credit hours, have most recently been through this transition from high school to college, their experiences and memory of those experiences are most salient.
- Domestic Student. For this study, only students who were born and raised in the United States were of interest as growing up in other countries or cultures can impact their experiences and understanding of the world around them.

- Millennial Generation Student. This study focused on the experiences of students from a generational cohort that was born from 1982 to 2003 (Howe & Strauss, 2000), also described as “Millennial” students.
- Enrolled at a Research University. This study focused on the social, cultural, and academic experiences of low socioeconomic class Millennial students. As a part of their experiences, the researcher discovered how these students have accessed and utilized resources. If the participants worked, were involved in activities, or were involved as a member of a group during their first two years in college, this information was of interest to the researcher. Research Universities, because of the size of their student bodies, provide a wide and varied amount of work opportunities, resources, activities, and membership opportunities for students to choose from while in college. Another reason to use a Research University is that the primary responsibility of faculty is the completion and production of research, not necessarily in the teaching, interacting, or mentoring of students. Therefore, this higher education environment could have influenced a student’s ability to interact with faculty, staff, and other students. This ability or inability to interact with faculty, staff, and other students could have influenced the experiences of the sample.

Data Collection

Potential participants were identified as those having been through a verification process of their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and also a participant in the 21st Century Scholars Program, although the potential participants could also have been a part of another program that works to assist college students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. The potential participants who had been through the verification process were identified by a staff member in the 21st Century Scholars Program. A staff member from the 21st Century Scholars Program sent an email, created by the researcher, to potential participants. In order to obtain more participants that met the criteria for the

sample, the researcher asked the staff member from the 21st Century Scholars Program to send the same email a second time soliciting participants. Interested potential participants contacted the researcher to set up a preliminary interview. The preliminary interview was conducted to assist the researcher in determining if a potential participant met the criteria established for the sample of the research study. During this preliminary interview, the potential participant was asked to complete the Informed Consent Form, Demographic Survey, and Release for Verification of Family Income form. Once the researcher determined if a potential participant met the criteria for the sample of the research study, the first interview was scheduled with the participant.

Informed Consent Form. This form reviewed the aims of the study, identified any possible risks to participants, and required a signature from each participant indicating his or her volunteer status as a participant. In addition, the researcher asked the participant to provide a copy of the Student Aid Report (SAR) that was created after the completion of FAFSA and award of financial aid. The informed consent form is included in Appendix E.

Demographic Survey. This survey was designed to allow the researcher to learn more about each participant's academic, socioeconomic, educational, and family background. This survey was developed by the researcher and questions were drawn from a review of related literature on Millennial students (Howe & Strauss, 2000, 2003) and about potential factors that influence student experiences in an educational setting, particularly in college (Astin, 1993; Tinto, 1993). In addition, relevant information from this survey was used to assist in determining if the participant has been involved in programs developed for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds including the Free and Reduced Lunch Program or a TRIO program. This survey is presented in Appendix F.

Release for Verification of Family Income. Each participant was asked to sign a release form to allow the researcher to collect, view, and verify the family income supplied on the Student Aid Report (SAR). The family income reported on the SAR was reviewed to determine if it fell within the family

income level reported by the potential participant in the Demographic Survey. The release form is included in Appendix G.

Financial Information. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is a government application that uses a student's annual family income to determine the amount of financial aid for which a student is eligible. Although this information is self-reported, verification of FAFSA applications with that of a student's family's W-2 tax filing occurs once they start college to ensure that family income has not changed significantly. If family income has changed significantly from the time of applying to the program, a participant would then no longer be eligible for inclusion in a program such as 21st Century Scholars. Once verification occurs, the Student Aid Report (SAR) and FAFSA documents are modified to reflect the correct annual family income. The researcher used only students who had been through this verification process as this provided for the most accurate information on the SAR and FAFSA documents.

The researcher asked that the potential participant print a copy of his/her SAR documents from the FAFSA online site for comparison with that of the information provided in the demographic survey by the potential participant. This information was used to ensure that the student was from poverty or low income family backgrounds.

Analysis and Synthesis of Data

Qualitative analysis works to transform data into findings and through phenomenological analysis, the meaning, structure, and essences of the lived experiences of a phenomenon for a person or group of people can be developed into themes (Patton, 2002). These phenomenological themes may be understood as the structures of experience. In analyzing a phenomenon, the researcher is trying to determine the themes or the experiential structures that make up the experience (Van Manen, 1990). This research study utilized a transcendental phenomenological model of analysis developed by Moustakas (1994) and Patton (2002) to analyze and synthesize the data into invariant themes. This type

of analysis is most often used with phenomenological research studies to identify and describe the subjective experiences of participants (Schwandt, 2001).

The first step in data analysis was what is described by Moustakas (1994) as *epoche*, the setting aside of prejudgments and opening the research interview with an unbiased, receptive presence. Katz (1987) further described *epoche* as a process that a researcher engages in to remove or, at a minimum, become aware of his or her personal viewpoints, prejudices, or assumptions regarding the phenomenon under investigation. “*Epoche* helps enable the researcher to investigate the phenomenon from a fresh and open viewpoint without prejudgment or imposing meaning too soon. The suspension of judgment is critical in phenomenological investigation and requires setting aside of the researcher’s personal viewpoint in order to see the experience for itself” (Katz, 1987, pp. 36-37).

The second step was phenomenological reduction, a process in which the researcher “brackets out” (Patton, 2002, p. 485) the work and presumptions and identified data in the purest form, uncontaminated by extraneous influences. Bracketing, a term developed by Husserl (1913), required the researcher to hold the phenomenon up for serious inspection. In order to do this, the researcher took the phenomenon out of the world in which it occurs, takes it apart, and dissects it (Denzin, 1989). After bracketing occurred, the data was then “horizontalized,” a process that spread all data for examination (Patton, 2002). Horizontalization allows all of the elements and perspectives of the participants to have equal weight (Patton, 2002). Through this process data was then organized by the researcher into meaningful clusters with data that are repetitive or overlapping being removed.

Invariant themes were identified for use in the third step of “imaginative variation” (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002). This process allowed the researcher to develop enhanced or expanded versions of invariant themes and determine “how did the experience of the phenomenon come to be what it is” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 98). Using these expanded versions of the invariant themes, the researcher developed an abstraction of the experience that provided content and illustration, referred to as

textural portrayal (Patton, 2002), but does not provide the essence of the experience. The researcher looked beneath the effect inherent in the experience to develop a deeper meaning for the individuals and from those meanings, developed a composite of structural descriptions (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002). The final step in this analysis required “an integration of the composite textual and composite structural descriptions, providing a synthesis of the meanings and essences of the experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 144). The researcher identified significant events and moments to develop a synthesis of meanings in the experiences of low socioeconomic Millennial college students.

Triangulation. Triangulation can strengthen a study by combining methods (Patton, 2002) and can assist in strengthening the validity of a study. Through triangulating different sources of data, from interview criteria and both sets of interviews, themes were then established based upon several sources and perspectives of participants (Patton, 2002). Utilizing information gathered from a variety of participants during interviews and determining themes from this information helped to triangulate the findings of the study.

Member Checks. “The process of establishing trustworthiness within a research study includes intentional behaviors that promote congruence. Perhaps the most critical aspect of congruence includes the ability to authenticate the findings with participants through member checks” (Jones et al., 2006, p. 99). Conducting member checks allows the researcher to authenticate the findings with participants and is a critical aspect of congruence within a study (Jones et al., 2006). In phenomenological studies, it is not as important to gather factual accuracy as it is to uncover meanings that may be hidden for participants (Jones et al., 2006). After the first interview, the researcher used the information gathered from the interviews to create partial case studies about each of the participants. When writing these partial case studies, the researcher attempted to synthesize and summarize the most important or common themes about the student from the first interview. These partial case studies were then reviewed by a faculty member for consistency and clarity. Prior to the

start of the second interview, participants were asked to read the case study about them and share their thoughts and reactions with the researcher. This process was used as a member check in addition to reminding the participants about the questions and experiences shared during the first interview. Through this process, participants had the opportunity to react to the findings and interpretations that were formed from their responses to determine accuracy of the account (Creswell, 2008, 2009). This process also assisted in the validation of the data (Moustakas, 1994). This process of member checks also occurred at the conclusion of the interviews through follow-up emails to all participants in which they were asked to provide feedback regarding the themes developed for each of the research questions through the creation of a composite case study by the researcher (Appendix L). The researcher received five of eight responses from the participants and all who responded did not have additional feedback or any changes to the composite case study that was created.

Overview of Research Procedures

According to Creswell (2008), there are five steps that are important in qualitative data collection. Those steps include the following: identify participants, gain permission to begin the study, collect data (interviews, observations, and documents), record the information supplied by the participants, and administer procedures of qualitative data collection with sensitivity to the challenges and ethical issues of gathering information in a face-to-face setting. Utilizing these five steps as a general guide, the following list presents a description of the research procedures:

1. Prior to data collection, a review of the literature was conducted to apprise the researcher of previous research in the areas of Millennial generation college students and the experiences of low socioeconomic class students within educational settings.
2. Following approval of the proposal, the researcher applied for the required approval from the appropriate Institutional Review Boards. In this research study, approval from two different Institutional Review Boards was required.

3. While awaiting approval from the two Institutional Review Boards, the researcher contacted three undergraduate students, with whom the researcher previously worked, and asked if they would participate in mock interviews. Three mock interviews were conducted to assist the researcher in becoming more familiar with the interview questions, as well as to gather feedback about the wording, flow, and structure of the interviews.
4. After gathering feedback in the mock interviews, the researcher modified some of the interview questions to provide more clarity by adding questions to assist in gathering more information related to the four research questions. The interview outlines used for both interview one and two are included in Appendix A and B.
5. After approval from the appropriate Institutional Review Boards, the researcher worked to identify potential participants. The researcher contacted a staff member from the 21st Century Scholars Program to identify potential participants. The staff member of the 21st Century Scholars Program worked to identify potential participants from a group of students in their program who had their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) information verified with their W-2 federal family tax information. This also ensured that potential participants had accurate information on their Student Aid Record (SAR) as adjustments are made to FAFSA and SAR information after verification. Only students who have been through this verification process were considered as potential participants.
6. Once potential participants, who had been through the verification process, were identified, a staff member from the 21st Century Scholars Program sent an email, created by the researcher, to solicit participants. The initial email was sent to a total of 256 potential participants. The potential participants' anonymity was protected as the researcher did not know who received the email until a potential participant responded directly to the

- researcher with interest to participate in the study. A copy of the initial email sent to solicit participant is included in Appendix H.
7. An additional method of solicitation of participants used was word of mouth from potential participants who met with the researcher for the preliminary interview. If a potential participant told the researcher that they knew other acquaintances who might be interested in participating in the study, the researcher encouraged the potential participant to have the interested acquaintance contact the researcher via email. Although a few potential participants mentioned acquaintances who were interested, none of the participants used in this study were solicited through word of mouth.
 8. The researcher collected names of potential participants on a first-come, first-serve basis until at least seven potential participants were identified. Although a minimum of seven participants was required for this study, collection of potential participants continued after seven had been identified in case the initial group of potential participants did not meet the criteria for inclusion in the study as a result of a recent change in family income or failure to meet the required criteria for family income levels.
 9. In order to solicit additional participants, the researcher worked with the 21st Century Scholar staff member to send a second email to potential participants requesting assistance with the study. A copy of the second email sent is included in Appendix I.
 10. Students interested in participating in the research study were directed to contact the researcher via email or phone. After the potential participant contacted the researcher, the researcher worked to schedule a preliminary interview time with each potential participant. A total of 24 potential participants contacted the researcher to set up a preliminary interview. Of those who initially contacted the researcher, 19 set up and completed preliminary interviews with the researcher.

11. After a preliminary interview time was arranged, potential participants were emailed an electronic copy of the Demographic Survey, Informed Consent Form, and Release for Verification of Family Income for review prior to the preliminary interview. The potential participant was not asked to complete any of these forms prior to the preliminary interview; however, some potential participants did come with completed forms.
12. The preliminary interviews occurred in person before interviews one or two took place to explain the nature of the study. During this preliminary interview, potential participants were asked to provide information about their family financial income level. The potential participants completed paper copies during the preliminary interview of the Demographic Survey, Informed Consent Form, and Release for Verification of Family Income, if they did not already have them completed. The researcher collected these forms from the potential participants during the preliminary interviews. Also during the preliminary interview the researcher asked the potential participants to log into their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) account online to obtain a copy of their Student Aid Report (SAR). The researcher asked the potential participant to print or email a copy of their SAR to the researcher.
13. After the conclusion of the preliminary interviews, the researcher compared the information from the SAR document with that of the family income information provided by the potential participant in the Demographic Survey to confirm the initial verification.
14. Prior to leaving the preliminary interview, if the potential participant met the criterion of family financial income, interviews were scheduled. Of the 19 people who set up preliminary interviews, 9 initially met all criteria for the study and scheduled a first interview. During the scheduling of the first interview, the researcher explained to participants the payment schedule: \$15 cash for the first interview and \$20 cash for the

second interview, for a total cash incentive of \$35 for participation in both interviews. The researcher also reiterated a suggestion from Patton (2002) that they are being paid for their time and not for the answers.

15. The first round interviews were conducted with 9 first-year and second-year college students during the spring semester who met the criteria necessary for the sample of this study. However, during the first interview, it was determined that one of the participants no longer fit the criteria as he/she was a transfer student with two full years of experience at a different university. This interview focused on each participant's life history as it relates to being a low socioeconomic status Millennial student and how one came to know about and enroll in college. Also during this interview, the interviewer asked the participants to reflect upon the details of their experience in college thus far and the opinions they have developed as a result of those experiences. The information about their experiences and developed opinions provided insight into the way they interact with the college environment and also provided a detailed account of the current experiences of the participants. Interviews were held at times convenient to participants and in a quiet, private location on campus. Interviews lasted 20 to 90 minutes depending upon the time required to address the questions in the interview protocol and the speed with which the participant responded to interview questions. The average length of the first interview was 60 minutes and for the second interview it was 38 minutes. Upon leaving the first interview, participants were asked a probe (found at the end of Appendix A) for them to reflect upon in preparation for the next interview. Interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder and the researcher took notes during the interview. At the conclusion of the interview, the participant was paid \$15 in cash and the researcher asked the participant to sign a Receipt of Money form. A copy of this form can be found in Appendix J. The

- interviewer worked with the participant to schedule the second interview no less than seven days and no more than eleven days after the first interview. The average time between the first and second interviews was 9 days. The first interviews were transcribed verbatim by a professional transcriptionist prior to the researcher's analysis.
16. Between the first and second interview, the researcher created a partial case study of each participant. When writing these partial case studies, the researcher attempted to synthesize and summarize the most important or common themes about the student from the first interview. At the start of the second interview, participants were asked to read the partial case study created about them. Prior to asking questions from the second interview guide, the researcher asked the participants to share their thoughts and reactions about the partial case study. This process was used as a member check in addition to reminding the participants about the questions and experiences shared during the first interview.
 17. After the researcher gathered information from the participant about the case study at the beginning of the second interview, the structured interview questions were asked of the participants. During the structured interview, participants were asked to reflect upon what it meant throughout their college experiences to be a Millennial student from a low socioeconomic status. Additionally, they were asked to describe how college experiences could impact their future. This interview was held no less than three days and no more than twelve days following the first interview. At the conclusion of the interview, each participant was paid \$20 in cash and the researcher asked the participant to again sign the Receipt of Money form. A copy of this form can be found in Appendix J.
 18. Interviews were transcribed by professional transcriptionists and analyzed using a transcendental phenomenological method. The researcher used the information and personal stories that all the participants shared during the first and second interview to

develop the themes of the study. In order to develop the themes, interview data were analyzed through a four-step process. First the researcher read broadly for the themes related to each of the four research questions. Secondly, the researcher did a constant comparison between cases and then worked to group the data for more specific themes. The researcher then took the themes and did a constant comparison between cases to see if the themes applied. Finally, the themes were consolidated and organized using the four research questions as a guide. To be identified by the researcher as a theme, at least three participants had to share an experience or information related to that theme during either the first or second interview. It is through the words of the research participants themselves, the themes of their lived experiences as a low socioeconomic status Millennial generation college student emerged.

19. Using the themes as a guide, the researcher then created a composite case study (Appendix L) describing characteristics of a Millennial generation college student from a low socioeconomic status background. This case study was created to be used for conducting member checks with the participants.
20. Member checks were then conducted to ensure credibility of findings by using the composite case that was created. This composite case was emailed to all participants by the researcher and feedback was requested. The feedback was then used to make changes or adjustments to the themes. Five of the eight participants responded to the researchers request for feedback on the composite case study. Of the five participants who responded, none had additional feedback for the researcher.

Ethical Considerations

Qualitative research, like most research that involves and utilizes human relationships, includes ethical issues that are present and need to be understood and managed (Jones et al., 2006). Therefore,

it is important to note ethical considerations for this study. The participants in this study were volunteers, who were fully aware of the purposes of this study. While it was anticipated that no threats were posed to participants as a result of their involvement, the researcher ensured reasonable safeguards to protect the rights and confidentiality of the participants.

First, informed consent was of primary importance throughout the study. Participants were not misled about the purposes of the study, and gave informed consent to volunteer as participants. Second, confidentiality of participants was maintained through anonymity by altering and changing names and other identifying information in the reporting of the study. Third, the researcher ensured the security of the data collected, and that data were only accessed by the researcher and transcriptionist assisting with the research.

Issues of Trustworthiness

As a researcher develops, conducts, and synthesizes the results of a study, it is not only important that issues of trustworthiness are addressed for the relevance of the results, but creating trust within research results is of the utmost importance, especially given that researchers are examining and becoming involved in people's lives (Merriam, 2009). "The basic issue in relation to trustworthiness is simple: How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences (including self) that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of?" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290). Firestone (1987) stated, "The qualitative study provides the reader with a depiction in enough detail to show that the author's conclusion 'make sense'" (p. 19). One way that a researcher can persuade his or her audiences and help the conclusion "make sense" is through developing a sense of trust between the reader and researcher. Most often trustworthiness in qualitative studies is addressed through the validity (both internal and external), reliability, and objectivity of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009).

Internal validity deals with the question of how research findings are congruent to reality and if the research findings capture what is present (Merriam, 2009). One of the most well-known strategies for developing internal validity of a study is through triangulation, the cross checking of data collected at different times and different places, along with gathering perspectives from different people (Merriam, 2009). By utilizing triangulation techniques, this not only allowed the researcher to develop internal validity but also external validity, or the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations (Merriam, 2009). In addition, a modified version of Seidman's Three Interview series was used to interview several participants at different times. Although the researcher used a modified, two-interview structure, there was still a passage of time from one interview to another. With this modified interview structure in mind, it is still important to note what Seidman (1994) stated:

The structure of the three interviews, the passage of time over which the interviews occur, the internal consistency and possible external consistency of the passages, the syntax, diction, and even nonverbal aspects of the passage, the discovery and sense of learning that I get from reading the passage lead me to have confidence in its authenticity. Because we are concerned with the participant's understanding of her experience, the authenticity of what she is saying make it reasonable for me to have confidence in its validity for her. (p. 26)

Conducting member checks with participants, also known as respondent validation is another strategy for ensuring internal validity (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009). Member checks allowed the researcher to take some of the analysis of the study back to the participants to determine if the researcher's interpretation of the information "rings true" (Merriam, 2009). The researcher conducted member checks at the conclusion of the first interview through the use of the individual participant case studies that were developed. As another form of member checking, at the conclusion of the research study, the researcher also allowed for the participants to react to the findings. The researcher used the emergent themes developed through the analysis to create a composite case study of a Millennial

generation college student from a low socioeconomic background (Appendix L). The researcher then emailed the composite case study to the participants and requested feedback.

Reliability is the extent to which research findings can be replicated (Merriam, 2009) and reliability is important not by itself, but as a precondition for validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). If research findings cannot be repeated with the same results, then the findings themselves cannot be valid. However, reliability within a research design is based upon the assumption of a single reality to yield the same results (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative research is not conducted in a way that allows for human behavior to be isolated, rather the researcher seeks to describe and explain the world as those in the world experience it (Merriam, 2009). Utilizing an interview structure allows not only for replication and applicability within other contexts by other researchers (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) but also allows the researcher to develop meaning making and explain the experiences of participants within the world as they experience it (Seidman, 1994).

Objectivity is related to both validity and reliability in that if multiple observers can agree upon a phenomenon or the findings of a research study, then the collective judgment can be viewed as objective (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Most often imperfect methodologies, including relying upon the data of a single observer, can threaten objectivity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Objectivity was achieved by the researcher in this study through rigorous research methods, and through the development of credibility of the researcher (Patton, 2002). Rigorous research methods included informed consent of all participants, the systematic process of conducting and analyzing the research data, the triangulation of data, and the use of member checks.

CHAPTER 4

PARTICIPANT CASE STUDIES

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore the college experiences of Millennial generation college students who are from a low socioeconomic class family background. By using the methodological lens of phenomenology, in particular hermeneutic phenomenology, the researcher sought meaning about the essence and phenomenon of the lived experiences of Millennial generation college students of low socioeconomic status. Hermeneutic phenomenology provides a unique direction for research as the focus is on the *essence* of a particular experience or phenomenon (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006). In order to gather information from participants, the researcher used a semi-structured interview method with open-ended interview questions. Open-ended questions in qualitative research allow for the participants to respond through their own experiences without the constraints of past research or the perspectives of the researcher (Creswell, 2008).

The researcher utilized emails to solicit freshman and sophomore 21st Century scholar students to obtain participants for the study. If a student was interested in being considered for the study, s/he emailed the researcher and the researcher set up a time to conduct a preliminary meeting to determine a potential participant's eligibility. In order to be considered for inclusion in the study and be a part of the research sample, participants had to meet the following criteria: a student from a low socioeconomic status family, a first-year or second-year student, a domestic student, a Millennial generation student, and a student enrolled at a Research University. After eligibility was determined, the researcher conducted the initial interview with a total of 8 participants. Four of the participants were women; four were men, and all were 21st Century Scholar students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Two of the participants, one woman and one man, identified themselves as minority students. Appendix K has additional demographic information about the research sample. All of the participants are natives of the state in which they attend college, State University. Following the first

interview, the researcher reviewed all recordings and created partial case studies for each participant highlighting the information shared during the first interview. The researcher then shared the partial case studies prior to the start of the second interview and gathered feedback from the participants about the accuracy of the information.

After gathering feedback from the participants about the partial case studies, the researcher conducted the second interview. At the conclusion of the second interview, the researcher made changes to the partial case studies based upon the feedback gathered from participants. The researcher also reviewed the recordings of the second interview and again modified the case studies to include information shared during the second interview. These case studies provide information regarding the participants' experiences as low socioeconomic Millennial generation college students.

KEVIN

Kevin is a college freshman who grew up less than an hour away from the large state college he chose to attend and described the campus as literally in his "backyard." Being close to home, the financial aid package he received as a result of his 21st Century scholarship, and the top notch humanities program persuaded Kevin to attend State University to pursue a career in criminal justice. Kevin's interest in criminal justice is a result of a project in high school.

Kevin is the first in his family to go to college; growing up, he learned very little about college life. Despite his father's belief that he should not attend college even with a full scholarship, Kevin's mother has always been supportive and proud of him and his academic pursuits. Kevin's mother had him while she was still in school and he learned early on to "do things in the right order." Since Kevin was at the top of his class his freshman year in high school, he feels that his teachers earmarked him to go to college. Kevin has been independent from an early age and has pushed himself beyond his parents' expectations. Kevin's friends and teachers had a significant impact upon him throughout his K-12 education; they challenged him to discuss and debate topics at a young age.

Kevin has also always known that in order to get a good job he would have to get a college degree. He enjoys school and the process of learning and is motivated to achieve academic success in order to go to law school after college. Upon arriving on campus, Kevin expected that his peers would be more motivated and intelligent than he has experienced. Kevin looks around at his peers, especially in his residence hall community, and often wonders why they are in college. Additionally frustrating to Kevin is his peers' lack of motivation. The academic course load, amount of coursework, and difficulty of courses have been what Kevin expected. Kevin was surprised that most of his time in college is not spent in the classroom, but outside in activities or studying. Many of Kevin's expectations about college academic courses were developed from conversations with previous high school graduates and friends who attended college before him.

Academically, Kevin feels smarter than the people around him. He developed this belief based upon the way he sees his peers act, engaging in parties and drinking on a regular basis. Based upon the partying and drinking that Kevin has seen of his peers, he wonders how they can perform academically. Kevin is also aware of the grades his fellow classmates have received and did better than most during his first semester. Kevin has also made a conscientious effort to make his college resume diverse engaging in many campus activities and working to integrate his different coursework and extracurricular experiences together to make him a better, well-rounded candidate to attend law school. Although in high school Kevin did not feel academically challenged, Kevin has enjoyed the academic rigor of his college courses.

Looking back, Kevin now wishes that he would have gone further away from home and been more aware of the impact and transitional issues of attending a large school. Being at a larger school, Kevin has found it harder to make friends than in his small high school. Kevin has now realized he enjoys being a part of a smaller community in which he has to interact with people. At his larger university, there are so many people who do not necessarily need to interact with each other on a regular basis.

Smaller environments are more comfortable for Kevin as he has often used his close friends to provide him with different perspectives which help him in making life decisions. Kevin was involved in many activities in high school and developed close friendships. Although Kevin expected to make many new friends in college, the friends that he made in high school and his high school teachers have continued to be a strong support network in college. Despite the friends being far away and attending different universities, Kevin stays in frequent communication with them. Kevin has also chosen to go back to his high school to share his collegiate experiences with younger students still exploring future options. Additionally, Kevin will play with his high school band or assist the basketball team on regular basis when he returns home on weekends.

Kevin's first semester at college was what he described as an "emotional rollercoaster," and one in which he needed to "hang on." Additionally, Kevin acknowledges that some mornings he did not want to get out of bed. By getting up each day, having coffee, going for a run, and talking with friends, Kevin was able to find a way to make it through this difficult transition period. Kevin remembers encountering similar difficulties when he transitioned to high school. When faced with a difficult choice about dropping a course, Kevin sought the advice of an academic advisor. By happenstance, Kevin was also able to talk with a current student working in the 21st Century Program office who advised him to continue in the course despite the difficulty he was having. Kevin also decided early on to seek activities in college similar to those he was involved in during high school. Kevin was involved in high school marching band and in the fall of his freshman year joined the collegiate marching band.

Being a part of the marching band and the practice schedule early in the year made it difficult for Kevin to meet other people during the first few weeks of college. However, Kevin has developed close relationships with many friends from the band. In the future, Kevin thinks that these friends from marching band will be his main support networks. In addition to the marching band, Kevin also was looking to become involved in a campus youth group and campus political group, but after attending a

few meetings, did not feel welcomed by either group and is no longer interested in the organizations. As Kevin has continued to look for other activities through flyers and chalking information around campus, he has recently decided to become a part of the campus emergency services organization. Kevin feels that his involvement in this organization will increase opportunities and experiences for his future law career. There are many activities and opportunities available to Kevin and he knows that involvement in a variety of activities will make him a more well-rounded law school candidate; he just needs to find the time in his schedule to participate.

With the 21st Century Scholarship Kevin has had less stress and worry regarding where his funding for college is coming from each semester. In addition, Kevin can devote time to his classes and involvement in marching band instead of needing to work on campus. Graduating from college will help Kevin get a better paying, more stable job, but he knows that before obtaining a job, his main goal is to get into law school. Kevin knows that in order to get into law school, he will need to develop relationships with his professors for letters or recommendation, but as of now, the classes are too big for him to get to know his professors well enough to develop that type of relationship. Kevin hopes that in the future he is able to live a more comfortable lifestyle than what he grew up in, not be in poverty, and be able to invest money for continued security. With a college degree, Kevin sees his future earning potential significantly higher than without, and going to law school will continue to increase that earning potential. Although Kevin wants to graduate from college, he does not feel that the point of college is to get a degree, but rather, to be more educated and have a better understanding of the way the world works, to take that knowledge and be more productive. Kevin refers to this as “human capital.”

Kevin feels that his academic success has negatively impacted his brother who is less academically gifted as in high school teachers compare him to Kevin. For his youngest brother who is academically successful now, Kevin feels that in the future he can help him relate to someone in college and help him find his way. By the time his youngest brother is in college, Kevin will have experiences to

share as a college graduate and be in law school. Kevin has never considered the possibility of not graduating from college as it is something he has to do. If he does not graduate, Kevin feels that he will be “stuck” in the same rut as many in his home community, working on a farm, at a factory, or at Wal-Mart. Not graduating from college would also be emotionally traumatizing and a hit to his own self-worth as academics have always been what has defined him.

After graduation Kevin noted that he will be better educated than many in his home community, which may impact his relationships and his ability to communicate with others. Those with more education and degrees tend to be people who Kevin can communicate with more easily than those who have less education or are close-minded. The majority of Kevin’s close friends are also in college, pursuing similar goals, and he does not foresee changes in these friendships in the future, except as a result of distance. In the future when he has a job, Kevin expects to have to support his mother and stepfather, as well as his own family. Being able to provide for his future wife and children is Kevin’s main motivation for continuing in college.

TANYA

Tanya is a college freshman who grew up without either of her parents playing much of a role in her life. Tanya is self-reliant, independent, and has provided for herself, including paying for food, from a young age. Given her independent nature, Tanya has had a difficult time reaching out to others for help. Her grandmother has been, and continues to be, an important support network and often checks up on Tanya to make sure she is doing well and stays on track to achieve her goals. Tanya always knows that if she needs support, her grandmother will be there, and her grandmother’s house is a place that she can call home. From a young age, Tanya was pushed and expected by her grandmother to go to college and be the first person in her family to get a college degree.

During her sophomore year in high school, Tanya was encouraged by a high school counselor to look more into courses that would prepare her for college. Seeing both her parents struggle to make

ends meet, and dislike their low paying jobs, Tanya was motivated to do better and go to college to have a career, a job that she is happy with, and not struggle financially. With the help and encouragement of her grandmother and older cousin's knowledge of the 21st Century Scholar Program, along with the help of a high school counselor, Tanya applied. Originally, Tanya planned on attending a private university, but because of a mix-up in the financial aid office, chose to come to State University where she could receive financial aid. As a result of receiving the 21st Century scholarship, Tanya is able to be in college, focus more on her academics during college, be involved in campus activities, and not have to work.

Since Tanya grew up in a college town, she was more familiar with and knew what to expect in regards to some college norms and college atmosphere, including the party atmosphere and significant levels of school work. Despite her close proximity to a college campus, Tanya still did not come to campus unless she had a purpose. Tanya would only go to campus if on a school field trip, or to attend an event with a class, as she saw campus as a "bubble" that people from the outside did not venture into. Tanya feels that there are high expectations for her to stay in college and be the first in her family to graduate with a college degree.

As a result of being bullied and teased due to her clothes and lack of financial resources, Tanya became withdrawn early on in high school and interacted with few people. On a whim, Tanya decided to become involved in a class during her junior year which provided her a continual support network until graduation. This experience really opened Tanya to being comfortable getting to know others and developing outside her close friend network. These relationships from high school have continued and Tanya has returned to meet with former classmates.

Despite her positive experiences at the end of her high school career, Tanya was most fearful about not making friends in college. Tanya knew only one person in her residence hall learning community, but through that one person, Tanya's friend network continued to grow quickly during her first semester in college. As a result of these friendships, Tanya has made many strong connections with

a diverse group of people. In addition to her friends from her residence hall learning community, Tanya's other large network of friends was the people she met during a freshman camping trip held prior to the start of classes. What Tanya has enjoyed most about these friendships is not only the support network that they provide to her, but also the opportunity that she has getting to hear their stories and learn about their different experiences. When a family emergency occurred during her first semester in college, these friends were who Tanya reached out to for support and were there to support Tanya and her family throughout the emergency.

Although Tanya is aware that she could have done better academically during her first semester, she still feels that she is doing well in her coursework because she is challenging herself with difficult classes. Tanya has also appreciated being able to set her own academic path in college which has made her more focused and wanting to complete her coursework. Tanya is passionate about the arts and fashion, and worked to find campus groups that would relate to these interests. Through Tanya's involvement in various campus organizations, she knows that the knowledge and the networks developed will be critical to her future, including internships and other career opportunities. In these campus groups Tanya has become a leader and enjoys helping empower others to set goals and get involved in activities about which they are passionate. She also has learned more about herself through her various involvements across campus, and has tried many new activities. Tanya finds managing her time, especially with friends, and developing a routine somewhat difficult given the variety of freedoms of college.

Tanya does not see that having a college degree will impact her family dynamics as she is not close with her parents, but knows that with a degree and a job, she will be able to set a good example, provide help and money, and be there for her younger sister encouraging her to get through college. With a college degree, Tanya also hopes to give back to her community by using her skills. Tanya is especially skilled in clothing alterations and would like to use her talents to help others in need. After

college, Tanya does not see her friendships changing as her current friendships are not based solely upon collegiate experiences. Tanya is hopeful that graduating from college will help her in the future, including having more knowledge about the world around her, getting a good job, being able to support herself financially, and being happy with what she is doing.

Tanya is aware that with a college degree she is more likely to obtain a job or learn about job opportunities than those who did not go to college, but is worried that so many people have college degrees, it might not be as important. If she is not able to graduate from college, Tanya knows that there are ways to get by and jobs that she could get, and ultimately she would find a way to make it. Tanya knows that she is trying extremely hard to finish college and depending upon the circumstances, knows that she might not be able to complete her degree. If Tanya was not able to finish her degree as a result of finances, she would not be as devastated because she would not have control over the situation, but would work to get the money to come back and complete her degree. If failure to complete her degree was related to grades, she would be more frustrated with herself, although it is hard for her to imagine this happening. Money is Tanya's main motivation for completing her college degree, but also recognizes and appreciates the knowledge and information that she is learning in college are important for her future and potential opportunities.

In the future, Tanya hopes to stay close with many of her friends that she has made while in college as they have helped to push her to make sure academics and education are most important, while also helping each other through difficult personal times. Tanya anticipates that these friends will be her main support network after college. If Tanya becomes close with a professor while in college, she can foresee herself continuing that relationship following graduation. Tanya has started to develop some of these relationships with professors based upon their mutual interest in fashion or design and hopes to continue to develop these relationships further in the future. Depending upon her financial

situation following graduation, Tanya may explore graduate opportunities in art and photography and would love to continue learning and studying, but currently knows little about graduate school.

JUAN

Juan is a college freshman who initially planned on moving out of state with a friend, working, and attending community college after high school instead of attending college full-time. After receiving additional financial aid information regarding the 21st Century Scholarship the week prior to the college application deadline, Juan decided to apply at the “last minute.” Prior to receiving this financial aid information, Juan did not think that he was going to be able to afford college tuition and living expenses. As a result of his decision to go to college just prior to application deadlines and not wanting to write an essay, Juan only applied to one college, State University, and was accepted. Prior to coming to college, Juan had no understanding of college life as he is the first person in his family to attend college. In addition to being motivated by college being funded, Juan feels that attending college shows the progression of his family and is an accomplishment everyone can celebrate.

Juan’s family is not from the United States and he feels that his cultural background impacted his lack of knowledge about college. Additionally, Juan is fluent in another language. Until seventh grade, Juan grew up in a single-parent household with several young siblings. Then his mother began dating Juan’s future step-father who became a part of his life and lived with the family. Following an argument when Juan confronted his mother about using money to pay for her upcoming wedding instead of food for the family, Juan was kicked out of the house by his mother at the age of 17. Juan’s mother is now married to his step-father and his younger siblings live with them although Juan wishes he could have continued to live with his siblings to take care of them. After being kicked out of his house, Juan was taken in by his grandmother who has always supported and encouraged him. Juan described his mother as being bi-polar while he was growing up which created issues within his family. Currently, Juan is in communication with his mother and step-father and describes his mother as being

more mentally healthy than before. Now that he is in college and away from home, Juan's mother has tried to "win him back" and be more involved in his life by being in contact with him often, offering to come and visit, and being "clingy." In contrast, Juan's Grandma has tried to let him go and therefore does not communicate as much so as not to bug him, but is still there to support him if needed.

Juan remembers the first person to talk with him about going to college was his high school counselor during his junior year. Although the counselor tried to give the best advice she could, Juan does not feel that she understood how clueless he truly was about college. Juan thinks that his counselor thought he knew more than he really did about college because he always completed his homework and rarely went to his counselors for advice, instead asking them basic questions. It was through the encouragement of his Grandma's friend who worked at a local non-profit organization that he first learned about the 21st Century Scholars Program and applied in 7th grade. Throughout Juan's life, both his Mom and Grandma told him to stay on top of his work and that school always came first. Juan feels that this strict academic approach taken by his Mom and Grandma is a result of them growing up outside the United States.

Prior to college, Juan thought that he would have to change and adapt to fit in at college instead of being allowed to be who he is and find people who support his lifestyle. In addition, most of Juan's friends in high school were people he considered "burn-outs" and who would never attend college. Juan did not see himself fitting into the images associated with the group of students from his high school who attended college. Most of these impressions about college life and the environment Juan developed were a result of watching television and movies. Much to his surprise, these perceptions of college were inaccurate and Juan has not had to change who he is in order to fit in. Juan finds that there are many different types of people in college who are more open-minded, accepting, and non-judgmental. Juan has found close friends within his residence hall living learning community and feels that the community is a good mix of many different types of people. In addition to the friends he has

made, Juan loves the relaxing college environment, the freedom he has, and the opportunity that college allows him to get away from his hometown, which he describes as “mediocre.”

When coming to college, everything was new for Juan and he did not understand much of anything, including common dining amenities on campus. Juan was anticipating that he would need to make his own food in college, not go to a dining center to get pre-made food items. Academically, Juan has to prepare and study much more for his college courses than he did in high school. The coursework in college is more difficult requiring more time. Juan has found it is easy to stumble academically and during his first semester got caught up in drinking and partying which affected his grades and GPA. In comparison to his college classmates, Juan feels that he is average. Juan noted that he does not try as hard as some, but still attends class more often than others, therefore making him average in his academics. Juan feels that he has a good balance between his academics and social activities.

The biggest difference Juan has faced academically from high school to college is the learning techniques, studying required, and expectations of his professors. In college, professors do not follow up with students if they miss class or do not turn in assignments, something that Juan was used to in high school. During class Juan feels that professors provide the basics of information, but understanding, practicing, and applying that information are the responsibilities of the students. Through the encouragement of a professor, Juan knows that he needs to start developing relationships with professors for recommendations and letters of references, as well as trying to establish professional networks, something he is working on doing. In the future, Juan foresees these relationships with professors being an important support network. Juan is motivated by seeing his friends around him be successful and knows that it is possible.

Juan often does not seek out support as he tries to work through situations on his own but as a last resort he will ask his Grandma as she has always been there to help him and has “had his back.” While in high school when Juan reached out to others for support, academically he would reach out to

counselors and emotionally he would seek out his aunt who would protect Juan from the treatment he received from his family. Prior to coming to college, Juan really did not anticipate having a support network in college. Since starting college, when he needs academic support, Juan has sought out the advice of his academic advisor as well as a friend from his hometown who is now a senior at the same university. This friend also has provided Juan information about loopholes within his academic coursework and major. In addition, Juan often turns to his new friends he has made in college who he lives around. These new friends are people that Juan trusts and feels they will always be there for him. Trust with these friends developed as a result of drinking alcohol and sharing their personal life stories with each other.

Although he was not involved in high school, Juan has become involved in campus activities after seeing flyers and advertisements. Being involved in a wide variety of activities, and exploring and learning new information are aspects of college life that Juan has enjoyed. Juan has become involved in a wide variety of activities, including student government in his residence hall, neuroscience club, and psychology club, in addition to attending concerts and sporting events around campus. Through his involvement in these activities, Juan has developed better socialization skills and other skills he can list on his resume. Following his first semester in college, Juan feels that he has learned significant amounts of information about new participants as well as life skills that will provide him a basis to be more prepared in the future to achieve academic success.

Although Juan feels that his family will be proud of him, after college he also thinks that some of them will be condescending because of jealousy as to what Juan has been able to achieve, opportunities that they did not have. In addition, he feels that his family will treat him more as an adult as graduating from college is an adult activity. Juan also thinks that he will be a role model for his siblings and be a resource for them when they go through college. Although he does not think about the future, Juan does realize that graduation from college is a step towards success and achieving his

goals. For now, his goal is being happy. Juan knows that the next step after college is finding a job, and he hopes to find a job that provides him with enough money to be comfortable. Despite him knowing he needs to get a job, what concerns Juan the most about life after college is having less leisure time and being busier as he intends to go to graduate school. Juan would like to go to graduate school in the near future if the opportunity is available and depending upon the financial advantages that graduate school would provide him in his future career.

EMMA

Emma is a college sophomore who recently changed her major. Emma grew up in a college town, but did not want to go to school so close to home, and looked for other colleges to attend. Although Emma did not want to go to college in her hometown, living in a college town did prepare Emma for the non-academic aspects of university life, including college athletics and partying, but not for any of the academic components. Although she does not remember who first talked to her about college, Emma does remember both her teachers and parents talked with her when she was very young. For as long as Emma can remember, she knew that the next step after high school graduation was to attend college. In part, Emma expected that she would go to college as a result of being enrolled in advanced classes throughout middle school and high school. Emma's parents also expected that she would attend college as they did not go to college themselves. Her parents worked to help ensure that Emma was receiving good grades and enrolled her in the 21st Century Scholars Program in middle school. As a result of her enrollment in the 21st Century Scholars Program, Emma decided to attend State University, a public state institution instead of a smaller state institution because of a larger financial aid package available to her. The financial aid provided through the 21st Century Scholars Program has been Emma's only financial resource during college.

During Emma's time at college, she has encountered self-doubt about what she is doing with her life and still feels that she is trying to determine what she wants to do and where she wants to go. This

doubt has also led Emma to contemplate leaving school several times. At the moment, Emma does not have a better plan for what she will do and is still in college because she is motivated to get a better job, make more money, and have more opportunities than if she would have entered the workforce after high school. Despite these motivations, Emma has struggled to attend classes on a regular basis and get her assignments done as a result of no one holding her accountable, and her newfound freedom and free time. Free time was not something Emma had in high school as she was very busy in activities; this has been a lifestyle change since coming to college. Emma has also chosen not to become involved in any college extracurricular activities and spends most of her free time with friends.

Emma expected that college was going to be an intellectual community with many different participants to study and explore and expected that professors and college professionals would assist her in deciding what she would study. Being enrolled at a large state institution, Emma's experience has been different than she expected with professors being less invested in her future and in her learning. For Emma, figuring out her own career path and making connections in the classroom has been difficult as there are so many students in her classes, the courses are broad, and the professors are very hands off. Although Emma is still studying a major within the humanities, classes that she enjoyed in high school, she feels that her experiences at a smaller university would have been closer to what she was expecting. At a smaller university Emma may have had more involvement from faculty and staff members helping her to define her direction. Even though Emma had a female cousin she visited and who attended State University prior to her enrolling, Emma did not attend any academic classes which she feels would have helped her to more clearly understand the college academic environment.

Despite her lack of knowledge of the college academic environment and her feelings of doing worse academically than her peers, Emma feels that as a result of her advanced classes in high school she believes that she is more intelligent and a "cut above" the rest of her classmates. As Emma looks around her college classes, she does not identify these peers as people who would have been enrolled in

her advanced classes in high school. Emma has not performed at a high academic level in college and has received the worst grades in her life. During her freshman year in college Emma did interact with a few of her professors, but only to discuss assignment logistics, not course material. In the past semester, Emma has worked to make changes in her routine by scheduling her classes closer together which she feels has helped with her motivation and attending classes on a more regular basis. Emma has not talked with professors outside the classroom, as she has seen no need to do so and does not anticipate having any interactions with professors after college.

Emma has developed different friendships since coming to college and these friends constitute most of Emma's support network. These college friends have supported Emma as she has contemplated leaving college many times in the past year and a half. Since Emma chose these friends and enjoys spending time with them, she trusts them. Her college friends have provided Emma with significant amounts of support that she feels will continue to be important to her in the future. Emma's cousin, who graduated from college in December, also still plays an important role in Emma's life and is a person she sees often. In addition to friends, Emma's parents provide her with constant emotional support and unconditional encouragement, which she also feels will continue in the future. Since coming to college, Emma feels that her relationship with her parents is better than in high school and Emma talks or communicates with her parents daily.

Emma is very aware of the alternative lifestyle for those who do not have a college degree as a result of seeing her parents struggle to make ends meet. Graduating from college will make Emma's family proud of her and she is hopeful that with a college degree she will have more opportunities, and live a comfortable lifestyle that allows her to have extra money. Emma feels that having a college degree will make all of her relationships better in the future as she will be able to bring more to the table and will have more knowledge to share in these relationships. Through her achievements, Emma hopes to be a role model and set an example for her younger brother, showing him college opens more

doors and opportunities. Relationships with friends who did not go to college, will be less strong in the future as they no longer share common experiences as they did in high school. Emma's biggest concern is determining what she will do after graduation and having goals and a path for her future. If Emma does not graduate from college, she feels she will have fewer opportunities in the future, she would be quitting on something that was important, and overall be disappointed in herself. Depending upon her future career, Emma may go to graduate school if the profession required an advanced degree, although it is not a goal of hers presently.

SHERRI

Sherri is a college freshman who has several younger siblings still at home who she would like to set a good example for by going to college. Additionally, Sherri is motivated to stay in college not only for the financial benefits a degree will provide, but also she wants to show her siblings and young cousin that they can make something of themselves and do something with their lives. In the future, Sherri wants to be able to take care of herself financially, get a career that provides her with a stable job, and not have to depend upon others. Sherri chose to attend State University that not only provided her an excellent financial aid package, but that also had a top notch medical program. In addition, the university was close to home, but not in her hometown making it a good balance for Sherri.

Sherri first learned about the 21st Century Scholars Program in seventh grade. Sherri's mother completed applications for both Sherri and her older brother but Sherri's brother chose not to attend college because it was not for him. Growing up, Sherri was told very early by her Mom that she had to go to college but did not learn any information about college until the 8th grade. Sherri also kept in contact with her first grade teacher who talked with her about college, always encouraged her, and told her that she was going to become something. Sherri's mom has always pushed her to put her school work first and make it her main priority so that she would not need to depend upon others financially.

In high school Sherri was in a program to become certified nursing assistant. While a part of this program, Sherri had severe test anxiety and reached out to her pastor's wife and cousin who helped to calm Sherri and provided her the needed support to pass her exams. It was through engaging in prayer with her pastor's wife and cousin that Sherri was able to complete the course. Sherri's mom tried to help her during the course, but she did not feel that her mother's unconditional support was what she needed to succeed. When coming to college, Sherri expected that her mother, other family members, her pastor, the pastor's wife, and a family friend who is a nurse would be her main support networks. Since coming to college, Sherri has not seen a change in her support networks, but does feel that her relationship with her mother has become stronger as she continues to push Sherri toward achieving her goals. Sherri talks to her mom often and gets her advice on everything, including how to approach situations with peers or handle a conflict with a professor, but her mother has never contacted a professor for Sherri. Additionally, Sherri's mom works to connect her to people she knows that might be helpful to Sherri as she works through a difficult situation.

The summer before her freshman year in college, Sherri participated in a preparatory program that she feels helped her ease into college coursework. In particular, this program assists first generation college students adjust to the college academic load and coursework. Despite her experiences with the program, Sherri was surprised by the heavy academic course load she was taking. Sherri feels that her older cousin who was a college graduate was better prepared for college since she took advanced classes in high school, courses Sherri did not take. Also, Sherri thought she would be on her own when trying to complete her coursework, but through the preparatory program and freshman orientation, learned about numerous resources on campus that could assist her, including tutoring and the academic support centers.

When frustrated with a challenging math class and concerned about her grades during the preparatory program, Sherri reached out to her support networks, including her mom, pastor, and the

pastor's wife. Knowing that these people had provided her with good advice and support in the past, Sherri looked to them for encouragement to achieve academic success and be able to continue in college in the fall. Prior to entering college Sherri wishes that she would have developed better reading skills including being able to speed read, how to pull information from readings, and better understand the information presented in course readings.

Adjusting to college coursework and readings has been the most difficult transition for Sherri to make from high school to college. Sherri feels that in college information is only presented once in class and it is the responsibility of the students to understand, comprehend, and retain the information on their own. Similar to her high school experiences, Sherri has excelled and struggled in the same courses, but feels that in college she has more resources available to help her succeed. Although there are more resources available to help students with their academic coursework in college, it is the responsibility of students to get help. This is different from Sherri's experiences in high school when her teachers kept track of her academic success and were much more involved in providing her with help. In order to have been better prepared for college, Sherri wishes that she would have taken more challenging classes in high school.

Academically when comparing herself to her college peers, Sherri does not feel as smart as them and feels that she is below them in her academic achievement. As a black student, she feels inferior to her classmates and is always expecting people to think that she is not smart because of her race. Also, Sherri thinks that her peers have a larger vocabulary and better language skills than she does, making it difficult for her to follow along in classes. When Sherri is unfamiliar with words used in class, she tends to blend into the background so as not to draw attention to her deficiency in knowledge. As a result of her drive to learn more and get better, Sherri will follow up with her professors either in person or through email to get clarification about the discussion in class and the vocabulary that was unfamiliar to her. Sherri anticipates that her professors will be a part of her support network and play a significant

role in her future in regards to connections for jobs, letters of recommendation for graduate school, or overall educational knowledge and support. In addition to adjusting to her college coursework, Sherri also found it difficult to be away from home and be responsible for making doctor appointments, studying, and managing her own schedule. Sherri did not think anything about her transition to college life was easy, and she spent her first semester struggling to “get into the college life” without her mother there to guide her.

Since coming to college, Sherri’s friends have also changed significantly and now she tends to be friends with people who are in college, have similar experiences, and who work hard to reach their goals. She feels friends she has developed in college push her and together they reach their goals. Sherri no longer speaks with her friends from high school who did not go to college. Sherri does not feel that she is better than her high school friends because she went to college and they did not, but her friends have chosen to stop socializing with her since she has come to college. In the future Sherri does not see that it will be possible to reconnect with these high school friends; she is extremely sad that these friendships have dissolved. Sherri foresees many of her current friendships developed while in college staying the same in the future, but she thinks that she will have less time to spend with them as a result of her job.

During her senior year in high school Sherri obtained a job and with the money she made, bought her own clothes in addition to giving her mother part of her paycheck to help with the family finances. While in high school Sherri attended a summer program, College Summit, that was a one-day event hosted on a college campus near her home. During this event Sherri learned about financial resources available to her for college including how to complete her FAFSA. Now that she is in college, Sherri receives financial aid through the 21st Century Scholars Program which relieves the stress and pressure of paying for college and allows her additional money to pay for tutoring. If she had more financial resources growing up, Sherri would have liked to attend a Historically Black College and

University (HBCU) out of state, but upon further reflection feels that she would have encountered less diversity and been more distracted by activities and events than she is currently.

Following her academic struggles during the preparatory program over the summer, Sherri decided not to get involved in activities outside of the classroom in order to focus solely on her academics and not have any distractions. In the future Sherri would like to become involved in the Black Student Union and volunteering opportunities in the community to help others who are less fortunate. Not being involved in activities on campus, Sherri has more free time and less structure in her schedule, allowing her to procrastinate on her academic coursework, even though focusing on academics was the initial reason she chose not to be involved as a freshman. Sherri thinks that she will wait until her sophomore year to get involved, but feels there are advantages to getting involved in campus activities, including developing communication skills and meeting people who can help her in the future with her courses and nursing career.

Having a college degree will make Sherri's relationships better with her family, as well as being a role model and resource for her younger sisters. Her family is what motivates Sherri to continue and be successful in college. In the future, Sherri plans on returning to her hometown and will continue to strengthen her relationship with her mother and family. With a college degree, Sherri will be able to have a career, take care of herself, and live in a good neighborhood with low crime. Sherri anticipates having to support or assist her family members financially in the future as a result of her higher earning potential. In order to continue to advance in her career, Sherri plans to go back and get her master's degree to become a nurse practitioner with more earning potential, power, and decision-making responsibility. Access to financial resources will determine when Sherri will pursue a master's degree and immediately following college graduation, she plans on working. If Sherri does not complete her college degree, she will not be able to have the career she planned and does not know how she would get a job without her degree.

ZANDER

Zander is a freshman who has had problems with his family and, as a result, has been independent since the age of 16. Although Zander does still have some contact weekly with his mother, brother, and grandmother, he largely credits his Boy Scoutmaster for helping him become the person he is today. The connections that Zander made while involved in the Boy Scouts has greatly impacted his life experiences and continue to do so today. It was a result of a conversation at the age of 14 with his Scoutmaster that Zander began thinking about his plans after high school; and he feels his Scoutmaster is the reason he is in college today.

When talking for the first time about college, Zander knew that he wanted to become a police officer. In addition to wanting to become a police officer, Zander is also motivated to be in college so that he can do his best and make a good future for himself. This good future includes Zander learning new information, and getting a good paying job that he enjoys. Initially, Zander was denied admission to State University, but through the connections of his Scoutmaster and his wife who were both employees of State University, Zander was able to be sponsored by a faculty member and, as a result, was admitted.

Zander is the first person in his family to go to college; however, when growing up, did not know much, if anything, about college life. Zander grew up in the same city in which he now attends State University and chose to go there because he was most informed about that university compared to others. Zander first learned about the 21st Century Scholar's Program through a program representative who came to Zander's middle school. Although Zander signed up for the program, he did not know what the program entailed until he attended more meetings for participants during high school. It was also a result of the additional financial support for room and board provided through the 21st Century Scholar's Program that Zander decided to attend the large state university instead of a smaller state school. Having the 21st Century Scholarship has relieved Zander's anxiety about how he will pay for his

room, board, and tuition while in college, but he also understands the responsibility that comes along with this scholarship.

Zander's Scoutmaster and his wife have provided him with various types of support since the age of 10, including reassuring Zander during difficult times, being a mentor to him, and encouraging him to take advance placement classes in high school. At the age of 14, his Scoutmaster offered Zander money for completing chores around his house, which helped to support Zander financially. Since the age of 16, Zander has lived with his Scoutmaster and wife and performs manual labor around their farm in return for his room and board. When coming to college, Zander expected that his Scoutmaster and his wife would continue to be supportive of him which they have. During college Zander's Scoutmaster has assisted him by reviewing some of his college papers and is a person that he feels comfortable going to for help. In addition, other adults that Zander met through scouting continue to be support networks for him, including providing him with financial resources. During breaks from school Zander stays at a firehouse where he works, with his Scoutmaster, or with other scouting families. Zander anticipates that his experiences at the firehouse will have the biggest impact upon him in the future as it will provide him with real life experiences and trainings applicable to his desired future career in law enforcement.

As a result of his family experiences, Zander was not the most social in high school and did not have many friends. Zander also did not participate in activities that required money, with the exception of becoming a part of an athletic team. In order to pay for his athletic equipment, Zander saved birthday and Christmas money. It was through an intensive program for freshmen that took place a few weeks before classes that Zander has gained new friends. It is a result of these new friends that Zander has been more social since coming to college. Although Zander goes to movies or dinner with these friends, he would not consider them to be a part of his support network.

Zander's impressions of academics prior to college were a result of research he did on his own. Through this research Zander expected to receive large amounts of time-consuming homework and classwork as well as have rigorous tests. For the most part, these impressions were accurate, but through the flexibility of creating his own schedule, Zander is able to make time for the activities he wants to do outside of his coursework which he did not expect prior to coming to college. Although Zander enjoys the freedom and flexibility afforded to him in college, he wishes that he would have known more about and been prepared for the different college time schedule prior to coming to college. This freedom and the change in schedule has been the most difficult adjustment for him to make from high school. Much of that difficulty comes from him having to follow through on his own schedule, not having people watch over him, and the choice to be lazy. Zander would encourage other students like himself to go to class, get involved, and find a group in which one is interested. After his first semester in college and becoming more familiar with the college environment, Zander feels more motivated to go to classes and stay on top of his class work. Although Zander has attempted to get involved on campus in the criminal justice association, this was not the experience he was looking for and has preferred to stay involved as a volunteer firefighter within the community.

Zander feels that his college professors are more experienced in their field, knowledgeable about what they are teaching, and offer a greater viewpoint of the world than his teachers in high school. College professors' ability to teach to large classes of a couple hundred students and the ability to have the students learn and be successful in those classes are skills that Zander finds very interesting and different from his high school academic experiences. Although Zander would like to interact more with his college professors, his shyness has stopped him from doing so more frequently. Zander knows that his college professors can play an important role and be a resource and support to him in the future, including letters of recommendation or jobs. Compared to his college classmates, Zander feels that he spends relatively the same amount of time on his classwork while still being able to be involved

in activities outside of his college coursework, including being on a peer judicial board in his residence hall.

Being in college has increased Zander's expectations for his future and he aspires to be a better person as a result of his college experiences. Graduating from college will allow Zander to be more competitive for different jobs and lead him to a career that he can stay in for a long time and that provides him with stability. Although Zander knows that a college degree will provide him with more job opportunities, he is most concerned about securing a job after graduation. Zander's future lifestyle will be impacted by his college experiences, connections created through his college courses, and activities that have developed life skills. Additionally, completing college will be a boost to Zander's morale, self-confidence, and motivation for the future.

Zander graduating from college could motivate his younger brother to pursue a college degree, but Zander is unsure of his brother's future educational plans. After college Zander feels that he could give back to the community through his specific training and education received in college. Zander feels that his friendships he developed in college as well as his relationships with his adult mentors including his Scoutmaster and wife will stay the same after graduation. If Zander does not complete his college degree, he is concerned that he will have let down all the people that have supported, believed, and invested in him over the past several years.

LOUISE

Louise is a college freshman who is studying education and has worked extremely hard throughout her life to be academically successful. Others have always expected a lot from Louise, and if she was not to go to college, she feels that she would have been letting many people down. When selecting a college to attend, Louise was most interested in finding a school that had a good education program and where she knew she would receive a good education overall. Louise was familiar with State University as a result of watching their sports teams. Additionally, the scholarship package that

she would receive as a result of the 21st Century Scholars Program was an added incentive to attend State University. Neither of Louise's parents went to college; however, they expected that their daughter would go to college. Louise's mother had always wanted to be a nurse, but was not able to as a result of life circumstances. As a result of her mother not being able to pursue her dream and do what she wanted, Louise feels that her mother has always pushed her to work hard, do her best in school, and save money for college so that she is able to do what she wants in the future.

Despite not knowing anything about college, Louise believed that somehow she would find the information she needed about college life and would make it work. Louise believes that by going to college, she can get the best degree to get the job that she wants in the future. Prior to coming to college, Louise's main motivation for attending was to become a teacher, knowing that teachers need college degrees. Louise also feels that by going to college she can reach her full potential. By reaching her full potential, Louise can do anything that she wants to do in the future, even if she decides not to pursue a teaching career. Now that she is in college, Louise is motivated to pass each semester's courses with good grades. She also keeps in mind her ultimate goal of earning a degree and getting a job she is excited about and enjoys doing each day.

Although her parents did not know much about college, Louise's teachers in grade school began to talk to her about college. Through her coursework in elementary, junior high, and high school, Louise feels that she was being given the necessary tools to prepare her for each step in her education and that college was that next step after high school. Louise first learned about the 21st Century Scholars Program during the seventh grade when a representative of the program visited her school and encouraged all of the students to complete the application. After learning that she was eligible, Louise also received additional information about college through a Directions program in junior high school that continued to assist her in preparing for college.

In high school, Louise's expectations about college were that she would go to class, do her work, and have large amounts of free time to participate in other activities with friends. Louise gathered her impressions of college from movies and her college friends' stories that they shared when they returned to visit her in high school. Since coming to college Louise has found that completing her homework takes significantly more time than she expected, leaving her with far less free time than anticipated. Additionally, Louise has found that the majority of the friends she has made are through her classes, not through other activities. Although many of her friendships have developed in the classroom, Louise finds that some of her friends act very differently outside of class choosing to engage in drinking activities that she does not support or choose to participate in.

As a result of working hard in her high school courses, Louise expected a smoother transition to her college coursework, but has found that she needs to work even harder by studying weeks in advance for exams, staying focused in class, and staying on top of her schedule. Louise feels that the larger the school, the more competitive the students are in classes. She wishes that she would have known this prior to coming to college as well as how focused everyone is on careers and their futures.

Through her involvement in sports during high school, Louise learned a lot about herself and others, and created strong bonds and a support network with her teammates. Her high school coaches and Mom were also significant support networks for her especially when she struggled with a fellow teammate who often let the team down. Through talking with her coaches, Louise learned how to stay focused and how the team working together could accomplish goals. Her mother allowed her space to vent her frustrations while at the same time trying to calm Louise.

When coming to college, Louise anticipated that the friends she would make in college, her professors, and her advisors would be support networks. However, since coming to college, Louise has not developed a relationship with or utilized her advisor as she feels that advisors have too many students to take care of and that they cannot provide her with the personalized care that she has

received from professors. Louise has also created new friend networks, but to her surprise has stayed close to her high school friends who attend different universities. Louise feels that these high school friends really know who she is while her college friends think that they know who she is, but really do not. In addition to continuing to stay in contact with friends from high school, Louise still emails and talks with her high school teachers. Louise talks with these teachers because she knows and feels that they really care about her and about how she is doing in college.

Louise's parents also continue to be part of her support network while she is in college by calling to make sure that she is doing well. Also Louise's parents inquire about her basic needs being met, and ask about her living arrangements and access to food. Although Louise's parents do not support her financially in college because of her scholarship, they do send food back with her after breaks. In addition to checking in on her, Louise's parents also encourage her to continue to do her best in her courses, but they are unable to provide specific advice about the coursework. For more specific information and support about her coursework Louise has turned to her friends and brother who is a year older than her and also in college. As a result of her brother going to college, Louise has also learned about the time commitment required of college coursework.

Academically, when Louise compares herself to her classmates, she feels that she is in the middle. Louise thinks that it takes her a bit longer to understand some of the material in the classroom and does not do as well on tests as some of her classmates. Louise also does not feel that she was academically prepared for college because her high school classes were too easy. Louise acknowledges that her parent's 8th grade education, use of a non-English language in her household, lack of an expansive vocabulary, and "simple-minded" nature, have impacted her beliefs about her academic abilities and achieving success in college. Louise feels that many of her peers have the ability to do better and are motivated to improve, while others do not work hard, are not smart, and do not do well in classes.

Louise is fortunate that her parents taught her responsibility, self-control, organization, focus, balance, and sticking to a schedule from an early age. These skills helped Louise have an easier transition from high school to college than some of her classmates who have had their parents take care of many responsibilities for them. For those students, it has resulted in a difficult transition to the more independent collegiate setting. Despite a difficult math course, Louise sought assistance from her professor during office hours, and went to tutoring sessions which helped her to be successful and pass the course. Not only does Louise still stay in contact with friends she met during the tutoring sessions, she also still talks with her math professor and considers her a friend. Louise feels that her friends will be important support networks and that possibly they could connect her with job opportunities in the future.

As a result of her experience in a math class, Louise learned that the most important accomplishment is not necessarily the grade you receive, but the learning that takes place. In order to make it through her first semester, Louise has had to set goals, work to achieve them, and then create new goals. Now after her first semester, Louise feels that things have become much easier in regards to her academic coursework. Louise also knows that the relationships she has built with professors will also be important in the future and can help her by providing advice, job references, and letters of recommendations or information about jobs.

Since coming to college Louise has become involved in many activities across campus including being a lab assistant that provide her with teaching experience. Also Louise is on a club sports team, is a part of a student athletic board, and has a seasonal job in her hometown. Prior to coming to college Louise was encouraged to get involved and has found activities that are of interest to her through seeing flyers on campus, attending an involvement fest, and a freshman preparatory course designed to provide students with resources across campus. Louise feels that being involved in a few select organizations in college and working her way up into leadership roles will help her stay active, build a

good resume, network, and create connections for the future. As a result of being involved in these extracurricular activities, Louise has reduced peer pressure from others to become involved in activities in which she is not interested. Louise has also learned better social skills, time management, and that anything is possible by setting goals and working hard.

While in high school Louise observed many of her teachers enrolled in master's degree programs; this was where she first became aware of the importance of graduate school. In the future, Louise hopes to pursue a master's degree as it is encouraged by many within the education field. A master's degree will open up more opportunities for Louise, and will provide her with continual learning opportunities. As a result of her 21st Century Scholarship, Louise will be able to leave college with less debt and be able to have money for other opportunities in the future, including graduate school.

After graduation, Louise thinks that her family will be proud of her and her completing college may motivate other family members to also pursue a college degree. Despite Louise and her brother both being in college, many of their family members have questioned their decision, not understanding the potential value of a college degree. Louise anticipates that her siblings will also go to college based upon the example set by her and her brother. With a college degree Louise hopes to be able to live on her own and support herself through the job she receives, but also have enough money for savings and having fun. If Louise does not finish college, she thinks that she will have to work a job in which she is not completely satisfied, as well as always being irritated that she was not able to achieve one of her goals.

MATTHEW

Matthew is a college sophomore from a small town and grew up on a farm in the same state that he attends college. With neither parent attending college, Matthew knew very little about college except for what he learned through watching college athletics. For Matthew's parents, attending college was an expectation of Matthew and he learned early in life that in order to have a career, he

would need to attend college. Despite neither of his parents attending college, they were eager for him to attend college, but had no knowledge or personal experiences to share with him. Matthew and his parents decided that together they would learn more about how to apply for college and the information about the college experience. Matthew's parents were aware of the large financial costs associated with attending college and therefore worked to find scholarships and financial aid. It was during middle school that Matthew and his parents first became aware of the 21st Century Scholars Program and he signed up. It was a result of receiving football tickets to State University and a more feasible financial aid package that Matthew made his college selection.

Upon arriving at college, the only things Matthew knew about college life were from pop culture references, movies, and shows. Most of these references to life in college Matthew was familiar with centered on partying and drinking. Despite his limited exposure to campus activities that did not involve drinking and parties, once on campus, Matthew learned that he could do anything he wanted and that there were many opportunities to get involved across campus. Matthew also learned quickly that he did not necessarily have to engage in the drinking and partying behaviors he had seen portrayed in movies and shows. Even with his enthusiasm, interest, and ability to engage in various campus activities, Matthew struggled to make friends. As a result of struggling to make friends, Matthew had to learn how to interact and work with people from a variety of different backgrounds, especially given his more conservative upbringing.

Matthew only knew one person when he arrived on campus and was worried about making friends. His freshman year was difficult as he did not have a strong network of friends, did not find people with whom he connected, and was often lonely. Many times Matthew would go back to his dorm room and be alone during his freshman year. Wanting to connect and develop relationships with others, Matthew sought out extracurricular activities. In high school Matthew's largest group of friends

was made through band and, as a result, Matthew sought friends by becoming a part of the college marching band.

Through his involvement in campus activities, and especially in marching band, Matthew has friends with similar personalities and interests. These friends have been a strong source of emotional support for Matthew as he has encountered personal challenges. Without involvement in extracurricular activities, Matthew thinks he would have transferred to another college as a result of lacking friends and support networks on campus. Matthew anticipates that the experiences he has had and friends he has made in marching band will have the greatest impact upon him in the future. In addition to his friends, Matthew's family has continued to be a source of support and guidance in times of need. Although Matthew still views his family as a support network, he has become less dependent upon them the longer he has been in college.

Matthew has become more accepting and tolerant of people who do things differently than he does or who engage in activities that he would not necessarily choose to do, including drinking and doing drugs. This has been a shift in his thinking since high school which Matthew feels has allowed him to connect with people who are very different than himself. Matthew has really connected with one person in particular who challenges his thoughts on religion and has helped him grow personally. Although Matthew's parents did not have college experience themselves, Matthew still learned a variety of important communication and people skills while growing up that have helped him develop relationships with people in college.

Matthew is a very intelligent person and excellent student who could have been admitted to an honors program upon entry into college, but knew little about what that meant or entailed and did not pursue that opportunity. Advanced courses in high school helped to prepare Matthew for the rigorous reading required in college, but he has had to work on developing his writing skills. Connecting with professors has also been a struggle for Matthew especially in large lecture classes and outside the

classroom setting, as it takes more initiative. Matthew knows that it is important to connect with faculty, especially for graduate school, but has had no reason to make these connections. Currently, Matthew is looking for more academically based extracurricular activities to become involved with to assist him in developing more relationships with faculty. Although Matthew feels that he is academically strong, his confidence waivers when it comes to speaking in classes as he second guesses himself and is afraid that he is holding himself to a higher standard than he can achieve.

Matthew has a strong sense of personal responsibility and feels it is important not to be a burden on other people. In contrast, Matthew believes that the strong partying and drinking culture on his campus encourages his classmates to be irresponsible about their behaviors and actions and results in them being a burden upon others. Reflecting upon his college experiences in the first two years of college, Matthew feels that through his experiences outside the classroom he has learned just as much, if not more, than he has inside the classroom. Matthew's future plans include going to graduate school to study psychology or going to law school. Although law school is his ultimate goal after college, Matthew is most concerned about getting into law school and if he is not accepted, will go to graduate school. As a result of his 21st Century Scholarship, Matthew will be able to enter graduate or law school with less debt, in turn allowing him more financial freedom in the future.

Currently, Matthew's main motivation for completing college is orientated toward future career achievement, but also is motivated by the personal growth he has experienced since coming to college. Matthew knows that getting a college degree is a stepping stone to future education, the career that he wants, and that in turn will increase his earning potential. Since coming to college Matthew feels that his abilities and the work needed to achieve his goals have become clearer, but his expectations for his future have not changed. If Matthew does not graduate from college, he would be disappointed in himself as there is not a career that he is interested in that does not require college. Also, Matthew would not be content with himself or the lifestyle he would have without a college degree.

Upon graduation Matthew anticipates having more job opportunities across the country, therefore creating distance between him and his family members if he moves to start a career. However, Matthew does feel that he can be a resource for his younger siblings and help them through the college experience in a way his parents could not help him. Matthew does not anticipate that graduating from college will impact his relationships with friends since most of them also have gone to college and share similar experiences. In the future, Matthew does anticipate that the friends he has developed in college will continue to be support for him in the future, but acknowledges that distance may inhibit his ability to stay connected with these friends after graduation. If Matthew is not able to stay in contact with his college friends, he anticipates that he will work to create support networks among friends in his graduate program. Ultimately, Matthew wants to pursue a career that allows him to be happy and make a difference as a constitutional lawyer.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

The purpose of this research study was to explore the lived experiences of Millennial generation college students of low socioeconomic status backgrounds. In particular, information was gathered about low socioeconomic Millennial generation college students' experiences prior to entering college, interactions with their parents and college administrators during college, and their overall collegiate experiences. The following four research questions were used to guide the development of the study:

1. How do low socioeconomic status Millennial generation college students gain information about the social, cultural, and academic norms of college life prior to arriving on campus?
2. What are the academic experiences of low socioeconomic status Millennial generation college students?
3. What support systems do low socioeconomic status Millennial college students have while in college?
4. What does involvement (e.g., organizations, jobs, internships) outside of the classroom consist of for low socioeconomic status Millennial college students? Why have they chosen to be involved in these particular activities?

The researcher used the information and personal stories that the participants shared during the two interviews to develop the themes of the study. In order to develop the themes, interview data were analyzed through a four-step process. The first step in the analysis was for the researcher to read broadly for the themes related to each of the four research questions. Secondly, the researcher did a constant comparison between cases and then worked to group the data for more specific themes. The researcher then took the themes and did a constant comparison between cases to see if the themes applied. Finally, the themes were consolidated and organized using the four research questions as a guide. To be identified by the researcher as a theme, at least three participants had to share an

experience or information related to that theme during either the first or second interview. It is through the words of the research participants themselves, the themes of their lived experiences as a low socioeconomic status Millennial generation college student emerged. The themes developed were organized based upon the four research questions of the study. The themes related to each research question are:

1. Knowledge of College (Research Question #1)
 - a. Parental Role
 - b. Knowledge of College and Encouragement from Teachers
 - c. Knowledge from Athletic and Cultural References
2. Academic Experiences (Research Question #2)
 - a. Academic Transitional Issues
 - b. Educational Support
 - c. Relationships with Professors
 - d. Impact of Degree Attainment
 - e. Educational Goals
 - f. Impact of Non-Degree Completion
3. Types of Support (Research Question #3)
 - a. 21st Century Scholarship Financial Support
 - b. Friends as Support Network
 - c. Self-Support
4. Collegiate Involvement (Research Question #4)
 - a. Learning about Involvement Opportunities
 - b. Importance of Involvement and Learning Through Involvement
 - c. Importance of Involvement on Future

d. Seamless Learning: Academics and Involvement

In the chapter, statements of experiences shared by the participants are used to support the themes developed. Additionally, the participant statements represent their lived experiences and give meaning and context to the themes.

Knowledge of College

As socioeconomic status still remains the best predictor of college aspirations (Greene, Huerta, & Richards, 2007) and with low income and low social class students still underrepresented on college campuses (Baker & Valez, 1996; Carnevale & Rose, 2003; Hofferth et al., 1998; Oldfield, 2007; Rowan-Kenyon et al., 2008), understanding the experiences of low socioeconomic status students and ways that they learn about college life can help identify areas for improvement for student affairs practitioners. In particular, all participants of this study lacked practical knowledge about the college experience, with few if any, having expectations about college courses and the collegiate lifestyle. Most participants planned on determining what to do once they were at college and did not have knowledge or information easily available to them to help in the transition to college. Despite all participants lacking knowledge about college, the participants' parents placed a high level of importance upon academic success prior to college in order to ensure that their children would be eligible to attend college.

Parental Role. The role of the participants' parents was an important part of their overall college experience, despite limited personal experiences. Since all of the participants' parents had limited or no college experience themselves, they lacked knowledge about college life and what to expect, especially while they were growing up. Despite being accepted into college, the participants still lacked knowledge about college when they arrived on campus. For the participants, their parents did not play a role in providing them with information about college. Although the parents did not have a role in providing information to the participants, they did play a role in providing motivation. The desire of the participants to go to college was due in part to a lack of knowledge and family collegiate

experiences. The participants are pursuing a degree in order to not be like their parents and have the same lifestyle as their parents. Even though the participants had to enroll in the 21st Century Scholar's Program in middle school, being a part of this program did not help provide them with information or an understanding of college. When asked what she learned about college while growing up, Tanya mentioned her parent's role in providing knowledge and stated,

Not really much at all since neither one of my parents went to college and I haven't really had anybody in the family who had. The closest it had come has been my cousin but he's only a year older than me so even that hasn't given me much knowledge family wise as to what college life is about.

Similarly, Zander stated,

My family background, I would say left a lot of ambiguity with regards to college life because no one in my family had gone to college. I didn't know exactly what to expect. But that's something that I gathered through research, or friends.

Having parents who did not attend college, Matthew reflected upon his lack of knowledge in regards to college life.

My parents have played an interesting role. Neither of them attended college so that was part of the gray area of knowledge about school but they were both really eager to find things out and then they, we kind of came in with the same knowledge level since they hadn't gone to school. So it was really just that we were going to pursue it together and make sure we found things out and looked into it.

In addition, Matthew stated, "I usually figured out things on my own and did just fine. So I just sort of assumed I wouldn't need that help and I just figured out when I got here as I was doing it." Kevin stated that while growing up he learned, "Very little" about the college experience. Also Kevin stated,

I'm the first one in my family to go to a four year school. Mom got an associate's degree at Vincennes, but other than that that's about it. Everything I got, I would have got from school and from other graduates.

Louise also discussed the lack of knowledge in relation to her parents not attending college. Louise stated, "Since my parents did not go I didn't know what to expect I guess but as I got into junior high teachers would talk about it and I was in the directions program that helped us learn about college."

Although parents did not play a role in providing knowledge about college experiences, the participants' parents did have some knowledge and awareness about the attitudes and behaviors important to be successful academically in order to get into college. Often the participants' parents and family had knowledge and an understanding that college was important and would lead to future success. The parents passed along their knowledge and awareness of the importance of college to the participants as young children and young adults, encouraging them to be academically successful throughout their lives.

Most participants were influenced not only by their parents' knowledge that college was important, but also through their lived experiences growing up with parents who did not complete college. The importance placed upon college and the encouragement by the participants' parents provided them with knowledge. From their parents' messages and to developing their own knowledge from their lived experiences, the participants had an understanding that college was important and necessary. Although there was knowledge about the importance of college, the parents' lack of college experiences and completion of a college degree increased their expectations for their children to go as well as working to provide them with encouragement along the way. Emma mentioned the role her parents played in encouraging and expecting her to attend college.

Basically, they just made sure that I knew all through my childhood that college was what I was expected to do after high school and just encouraged me to get good grades and do the things I needed to do to get there.

Matthew's parents also expected that he would attend college.

Just the very first thing I remember is her [Mom] stressing the importance of going to college and basically saying that it wasn't an option. That college was something that we were going to pursue and that was something that needed to be done.

For Tanya, her parents stressed the importance of college through their encouragement of her to succeed academically. In addition to the importance placed upon going to college, there was even more encouragement from her family as Tanya will become the first college graduate. Tanya stated,

Growing up I was always pushed that I was going to college. It wasn't a request or anything; it was something that was going to happen. Neither of my parents went to college so there wasn't really anybody to say oh yeah this is what it was like or this is how you get through it. It was just you're going because nobody else has.

There was that high expectation of going to college and going somewhere with my life. That's probably pushed me the most because whether it's them motivating me to go or seeing the flaws of how they didn't go.

Although Sherri's mom did complete some college, unlike most of the other participants' parents, the importance of attaining a college degree was still impressed upon Sherri while growing up.

My mom went to college. I think she made it through two years. My dad didn't but I mean she talked to me about it once I was finally old enough so I could understand and she gave me some tips. She just said that having a college degree would help me further along in my career as an adult.

Sherri's mother not only placed importance upon her to attend college, but also provided her with encouragement to do so.

She made sure my work was done all the time. She just set me up young and you do your homework before you do anything else. You study before you do anything else. So it was like school was my main thing and then everything else was after. So school was always my main priority and what she always made me focus on first. Just always pushing me to do my work, keep school first, focus on my grades. That's pretty much it.

Zander struggled in middle school, but through the help of his Scoutmaster and his wife, Zander was encouraged and motivated to do better, making attending college a possibility. He stated,

With school, I was motivated by them [Scoutmaster and his wife] to do my best to get good grades,...in middle school, my grade were very, very, poor. And because of them, I did better in high school and gradually from 9th grade to 12th grade increased my grade point average and all of my grades in my classes, and pushed me to do AP classes and dual credit classes for State University and high school.

Knowledge of College and Encouragement from Teachers. As a result of the participants' parents' lack of knowledge, experiences, and information, much of the practical knowledge the participants learned about college life came from K-12 teachers, counselors, or friends with college experiences. Teachers and counselors, by using their own knowledge from personal experiences, were often the first individuals to talk to the participants about attending college and provided them with information and encouragement. As a result of their personal experiences, the teachers were also able to provide knowledge about how to prepare for college, impacting the decision of some participants to go to college.

Although Sherri's mother told her that she needed to go to college, it was really her first grade teacher who impacted her decision to go to college. Sherri stated, "I kept in touch with my first grade

teacher and she just always was the extra push and you're going to go to college; you're going to become something." Sherri's teachers not only pushed her to go to college, but also told her she would succeed in college. For Sherri, this encouragement and knowledge that she could be successful came from, "...talking to certain teachers that I got really close to. They would always tell me that I would be able to succeed and make it through college."

Tanya remembered that the first person to talk to her and encourage her to think about college was a high school counselor. Despite Tanya signing up for the 21st Century Scholars Program in the seventh grade after learning about the program from her older cousin, it was not until high school that she really thought about attending college. Emma remembered that there were some courses in middle school that helped prepare her academically for college and teachers who encouraged her. Additionally, her courses and teachers provided her with information about college. Emma stated,

Basically there were a couple courses in middle school that kind of directed your attention to what you might want to study in college. So that was basically where I got most of that knowledge, and I was in a lot of advanced programs in K-12. So there was a lot of emphasis on going to school, and basically I just expected to come and sort of try to figure out what I wanted to do and get a basis and whatever that might be.

Kevin felt that because he was a good student in high school, his teachers assumed that he would go to college and treated him as someone bound for college. Kevin also said that his parents had very little, if any, role in preparing him for college. Kevin stated, "My friends and teachers had a bigger impact than my parents did." Later in the interview, Kevin remembered how many of his high school teachers really pushed him which resulted in continued relationships with them while he is in college.

So like Stahl would really push me, my Sociology teacher; and Dart would push me, he was the Physics and Government and Econ, and everything-else-known-to-man teacher. And my Yearbook Advisor, Von Trager. And then the basketball coach, those were the four people who I

was probably the closest to in the high school. Plus, I went to church with our principal. And it's just like, I don't know, those people I feel like I can talk to all the time. They were, like probably the people I went to the most when I had problems in high school. So it's nothing to go back to them now.

In addition to gathering knowledge about college from teachers, some participants mentioned that much of their information came from 21st Century Scholars Program representatives, although this information was not easily understood or available on a regular basis. In particular, a few participants remembered signing up for the program in seventh or eighth grade, and occasionally having a 21st Century Scholar's Program representative visit or hold a meeting at their school during the year. However, these visits and meetings were infrequent and many struggled to get information about loans and college up until high school graduation. As a result of the infrequency of the information from the 21st Century Scholar's Program, this placed additional importance upon the knowledge of college that the teachers were able to share with the participants.

Knowledge from Athletic and Cultural References. Since participants had an overall lack of collegiate knowledge, they utilized other sources to gather information about college life, including pop culture, cultural references developed as a result of experiences as children in college towns, and knowledge gathered from watching or following college athletics. Louise discussed where she gathered her impressions about college life and noted the following:

I would say probably some of it comes from the movie aspect. You see kids in college and you think it's oh this way and that and then whenever your friends come back. You are still in high school and then they come back from college to visit and they tell you about all the good times they had I guess and not so much they don't mention all of the heartache and stress about it. So you just get the wrong impression I think.

Similarly, Matthew had an impression of college life through college athletics, but those impressions did not help in his understanding of how college majors and programs are organized.

I didn't know, I didn't understand growing up or even in high school before I really got here how a university is separated into different colleges and how that all interacts and the different majors and stuff like that. Really the only interaction I sort of had with colleges was I knew and I understood athletics and that competition and then just kind of what some schools were known for.

It was a result of Matthew receiving tickets to a college football game, an aspect of college he knew the most about, that he decided to attend State University. The only references that Kevin's parents had about college were also related to athletics. According to Kevin, "They didn't know anything really about college except that they loved State University football. But other than that, really there was not much of a background of what college would be like for my family."

For other participants, growing up in a college town provided them with some basic information about college life, including nonacademic collegiate experiences. Emma, who grew up in a college town, although not where State University is located, feels that living there prepared her for college.

I think it sort of just prepared me. I was sort of really familiar with the nonacademic parts of colleges growing up in a Big Ten town and knowing what a big role sports played and everything and just sort of what people do in their spare times and sort of got to witness that.

Tanya grew up in the same town as State University, but had some misconceptions about college life.

I grew up in the college town, definitely thought college students were a bunch of party animals. That's most of what we heard in high school. We heard it was a lot of work and that's all we would be doing from adults but then you hear from the college students and they talk about partying and just things other than the schoolwork. So it was kind of mixed signals but when

you hear it from the college student that tends to be what you go towards. But I don't know. It seems like it was all exaggerated, thinking about it now.

Not only did Tanya feel that she received mixed signals about the college experience from living in a college town, she also did not feel she had a place on campus as a member of the town. Tanya stated,

There was a cultural festival that would be held here that I would go to. There would be different, I don't know, I know Japanese National Honor Society we would take a trip over here for a day to just shadow a student and see what it was like. Other than that I didn't venture onto campus for no reason. It was kind of like that's where the college students are and it was like a bubble in the city that if you don't have a reason to go in it you don't really go in it.

Zander, who also grew up in the same town as State University, was able to attend State University as a result of his connections within the community. He stated,

And I chose State University just because I . . . since living here in the town, I was more informed about State University than other colleges, and so I was actually initially denied my application and I was able to get admittance through a faculty sponsor.

Although the participants learned about college through various means, a characteristic of college life described by all participants was that of the college party culture, including drinking alcohol. Though the participants did not necessarily explain how they came to associate drinking and parties with college life, all had an expectation that in college people party and drink. Prior to arriving on campus, all of the participants had come to understand that a college norm is to party. Juan did not hesitate when describing the role of partying in college and said, "Everyone is sort of expected to go out on weekends. Drinking is a big thing, like I've heard a lot, oh, you don't drink, well you will soon." Louise stated, "There are a lot of big partiers." Zander also felt that a social norm of college is crazy parties. Sherri said that norms of college included "studying, partying, drinking, and making your own decisions." Kevin,

although he expected drinking to be a part of college, was surprised by the amount of drinking he encountered and stated,

There's a lot of drinking, a lot more than I actually thought there would be. I thought it was a very stereotypical joke that they had on all of us in high school but it's much worse than I thought it would be, a lot more partying than I thought there would be . . .

Summary. The role of the participants' parents, in particular their lack of knowledge about college experiences, encouragement to attend college, and importance placed upon attending college, has greatly impacted the participants. Although the participants' parents did not play a role in providing knowledge about college, they each found a way to achieve academic success in high school allowing them to get into college. It is, in part, due to the parents' lack of college experiences that they valued and stressed the importance of attending college to the participants. The participants' parents also provided encouragement to attend college. The participants were motivated to attend college due to their families' lack of college experiences and desire to not struggle financially as their families did.

Since the participants' parents did not have knowledge about college, the participants looked to other sources, most often teachers and counselors, for practical knowledge about the college experience. These teachers and counselors were often the first people to talk to the participants about attending college and were able to provide them practical knowledge about college life and expectations. For the participants, the teachers and counselors were also sources of knowledge and encouragement throughout the process of learning about, applying for, and deciding to attend college. A few of the participants also utilized 21st Century Scholar's Program resources, although these were not as readily available as the teachers and counselors.

Although the participants gathered information about college life from their teachers and counselors, most also used other sources to supplement their limited knowledge of college. The participants utilized pop culture and cultural references (e.g., movies and television shows) to provide

them with a better understanding about the college experience. Through college athletics, the participants also became knowledgeable about college. In addition to knowledge from cultural and athletic references, four of the participants lived in or around college towns which provided them with first-hand experiences. Based upon the knowledge they obtained prior to arriving on campus, a characteristic of college mentioned by all participants was the party and drinking culture. Despite some participants having expectations regarding the excessive amount of partying and drinking on a college campus, their expectations based upon knowledge received, were different compared to the experiences they had once they arrived on campus.

Academic Experiences

With all of the participants lacking general knowledge about college, they also had different expectations regarding their collegiate academic experiences. In order to be a part of the 21st Century Scholars Program, all of the participants had to achieve a certain level of academic success in high school, but that has not always resulted in success in college for the participants for a variety of reasons. Despite all of the participants having different majors and reasons for attending college, there were some similar themes that emerged through their personal narratives related to their collegiate academic experiences.

Academic Transitional Issues. For most of the participants, the lack of knowledge about college life and the academic rigor of college coursework did not help to prepare them for college, resulting in transitional issues. There were several transitional issues that impacted their academics that most were encountered by the participants, including freedom and lack of a structured schedule, reduced academic accountability, and different academic expectations from high school to college. Adjusting to the different academic environment of college was a challenge for most participants.

A common transitional issue mentioned by several participants was the overall freedom in college, also described as lack of both accountability and a structured schedule, which impacted their

academics. Sherri noted that what has hurt her most since coming to college was, “the freedom.”

When asked to further explain what that meant, she stated,

It just allows me to make extra decisions. Some things would have never matter to me in high school Choosing the party over studying and nobody is really there to tell you don't do it. It's not being monitored all the time, I think is what has hurt me.

Tanya also talked about her experiences transitioning to the freedom of college life.

Here there's not a set schedule so if I wanted to do what I wanted and set my schedule some way I'm free to do that or if I decide that I'm going to start doing, I don't know, I can't really think of examples now. It's a lot freer and being able to do what you want because you don't have that set well you're going to sit in this building all day. We have our classes and we have time in between and time before and after. You don't have to be at any certain place before or after or in those breaks. You can do what you want.

The ability for Tanya to do what she wants and not have a set schedule has been a difficult adjustment for her, especially with her many art classes that require her to work in a studio. She has had to find this time in her schedule for her coursework and not become distracted by the many activities she is involved in across campus.

The freedom of college life, although not necessarily bad, is something that Zander wishes he would have known more about prior to getting to college. He commented, “The big difference I suppose that I would have liked to have known I guess is the freedom, it's much more free, you choose your schedule. So, it's a lot more flexibility, new opportunities to meet people.” Freedom of choices in college was a transitional issue encountered by several of the participants.

In addition to freedom, a transitional issue mentioned by most participants was the difficulty with self-accountability and the lack of guidance or oversight in the courses by their professors. Emma described the difference in accountability from high school to college.

I don't feel like it's been that much more challenging intellectually. It's probably been the fact that in high school I always felt that there would be huge repercussions for not doing my work, and in college if I don't do an assignment nobody says anything, I just don't get the points so not being held accountable has probably been the most difficult transition.

Emma also mentioned the size of classes in college and the difference in investment by teachers in high school compared to college professors. Emma also feels that the class size has impacted the ability of her college professors to hold her accountable in her courses. Emma stated,

I was really used to be in classes that were 25 students at the most leading up to college and now they're almost all huge lectures and even the classes that aren't lectures are still really big. Before coming to college, my experiences with teachers were much more hands-on and much more invested in my success, and in college that's not the case at all.

As a result of this lack of accountability, Emma has struggled to motivate herself to attend classes on a regular basis. In addition, it was challenging to motivate herself to succeed in her coursework.

Zander also identified his difficulty in holding himself accountable in college.

Following through with my schedule, where you're in high school, you're there and you just go from class to class. In college, you have your dorm to go back to, partly if someone lives here or whatever . . . if you miss a class it's not like the principal or something will come down and lecture you or something like that. So the freedom of college gives the ability . . . to be more lazy.

Tanya also noted that in college there is a lack of oversight, accountability, and guidance with her coursework. She stated, "I feel like, I myself don't feel like I have any set thing that's going to say oh I'm doing really good or oh I'm doing really bad."

Similarly, Sherri felt that the lack of accountability in college resulted in the burden of learning and understanding material being placed more upon her as the student than it was in high school.

I think the ways that we just have to go about getting extra help. In high school if you were doing bad a teacher was there to like okay what do you need; we need to do this and this. In college you have to be more responsible yourself to get the job done and to receive the extra help. I feel like in high school we went over it [coursework] and over it and over it. They [teachers] tried to stick it in our heads whereas in college we're going to go over it once and it may come back up at a later time but we're not going to and they [professors] don't typically go over the readings in class. It's just our responsibility to read on our own.

Juan also felt that there is a difference in how students are expected to learn information in college compared to high school. He stated,

High school was, I'm not going to lie, it was kind of a joke. It, the information, I don't know, it's hard to explain, like it's so easy in high school, and I realize that now being in college because they, when they give you the information they do expect you to absorb it, somehow learn it, and they're not too concerned with the individual whereas in high school if someone's failing they'll try to, you know, say, hey, you know, you haven't turned this in. They don't care here.

Learning about this difference in accountability in college resulted in Juan encountering some challenges his first semester in college. Admittedly, Juan noted that during his first semester he got caught up in drinking and did not study as much as he should have. The result of Juan's behavior was a low GPA, far below the GPA he had earned in high school. After going through that experience first semester, Juan knows that he has to study and be more diligent with his college coursework as it is overall more difficult than high school.

In addition to the lack of accountability in their coursework, Matthew and Sherri both mentioned higher reading and writing expectations in college than high school, something that neither was prepared for and an area that they have struggled to improve upon. The increase in freedom coupled with the decrease in accountability has resulted in several of the participants struggling to be

successful in their academic coursework as they work to navigate and understand the new learning environment of college. In addition, adjusting to the differences in class sizes, reading, and writing expectations from high school to college were transitional issues encountered by a few participants.

Educational Support. Given the various challenges that all of the participants have encountered in college, whether related to financial resources, or lack of knowledge about college experiences and academic courses, many have had to seek support. When faced with challenges regarding their academic coursework and educational experiences, the participants tended to seek help, support, and guidance from their peers. The participants sought these people out because they identified their peers as having similar experiences as themselves. In addition, in some circumstances, a few participants sought the help of professors or college administrators as they felt they would have the knowledge to help them be successful in their courses. Most of the participants did not seek the educational advice of their parents as they lacked knowledge about college.

Growing up in a household where English was a second language, Louise felt that her family environment put her at an educational disadvantage in comparison to her peers. These disadvantages and challenges that Louise experienced throughout her life can, in part, be a result of her parents' educational attainment of GED's later in life. Her parents' lack of knowledge also impacted their ability to assist Louise in school. Louise felt that she lacked knowledge and was unable to engage in discussions with her parents that could have helped her in her schoolwork. Despite Louise lacking educational knowledge prior to college, she did not discuss these as negative experiences. Rather, Louise was appreciative for the high educational expectations that her parents had for her from a young age that have continued to help her during college. The support that Louise's parents provided her through their encouragement and academic expectations are reasons she feels she was able to get into college. When asked to think about her educational support networks now in college, Louise did mention both

friends and professors for their ability to help. Also, professors and friends were mentioned as educational support by most of the participants.

Similar to Louise, Matthew's family also lacked knowledge about college. As a result of his lack of knowledge, Matthew understood that it would be important to reach out to his friends before his family when struggling academically both in high school and college. When asked to think about who provided him educational support in high school Matthew stated, "I think academically I probably would have went first to my friends. I was in the gifted and talented program so I had a lot of friends that I could work through it with or teachers." When asked why he would go to friends before family, Matthew stated, "Just because my parents and my grandmother didn't have the similar experiences." Matthew went on to state that his friends,

Share a lot of similar experiences and they're just people that I can go to with college related problems because they're in the same situation and they're people with different perspectives and that I can go to for whatever I would need help for.

Similar to Matthew, Juan also discussed his preference to seek peers for academic support as well as also going to advisors.

Whenever I have questions about school, I definitely go to my advisor because if there's any sort of . . . because I don't know much about college experience, so they're definitely the ones I go to. And my peers, if I have a question about like what in general, an academic question, I would probably ask them first just because they're around.

When faced with a challenging decision about dropping a Latin class, Kevin tried to seek the advice of various college resources, including academic advisors and a counselor in an academic resource center in the residence halls. While trying to seek advice about the Latin class, Kevin made his way to the 21st Century Scholar's office on campus. Kevin had the good fortune of running into an older, upper class student who gave him advice based upon her own experiences in college. As a result of this

conversation, Kevin decided not to drop the Latin class as it could be very important in the future when he applies to law school programs. Although Kevin did not initially know where to get help, he utilized the resources he did have to try and get assistance.

Zander has also utilized his resources in order to get assistance and educational support. During a summer college prep program, Zander developed relationships with two professors. It was a result of the small class setting that Zander was able to connect with the professors and develop trust in them. Because of the relationship that Zander developed with these professors, Zander has been more willing to use them as a resource. Not only has Zander turned to the professors for support, they have been willing and available to do so. As Zander has faced different academic challenges in college, he has been able to go to these professors and has received support and advice.

Although Zander looked for support from his professors, similar to Matthew, Sherri's friends have played an important role in supporting her during college, especially when she has struggled academically. Sherri feels that her friends are a good source of support given their similar experiences and educational goals. Since they are all working toward the same goal of a college degree, they can help support each other.

Now I tend to hang out with people, I guess they are more on the same level as me. So a lot of my friends now they usually tend to go here or they go to a different college. But a lot of friends that I had in high school that didn't continue on to college we don't speak very often.

Although Sherri's college friends have helped support her when she has struggled academically, her close high school friends are no longer a part of her academic support network. Sherri's friends from high school, who did not go to college, no longer talk to her and she does not see that she will be able to reconcile these friendships in the future, in part as a result of her choosing to go to college. Not having her high school friends to depend upon for educational support has resulted in Sherri turning to her college friends or friends who she feels are on her "same level." When asked to clarify what she meant

by her friends now being “on the same level,” Sherri stated, “ I think we just have a lot in common and what we’re trying to achieve and reach our goals together.” Sherri also mentioned how fellow classmates have always been willing to help her through academic challenges because they are peers going through similar experiences.

Relationships with Professors. Even though some of the participants mentioned seeking academic support and guidance from their professors, a few of the participants developed an academic relationship with their professors. Some participants are continuing to work and develop these relationships with their professors related to academics and future educational aspirations, while others have had little contact other than what occurred in the classroom. For example, Matthew’s shyness has inhibited him in developing relationships with his professors. Despite this shyness, Matthew knows that professors are going to be important, and during the second interview he reflected upon the role he would like his professors to play in the future. He stated,

Especially in the last week I’ve thought a lot about needing to connect with professors and needing especially to get letters of recommendation and I’m not sure. I hope that they would, that I would establish a couple of professors that I could go back to and visit with and discuss during my graduate education and afterwards. Right now I don’t have that but that’s a role that I would like them to play.

Matthew also sees that building relationships with the professors will be of value to him, his academic experiences, and his future academic pursuits.

I think that they can give a lot of guidance because they’ve probably been through graduate school and I can talk to them about the kinds of things I need to be doing, the system, sort of the administrative things and the mechanics or where should I be at, what should I be doing. And I can ask for, especially if I can get a connection with a professor that’s related to law, talking with

them about how to get through law school. The things I need to be doing, academic type advice.

At this point, Kevin has also struggled to make connections and build relationships with his professors as a result of the large class sizes; however, he recognizes that these relationships will be important to his overall academic experiences including the impact they will have upon his future.

I understand that I'll have to have them for letters or recommendation. And ideally I'll eventually develop a couple of personal relationships with one or two of them, but right now my classes are so big it's almost not even feasible to think about yes, that's the best way to put it.

Emma has not seen a need to utilize her professors since she does not think that building these relationships can help her improve her grades. Despite this, Emma does feel that her professors will be important in helping her develop professional and career networks. Juan has been encouraged by one of his professors to work to build these relationships regardless of other support networks that might exist. Juan stated,

Support networks, people. I mean there's friends as always, but one of my professors has been stressing for success continue on through college I need to network with professors for recommendation letters and things of that sort so that's something I'm working on is just trying to enter the adult world per se.

Sherri, Zander, Tanya, and Louise also mentioned that connecting with professors through coursework or extracurricular clubs and organizations will be an important part not only of their academic achievement in college, but also their future success. With Louise entering the teaching profession, the ability to create connections with professors is something that she feels will help her find a job.

Well usually they always say it's who you know not what you know or something like that. So I mean who you know helps a lot. They [professors] can get you in but you also have to know

stuff, I believe, but usually is someone knows you through someone else, like, they can put a good word in for you, it usually works out.

Impact of Degree Attainment. Although the participants were only in their first or second year of college, for most of them the importance of graduating and getting a degree has been impressed upon them throughout their college experience. One way that this importance has been impressed upon them is that the participants know that they need to be successful academically in order to graduate. As a result of the importance placed upon graduating, the participants have started to think about the ways that their college degree could impact their future as well as their family. All participants were aware that a college degree would impact their overall financial resources in the future through increased earning potential. This increased earning potential a college degree could provide to the participants was another way that their college degree attainment could impact their families and siblings in the future.

Despite their own lack of knowledge about college, almost all of the participants identified that they would use their knowledge from their own college experiences to help others, in particular their siblings or other family members. The participants felt that after completing college they would be able to provide support, share resources, and provide useful information to their siblings, children, or other family members. The overall impact of attaining a college degree, including the ability to assist others through the college process and be a role model for others, is what motivates many participants to complete college.

Sherri feels that obtaining a college degree will help in her career pursuits as a nurse practitioner as well as allowing her to take care of herself and live in a good neighborhood, one that she describes as not being a high crime area. Although Sherri hopes that she will be financially stable in the future, she realizes that her family may depend upon her for financial support. In addition, Sherri noted that she is motivated to stay in school not only for the financial impact it may have upon her in the

future, but also to be a role model. She stated her motivation is, “Still financially pretty much and just to show my little sisters and my little cousins that they can do it. It’s not hard and that they can make something of themselves.”

Emma hopes that she is “setting an example for my little brother that going to college opens up more doors for you and allows him to see that that’s what he wants for himself.” Juan also felt that by him going to college he could provide information about his experiences to his siblings. He stated, “Once they reach that time in life they will not be clueless about it. There will be someone to ask.” In addition, Juan also said, “I think my family will see that it is possible to move up and then I think I would be a role model for my siblings.” Zander also hopes that through his completion of college and being successful that he is able to motivate his younger brother to do something with his life.

Tanya also felt that with a college degree she could provide resources to her siblings in addition to her future community members. Given that Tanya currently provides assistance to people in need in her community, she hopes to be able to continue to help others by providing additional resources after she receives her degree. Tanya stated,

Right now I’m hoping just more so that I’m setting an example for her because I do want her to stay on a good path and grow up going to college too Hopefully, it will help at least financially if I can get out there and get a good job and get a better job or something if anybody would need anything, especially my little sister if she were to need something when she gets into college or starts doing stuff I want to make sure I can be there for her too. Within the community, I don’t know, maybe just being able to have skills I have put out there to good use. Later, Tanya also talked about how she could support her sister academically and financially in college.

Again, academically if she gets in here as a freshman gets that overwhelming I can’t do it type of idea or feeling I want to be there to say I know what you were going through. I’ve been there myself and it gets better and you’re going to get used to it and you’re going to find all kinds of

new people and things you like to do Financially because I know if she does get into college that's going to be right around the time I get out and hopefully I'm getting a job. So financially if I'm needed hopefully I'll be there to help her out.

Louise had a brother who started college a year before her and she was able to acquire some knowledge about college from him. Even though she had limited knowledge about college from her brother, Louise feels that she and her brother can help influence their other siblings in their decisions about attending college. In addition to attending college, Louise believes that with their degree completion, she and her brother will show their siblings the importance of going to college and being successful. Louise stated,

I think it sets the bar where they know they're going to go too because now my brothers went and I've went, they just follow suit so if they wouldn't go, I don't really think that's an option, but if they wouldn't go they'd know like that. I guess they would feel like they'd be failing, I don't know, in a sense.

Emma and Juan feel that a college degree will provide them with the ability to make more money; therefore, they will not have to worry about paying bills and will be able to save money for the future. Juan also knows that there is a connection between a college degree and a job and stated, "A person with a college degree has a better chance of being hired somewhere than someone without one."

Tanya is also aware that she is more likely to get a job with a college degree than without one, and her parents continue to be a reminder of that. In addition to finding a job and making money, Tanya hopes that she is able to find a job that she enjoys. Zander is also hopeful that with a college degree he can get a job that he likes, and be in a position that will allow for advancement and increased pay.

Again I just think it would make me more applicable for, more competitive for a job. And that, and other experiences I have, would hopefully be able to get me into a position where I can work up the ranks to increase my pay.

Matthew also feels that his future earning potential will increase with a college degree and he hopes that he will have financial security allowing him to spend money more freely and do various activities that he wants in the future. Despite the importance placed upon the financial benefits, Matthew sees that a college degree is most important to help him in his future career pursuits.

It's going to be huge because I want to, I want to pursue a career that's going to require an education and not just an education, but a graduate or not just an undergraduate education but also a graduate education so it's going to be a huge stepping stone and absolutely necessary to getting the career that I want to get.

Educational Goals. For some of the participants, graduating from college is just the beginning of their academic and career aspirations. Despite lacking knowledge and information about college prior to attending, once in college, all participants have thought about pursuing educational goals beyond a bachelor's degree. Their desire and intention to achieve additional educational goals impacts their overall academic experiences. Without success academically as an undergrad student, most of the participants will be unable to reach their educational goals in the future. In particular, four of the participants have made plans to attend graduate or law school following the completion of their bachelor's degree. Matthew stated,

After undergraduate I'm most concerned about getting into law school and then selecting my specialization or whatever I want to study in law school. I don't know what I want to do about that. And then after my education in general it would be primarily career oriented, being successful at that.

Kevin sees his bachelor's degree as helping him get to his ultimate goal of going to law school.

He stated, “. . . I’m under the impression that the route I’m taking, what really counts is law school, even that this is all just right now a supplementary in getting myself ready for law school.”

Both Louise and Sherri mentioned that a master’s degree will allow them to increase their salaries while also being more educated in their chosen profession. Louise said,

Well first of all I know as a teacher you have to always continue your education and then eventually schools usually encourage you to get a master’s. In the past I know having a master’s you got paid more, but I think that may have changed now, and in order to be the best teacher you can be, I feel like you need to continue your education because it changes constantly, and I think also by getting it it’s going to open up more opportunities for me to do more things. So if I like wanted to teach at like community colleges or stuff, I could also do that.

Sherri stated, “the farther that I go if I do get my master’s the more money I would earn.” In addition, a master’s degree would also allow her more professional power.

. . . I think just being a regular RN (registered nurse) you are still really under the watch of other people and have to answer to other people but becoming a nurse practitioner it is you make the decisions and you decide what goes on so it is like more power.

A master’s degree will provide Sherri the opportunity for increased earning potential and independence. As a result, Sherri’s goal is to get a master’s degree in the future.

For these four participants, a bachelor’s degree is not the end of their educational journey and achievements, but only the beginning that will lead to more opportunities in the future. However, in order to be able to continue to pursue their educational goals after college, the participants need to achieve academic success. The academic experiences of the participants have been influenced by these educational goals and desire to continue their education, helping most to focus upon their coursework.

Impact of Non-Degree Completion. Given that most of the participants view their college experiences as an opportunity to help them succeed as well as increase their families’ future success,

there is pressure to graduate from college. This added pressure to graduate from college, whether self-imposed or from others, can impact their college academic experiences. Positive academic experiences and high academic achievement in courses will result in graduating from college. If the participants fail to be successful in their academic courses, it will also result in failure to graduate from college. Not graduating from college for some of the participants is something they have never thought about as they plan on doing anything and everything to ensure they get a degree. For some of the other participants who have thought about the possibility that they could not graduate from college, they were also able to articulate some of the implications not completing college can have upon their future, their earning potential, and their self-worth.

Initially when asked how his future would be different if he did not graduate from college, Kevin stated, "I never even thought about that. I have never even considered the possibility that I wouldn't get a degree." Then after asking how not getting a degree would impact him emotionally, Kevin quickly realized the possible impact of failing to graduate from college. "I would guess it would be emotionally traumatizing. It would be a big hit to self-worth, I think, like a massive hit to self-worth." When asked why it would be emotionally traumatizing, Kevin stated, "academics has been the only thing I've, well, the thing I'm the best at."

Emma, Louise, and Matthew felt that not completing their college degree would negatively impact them in the future. Emma stated,

I guess I would probably just feel like if I didn't complete my college degree, I would feel like I was quitting on something that was important and it would kind of be a discouraging factor in my life and make me feel less proud of myself.

Louise stated,

I think it will always be at the back of my mind, like why didn't I finish that degree like or the fact that I couldn't finish it would be kind of like not reaching one of your goals and it'd probably irritate me a lot.

Additionally, Louise thinks that not graduating from college will result in her being unhappy, working a job that she is not satisfied with, and making less money. Matthew also has thoughts similar to Louise about how not completing college will impact him in the future. He stated,

If I didn't complete my degree I would, I mean like I said I wouldn't be content with a job or whatever that I could get. I would probably be pretty, I mean depending on the circumstance, I wouldn't be happy about not finishing college. Yes, just, I don't see any positive emotions coming out of not completing college.

For Zander, not graduating from college would not only be disappointing to him, but he also feels the people who have supported him would be let down.

I would probably feel bad, letting down people that have put time and energy into making me who I am today, letting them down is not something I'm looking to do. I wouldn't be happy with myself, to say the least.

Summary. Given some of the transitional issues the participants have faced in college, they have had to seek academic support systems to help them be successful in their educational and academic experiences in the classroom. Most often the participants have turned to friends for academic support as they feel that they share similar academic experiences and can relate to some of their challenges more so than parents or other family members. Friendships developed with peers by most of the participants have been an important network of academic support. Additionally, some of the participants have sought academic support from advisors and professors. Through seeking out academic support networks, the participants are working to create positive academic experiences with the intention of being academically successful and graduating from college.

The importance of building relationships with professors, whether for academic support or other benefits, was an experience all participants understood. Despite understanding the importance of building these connections and relationships with professors, only a few of the participants have actually done this during their first two years in college. For those participants who have not yet developed connections with professors, they intend to do so as the professors can serve as important references and resources in the future.

Despite their own lack of knowledge about college, almost all of the participants indicated that they would use their knowledge from their own college experiences to help others, in particular their siblings or other family members. After completing college the participants feel they will be able to provide support, share resources, and offer useful information to their siblings and other family members. The overall impact of attaining a college degree, including the ability to assist others through the college process and be a role model for others, is what motivates many participants to complete college.

Not only do the participants want to use the knowledge that they have acquired from college to help their siblings and family members in the future, they also see a college degree as an important first step in achieving other educational goals. All of the participants have thought about pursuing additional educational opportunities after college, with four of them having plans to attend law school or graduate school. Graduating from college will not only help the participants' families, but also the participants to achieve future educational goals.

The participants clearly understand the importance of college and the impact that not graduating from college will have upon them and their future. Being aware of the impact not graduating could have upon them has resulted in the participants creating expectations for themselves and working to not disappoint themselves as well as those who have supported them throughout their academic journey.

Types of Support

As noted in the previous section, educational support was a theme among participants in relation to their academic experiences and achievement. However, there are two other types of support, financial and emotional support, that the participants sought and were important to their admission and retention in college. Some participants noted that as a result of lacking financial or emotional support they have had to seek ways to acquire this support from different places or people. Although these two different types of support had different meanings to the participants, the types of financial and emotional support have been an important to the participants' ability to continue in college and take advantage of their college experiences.

21st Century Scholarship Financial Support. All of the participants of this study were first-generation college students with none having a parent with a four-year college degree. In addition, the median family income for the participants was \$13,617 a year (see Appendix K), just below the 2011 National Poverty Guidelines for a family of two (United States Department of Education, 2011; United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2011). It is important to note that the typical family size for the participants was larger than two, making their median family income further below the National Poverty Guidelines. For all eight participants, the only way that they were able to attend college was because of the financial support they received from the 21st Century Scholars and Covenant programs. The 21st Century Scholars Program is a state-funded program that provides financial support for four years of in-state tuition costs to students whose family meets income criteria. The program also requires interested students to apply in the seventh or eighth grades in order to be eligible to receive the scholarship. The Covenant program, also referred to as the State University Promise, is a university-based program that provides a monetary stipend for room and board to 21st Century Scholars who apply and meet qualifications. The ability for students to receive both the 21st Century Scholars Program financial support as well as the State University Promise drew all of the participants to State University.

The positive impact that the financial support from both programs has had upon the participants was mentioned numerous times during the interviews. Juan stated, "I rely fully on financial aid. I wouldn't have been able to come to college period if it weren't for 21st and the [sick] Promise." Similarly, Tanya described the importance of the scholarships as follows:

21st Century Scholars is my biggest thing. It has helped me so much. I don't know how I would be here if it wasn't for them. The Covenant pays for everything else, which has helped me a lot because I would get a refund check and once I got done paying for all of the books with that and all the school supplies it definitely went into helping me if I would need something throughout the year.

Tanya also went on to describe how the 21st Century Scholars Program helps to reduce her stress and worry about paying for college.

They [21st Century Scholars] have helped me tremendously. I wouldn't be here probably without them. That is the entire lump sum of what is paying for all of my expenses. So it has helped a huge amount and especially now being able to study and do all these things that I am doing without having to worry about going out and working all night and in my free time to try to pay for stuff.

Louise also experiences less stress and worry as a result of the financial support of the scholarship. She stated, "I mean 21st Century and the state has pretty much paid for most of it so I haven't really had to worry out much and then I just use my own savings for everything else I need."

Similar to Louise, Sherri experienced less stress and worry about money as a result of the 21st Century Scholars Program and Covenant. Sherri stated, "I have my 21st Century Scholarship and Pell Grant. I think with those I'm given more choices if I need to pay for a tutor for a class or something. I don't have to stress over money or anything." Sherri also described how the financial support helps her family and stated,

Being part of the 21st Century program has really helped because it leaves less worry on me about how I am going to pay for things and it also keeps the stress off my family. I just have more time to focus on my work since I don't need a job to pay for anything.

Emma also described the importance of the 21st Century Scholar's Program financial support and what that means for her managing her college expenses. She stated,

Well, with the 21st Century Scholars Program basically since I live off campus, instead of paying the University for my room and board, they just give me a cash refund to pay my rent and buy food so all my money comes from my scholarship. I think it's just not having to worry about working necessarily or worry about where the money is coming from have just made my life simpler.

When asked how their college lives would be different with more financial resources or financial support, most participants noted that their lives would not be different and that through their 21st Century Scholars Scholarship and Covenant, they presently have more financial support than ever before in their lives. Despite most participants not thinking additional financial resources would impact their lives, four participants noted that if they did have additional money available, they would use it for non-academic related expenses. Matthew talked about being satisfied with his current amount of financial support, but if possible, would like to have a car to make life easier. He stated,

I don't think it would be terribly different in, I don't think that there would be a big quality of life increase because I don't really want for anything. I'm pretty careful with my money. I guess I would, I'd probably eat out more and be a little bit more unconcerned about, probably pay a little bit less attention to the money. I guess the one big thing that might change if I had a fair amount more resources I would have a car.

Zander had similar thoughts about what he would do with additional resources. He said, "I wouldn't say it would be too much different because at the moment I'm doing well financially for college to have

money for social aspects and money for gas for transportation, and all other needs I might have.” Louise thought that she would probably just acquire more things and stated, “I guess I would just have more stuff, I don't know, because I feel like a lot of the kids here actually are paying for their stuff, for their schooling or like most of it.” Juan indicated he would also spend more money if he had it at his disposal. He stated, “I would be spending a lot, just because everything is paid for and then I get a small amount of money for other expenses. It would be more just materialistic objects rather than important things.” Juan then went onto talk about how a recent health concern made him rethink what he would do with additional financial resources. He noted the following:

Actually, hold on, that changed this semester because I did go to the hospital and it was pretty big because I don't . . . the bill was pretty big because I don't have insurance, so I mean in a case like that it would be nice to have more just in emergency situations. But overall, I'm well financed with the scholarship.

Since the participants have grown up with limited financial resources, they are content with what they view as a significant amount of money as a result of their 21st Century Scholarship and State University Promise. When asked to think about what they would do with additional money, although four did mention how they would use additional financial support if available, all participants were satisfied with what they had presently. All participants, although not from affluent backgrounds, have been given the opportunity to attend college as a result of a program designed to help students from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

Friends as a Support Network. Zander, Juan, and Tanya have grown up independent of their parents; however, they still have received some emotional and financial support from family members and friends. The other five participants described their parents and family members as being part of their lives, although they tend to provide more emotional support and encouragement from a distance. By receiving this support from a distance, these five participants explained that their parents and family

are not involved nor do they intervene in their lives on a regular basis. When asked who they include in their main support networks in college, most of the participants, similar to Juan and Kevin, noted their friends, not their parents, were their main support. These included friends from home and high school as well as the friends that they have made in college through different activities, their residence hall community, or special programs in which they were involved. Emma includes friends from home and college as a part of her support network.

Now I have a different group of friends who a few of them went to my high school but we just weren't really friends and a couple of them went to a high school in my town and they were sort of a group friends that I sort of just got to know once I got here.

In addition, Emma talked about the role that these friends have played in her life at college. She stated, Since coming to school, I guess just a challenge of not being motivated like I've discussed throughout and wanting to quit school at certain points. Basically my support system for that would be just talking to friends and my parents who would just support me to keep working through and try to find something that I was interested in doing here, and just pointing out that this is sort of best possible thing I could be doing at this point in my life. I think the emotional support from my friends just makes me more likely to graduate because I have them to talk to if things are tough or I'm not enjoying it and know that if I'm not enjoying my course work I can enjoy my time with them and that kind of helps me get through it.

Matthew described an interesting shift in his support network during his first two years in college. As a sophomore, he now considers his friends from marching band to be his support network; however, during his freshman year he described how his family provided significant emotional support as he struggled with a breakup. He stated,

It's sort of shifted. My freshman year it was definitely my family. It was still my mother and grandmother. I had a really hard time coming to college and things didn't work out quite as well

as I expected. My freshman year was really, really rough so it was still definitely family and friends from high school that I communicated to. And then since I've gotten here for my sophomore year I have really reconnected with friends that I made last year and gotten a lot closer and it's definitely them now, friends that I've made here.

Not only are friends important support networks for these low socioeconomic Millennials, they also see the role of their friends being important in the future. For example, Louise stated, "Definitely friends. Like, they all have their separate hometowns so I'm sure like if I have a hard time finding a job they could let me know of any opportunities they hear about." Also Emma stated,

Probably my group of friends that I can kind of see myself having throughout my life that we're sharing common experiences now in college that are going to allow us to be stronger friends in the future after college is over.

Tanya also had similar thoughts relative to her friends being a part of her support network in the future. She stated,

I guess probably my friends but I don't know. They've been my main support group even if it's not the same people. The category of people has been my main support group for most of my life just growing up and getting where I am today.

Although some participants did not have any emotional and financial support from their family, others did but the support was more irregular. Additionally, for the participants who received support, their family was more removed from the situations and helped from a distance. Regardless, if they received support from their family, all the participants stated that their friends play a significant role in their lives and provide emotional support to them while in college. In addition, some participants anticipate that their friends will continue to be a big part of their support networks after they leave college.

Self-Support. Three of the participants, Zander, Juan, and Tanya, were independent from their parents while in high school, and could not depend upon their parents for any financial support. This lack of financial support resulted in them acquiring jobs and supporting themselves before or soon after arriving at college.

Tanya explained how in high school she worked to support herself financially. She stated, "The job I had pretty much paid for my food and if I would need something I could go get it and I had the money to do that. I didn't technically; I wasn't paying the bills obviously. I know some of the money, because my dad pays child support so some of that, I know a lot of that money would go into paying the bills. But when it came to just living, other than paying for the roof over my head, I pretty much paid for all of my food and if I needed to go somewhere, if I had to pay to ride the bus I would do that. If I needed something for school, that was pretty much just me."

Zander has had a strained relationship with his family, which also resulted in him being independent at an early age and having to find ways to support himself. Zander was taken in by his Scoutmaster and his wife and he described how he worked to earn his keep and support himself financially. He stated,

"I worked over the summer and I also worked for Clay, and got money through that, and just also worked for food and shelter I suppose. Like I'd stay there and help feed his chickens, and weed the garden, and do all of this and that; so trade labor for room and board."

Since he did not have many financial resources in high school, Zander had to make choices about how he would spend what money he did have. As a result, Zander was not very involved in high school activities, especially those that required money. He stated,

"I didn't really do anything in high school that really required money. I did play lacrosse two years in high school, the last two years, and I was able to pay for that from money I collected through ."

. . I had saved up from birthdays and Christmas, I paid for the equipment and was able to do that.

Juan remembered that an argument over money was the reason that he was kicked out of his house by his mother. He described his experience as follows:

What happened was actually there was problems way beforehand leading up to it but this was the one problem where she wanted to have a wedding. We didn't have the money for the wedding, and then there came a day where I asked for food and there was no food, and I called her out on it. I'm like well you can't be throwing a wedding, you can't be spending money on this stuff if we don't have food. And she's like well that's something that you have to deal with. And that upset me. My grandma was there, and then my grandma and them got into a fight. And then the whole thing, it upset my mom, and she kicked me out.

Now in college Juan still does not ask his family to support him financially. He stated, "I mean like my financial resources like asking parents for money is rare must because I know one they don't have much and I can usually handle it myself with the assistance I've gotten through aid."

Other participants also mentioned that they had learned to support themselves financially at a very early age, even though they still lived with their family. Emma worked in high school, but also could depend upon her parents for some financial support.

I worked part time off and on throughout high school and so that was where my personal money came from and other than that it was just my parents. If I wasn't working, my parents would pay for my gas and obviously my food.

Emma's spending money was, "Mostly just from working or gifts from relatives for Christmas and birthdays and stuff." Similarly, Sherri could depend upon her mother for some things but,

In high school before I started working, I started working as a senior but before that it was just majority on my mom. But once I started working I started to buy my own clothes. I gave her part of my checks for food and stuff.

Louise described that she got her first job at a young age to help pay for expenses in high school and save for the future. Although her parents provided some financial support while she was in high school, she now pays for everything on her own. Her job and the money she has saved help with some of her living expenses in college. She stated,

I got a job when I was 14 at Holiday World which is a theme park and I have been working there ever since on the summers I mean I just saved all the money I made there and put it in a savings account and then I used that to buy a car and other things I need but mom and dad when I was still in high school they took care of food and most of my clothes. But now I pay and then I used the money to get a cell phone. I pay for my cell phone, I pay for my car, my gas and my insurance so I guess they taught me save your money and use it for the things you need and then save the rest of it for things later, I guess.

Kevin also worked in high school and said as far as financial resources in high school he had,

Very little. We had, my grandparents were basically the reason I had anything I had in high school. Mom and Ron did very well, my step-father, did very well just to be able to afford the house and such, and take care of my little brothers. Basically anything I had came from my grandparents because grandpa was well off despite the fact that my family wasn't. Grandpa worked for the government. So I try to avoid turning to my grandparents because I knew that they would always be there if I needed them, and I worked at a small mom and pop place Junior well, the second half of my Sophomore year through the first half of my Senior year, and then quit to join track for a semester, and finish out my Senior year. So I worked there but it was a very small number of hours and it was just enough to drive, it was a nominal amount. It was

enough to get around on. And I worked a summer camp, which basically provided me enough for the rest of the year if I had to make any purchases. So I guess I occasionally had small jobs that I had with my grandparents, but that's about it. I knew that I couldn't depend on mom and Ron much if I needed anything.

Summary. The support and resources that the 21st Century Scholar's and Covenant Program provide are the primary sources of financial support for all of the participants of the study. Without these resources, the participants would not be able to attend college. By having access to financial resources through the scholarship, it has helped to reduce the participants' stress and worry about paying for college costs. Most participants also mentioned that with the 21st Century Scholarship and Covenant, they have access to more financial resources than ever before in their lives and are do not feel that access to more money would change their current lifestyle.

The financial support provided by the 21st Century Scholar's Program and the Covenant have made college a reality for the participants. Not only was financial support important to the participants in college, but also having people who provide emotional support. The primary source of emotional support for the participants was their friends, whether those from high school or new friends they have met in college. Although for a few participants their family members still provide some emotional support, it is more from a distance and not as frequent as the support provided by friends. The participants' friends are important sources of emotional support during college and the participants foresee their friends continuing to be important by providing emotional support after college. Despite the participants lacking financial resources prior to college, all of the participants have found financial and emotional support networks while in college.

Collegiate Involvement

The participants of the study noted that they are involved in a variety of activities on campus; however, Juan and Zander were the only students who participated in activities for pay. Through a

psychology class Juan started to participate in experiments for pay and Zander serves as a volunteer firefighter getting paid for shifts he picks up at the fire station. Despite both Juan and Zander participating in activities for pay, neither depended upon this money to finance their education and used their 21st Century Scholarship as their primary financial support.

Since the participants did not have to worry about finances while in college and were not required to have jobs to support themselves, six of the eight participants were involved in activities on campus, including academic clubs, student organizations, residence hall learning communities, judicial boards, intramural sports, and marching band. The two individuals who were not involved had different reasons for their lack of involvement. Emma was overly involved in high school, and when she came to college wanted a break from being involved in outside activities and prefers to “hang out” with her friends. She stated, “I don't really have any extracurricular affiliated with the University things that I'm really doing right now. Mostly outside of class I just hang out with friends and don't really have that many to speak of at the moment.” Sherri's reason for not being involved is related to her concern about her academics. She stated, “I was trying to just focus solely on my schoolwork so I wouldn't have any other distractions.” Although both are not currently involved on campus, they intend to get involved in the future and see the importance of involvement to their careers. When asked about what being involved could do for her, Emma said, “Probably just allow me to branch out a little more and get to know more people and just have some more stuff going on in my life and make connections and develop interests.” Sherri state, “I could meet new people that could potentially help me along the line with school or a career maybe.”

Learning about Involvement Opportunities. The choice to be involved in activities or organizations while in college was a result of the participants independently seeking these opportunities. Most often the six participants involved in college activities learned about opportunities

through involvement fairs, posters, flyers, or chalkings on campus. If they did learn about an opportunity from someone else, it tended to be a friend or college peer. Matthew stated,

With the exception of Psychology Club I went out and looked for them. I was looking for things to get involved with and just in searching for them I found them. I was researching on the Internet and either through a State University website or thorough a support website for similar clubs I found that.

Three participants learned about activities through involvement fairs. Sherri, although she is not currently involved, learned about ways to get involved during the first week of college. Sherri stated, "During Welcome Week a lot of it came from that. We just went to different booths and talked to the people and got involved that way." Louise also learned about opportunities through a fair,

They had an involvement fest here or something. I got some fliers and then went to the co-op meeting and then one of my classes I took first semester and she helped us with the resources around campus and told us about all of the involvement things you could get into and go to the fest and learn about more clubs.

Zander also attended the fair, and described his experience as follows:

I received an email from someone through State University and they had . . . fair where pretty much all of the student groups and organizations got together. I just went there to check it out, and walk through the booths, and ended up finding them and getting some information from them, and attending one of the meetings.

Others learned about opportunities through publicity around campus or from websites. Juan saw flyers on campus about events as well as hearing from his friends who were also involved. Juan stated he learned about activities from, "flyer, friends, other friends who are in it." Tanya attended a meeting despite the group's webpage being outdated. She stated,

I'm in Photography Society, that was the other one. I was trying to think because Photography Society is actually the one that I found on my own just looking through the club sports and club pages on State Universities' website, which I found it and their website had not been updated for quite a few years.

Kevin also described how he learned about activities on campus. He stated,

I saw most of them from just chalkings, except band. Band was my like my band went to State University band day, so I knew about them in high school and decided why not join band, that sounds like fun. So I did. But everything else has been posters and chalkings on the ground.

As Kevin noted, he decided to get involved in band in college as a result of his involvement in band in high school. Matthew and Louise also looked for activities on campus that were similar to the activities that they were involved in during high school. Knowing the types of activities they enjoyed in high school helped both Matthew and Louise to narrow down their search and seek out information related to specific types of activities in college.

Importance of Involvement and Learning Through Involvement. The impact that involvement in the organizations had upon the six active participants was different, but an important part of all of their college experiences. Matthew felt that without his involvement in college, he might not have stayed at State University, but through his involvement, especially in band, he has made close friends who have helped him get through difficult times. When asked if he knew that his involvement would have such an impact upon his college experience, he stated,

Yes. Because that's part of the reason that I chose to do them is because that's the role that similar activities have played before and I expected that they would do something similar again. And then as I was participating in them and then even like for example last year immediately after marching band ended in the preceding weeks I became really conscious of that effect and

knew that that was going to be the primary way to, I knew that it would have been very different if I hadn't done that.

Louise knew that involvement in high school had helped her in a variety of ways and was hoping that involvement in college would continue to help her,

In high school I was always out looking what else I could pick up; what else I could do; what else interested me so I kind of just have the same mentality up here, and then if you didn't do that in high school I feel like you don't think that are opportunities here either and you don't take advantage of them.

All participants, even the two who were not currently involved in extracurricular activities, shared an understanding of the importance and impact that being involved could have upon them as people, in their skill development, and to their future. Although none of them explicitly stated that involvement in college would help in their pursuit of a degree or increase their likelihood of graduating, they still understood that being involved was important. There were a variety of skills, both personal and professional, that the participants identified that could be acquired through involvement in activities in addition to being helpful to them in the future. Some of the skills identified by the participants that they feel they are acquiring through their involvement include learning to communicate, working with a variety of people, networking, and learning to build their resume, especially as it relates to assisting with graduate school applications.

Tanya views her entire college experience, including involvement in activities, as a learning experience. She stated,

I think college in itself, the entire thing has just kind of been a learning process as we go, as I go. It's just no matter what I do I'm still learning, learning about other people, learning about my schoolwork, learning about myself, just learning about the ways of the world and just that kind of thing, the entire experiences has just been learning.

Juan feels that he has learned basic communication skills,

I've learned more socializing skills, absolutely. I used to have social anxiety where I worried too much of what everyone else think. I always felt judged even when no one was looking. And here, I've loosened up, I thin. I don't know, I've learned to socialize with people a lot better.

Louise also feels that she has learned important skills and gained friendships through her college activities,

It's helped me become a well-rounded person. I mean, you learn responsibilities, social skills, like, the whole volunteering aspect, you make a lot of friends through there and then I feel like you make a lot of your friends through activities and then you stay connected. In college, I've made several friends from the activities but I feel like that will continue to grow as I am here longer, but I've also made friends in classes and just friends I made through friends I think is also...

Impact of Involvement on Future. Most participants also realized that their involvement on campus could have a positive impact upon their future, including applying for graduate school, internships, or jobs. The possible impacts of their involvement for the future influenced many of their choices in extracurricular activities. For example, Kevin has taken advantage of his scholarship and feels that it has allowed him to be involved on campus while also allowing him the opportunity to obtain preparation for his future career. He stated,

It is extremely nice to not have to worry about, you know, the student loans being taken out. I can get the EMT training rather than having to borrow off of my grandparents, or I can do laundry and not feel guilty about it because it's money out of my pocket. I don't have to, I actually get to devote hours to classroom work instead of working like four hour shifts down at the dining hall. It gives me a lot more freedom.

The various experiences he is acquiring through his college activities are making Kevin well-rounded in addition to making him a competitive candidate for law school. Kevin believes that his involvement will help him as he applies to law school, potentially impacting his future. He stated, "I think they'll [activities] make me more diversified, they'll make me a better candidate for law school, but also just add to the experiences and stuff that I have."

Matthew also feels that his involvement in band will help him as he applies for law school. He stated,

Really the biggest activities have been marching band so it's given me some connections in that there's at least one, the director, a professor I see all the time and graduate students who are assistants who I see all the time. So that's helpful. I guess that has been a gap in the last year and a half which is why I'm starting to get involved in other clubs which I intend to be more helpful in that area. And specifically help me to think about things to sort of broaden my education within psychology or prepare for law school and then hopefully give me connections with professors.

Louise, Tanya, Juan, and Zander also mentioned that their involvement could be used on their resumes or could help them connect with people who could help with their future careers. Without being involved, Juan said, "I would have less technical background experience. I wouldn't be able to put stuff on resumes so it would make me look bland." Louise stated, "It is just another I guess like it is good to build your resume up for some of the things and then you make valuable friends and it is also networking so you can have connections maybe down the road." Tanya hopes that her involvement will help her break into the fashion business through connections with people.

Then RSO (Retail Sales Organization) is with the fashion design. From what I've heard about it it's really good for opportunities of finding internships or getting your name out there for the

future. I haven't learned much other than that yet but I'm really looking forward to that because I feel like that could help me a lot.

Zander feels his involvement in the community through volunteering at the fire department will be important in the future. He stated, "That [the fire department] gets me out into the community, gets me the experience I can put on my resume, certifications and training I get that I can use as well, people, firefighters across the nation and the county."

Even though Emma and Sherri are not involved in activities, both still expressed the importance that involvement outside of the classroom could have upon their futures. Emma felt involvement could give her more direction,

I would probably just have a better idea of what I kind of want to do and would have definitely branched out and made more friends and more connections and gotten a little more experience and sort of know better what I might want to do with my life after college.

Sherri also felt that involvement could help her in the future by helping her to make connections as well as learning from others. Sherri stated,

It could help me meet more influential people that could possibly help me later in the future. I could meet new people that could potentially help me along the line with school or a career maybe. I think it will make me a more rounded person like well rounded. It is not just being around my everyday people. It is learning different people's backgrounds and just different ways of life other than my own.

Seamless Learning: Academics and Involvement. In addition to helping to build their personal skills and resumes, three participants also saw that extracurricular involvement could be related to their work in the classroom, linking the in-class learning to that which takes place outside the classroom. Zander remembered that some of the experiences he had in extracurricular activities he could relate to classwork. According to Zander, "There's been several times that where in the classroom where we're

covering something and I've had first-hand experience of that, that can be applied, there has helped me better remember or learn about that subject." Juan also feels that the skills he is learning from organizations will reinforce what he is learning in the classroom. He indicated, "It will give me outside knowledge. Knowledge that is commonly found in the classrooms, other things as outside sources and different experience of a classroom doesn't really offer, such as organization and event creation, things of the sort." Matthew also views his involvement in the Psychology Club as important to his academics.

The Psychology Club has been good. I've only been to it a little bit but it's going to be a good measure of my aptitude for psychology and how much it really does interest me and whether or not I want to pursue it. So that's going to really help academically and then hopefully also socially as well.

Summary. The participants of the study have chosen to become involved in a variety of collegiate activities for various reasons (e.g., gain skills, make connections, and help them in the future). Participants who are involved in activities on campus sought these opportunities on their own by attending involvement fairs, through organization websites, or seeing posters and advertisements across campus. Some participants also mentioned how they have been able to apply some of the knowledge and experiences that they have learned through involvement in campus activities to what they are learning in the classroom. As a result, the participants are creating a seamless learning environment.

Although two participants were not involved in any collegiate activities, all of the participants were aware and acknowledged that being involved while in college is important. Not only did the participants acknowledge that involvement was important, but also that their involvement can help develop skills and provide numerous opportunities for learning and growth. Many participants also recognized that the learning and growth acquired through their involvement in activities can also be beneficial to their future. Most often the participants mentioned the importance of these activities in

relation to their future careers, whether becoming more knowledgeable about their chosen field or making connections that could lead to future jobs.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides a discussion of the current findings of the study of the lived experiences of low socioeconomic status Millennial generation college students in relation to the literature about Millennials, “emerging adulthood,” and Bourdieu’s (1977) Cultural Capital framework. The purpose of this study was to gather information about the stories and lived experiences of low socioeconomic status Millennial generation college students through a phenomenological qualitative lenses. There were four research questions that framed this study and were used in the creation of the interviews. A theme related to each research question was developed and is noted after each research question.

1. How do low socioeconomic status Millennial generation college students gain information about the social, cultural, and academic norms of college life prior to arriving on campus? (Knowledge of College)
2. What are the academic experiences of low socioeconomic status Millennial generation college students? (Academic Experiences)
3. What support systems do low socioeconomic status Millennial college students have while in college? (Types of Support)
4. What does involvement (e.g., organizations, jobs, internships) outside of the classroom consist of for low socioeconomic status Millennial college students? Why have they chosen to be involved in these particular activities? (Collegiate Involvement)

When analyzing the information gathered during the interviews from the participants, a phenomenological qualitative perspective was used; themes were developed to describe the lived experiences of the participants. In addition to a discussion of the findings, this chapter addresses the implications for future research of the study based upon the themes and findings presented in the

previous chapter. The chapter concludes with recommendations for student affairs practitioners, and college administrators.

DISCUSSION

With the acknowledgement that few qualitative research studies have been completed that seek to learn about the college experiences of students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds (Walpole, 2003) and given the unique characteristics identified about the Millennial generation (Atkinson, 2004; DeBard, 2004; Glass, 2007; Howe & Strauss, 2000; Newton, 2000; Nicoletti & Merriman, 2007), this study examined the lived experiences of low socioeconomic Millennial generation college students. In this chapter, discussion of the findings for this study is presented based upon the themes developed related to each research question; knowledge of college, academic experiences, types of support, and collegiate involvement. Within each of these themes related to the research questions, themes related to the participants lived experiences are presented with related research literature. Through the development of the themes and use of the research literature, suggestions for future research and recommendations for practice were created. These suggestions and recommendations are presented at the end of the chapter.

Based upon the findings of this study, Millennial college students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds lack information and knowledge about college. Despite this lack of knowledge and other challenges that they have and continue to face, they have found ways to be successful academically and to become involved on campus. In addition, they see obtaining a college degree as an important part of their lives and one that can positively impact their future. A college degree is not only important because of the various financial, social, and career advantages (forms of Cultural Capital) that they will receive, but also the knowledge, experiences, and advantages that they can provide to siblings and other family members. Discussion of the themes developed for each research question and current literature related to these themes follows.

Knowledge of College. Despite the information gathered from the participants of the study that financial resources did not limit their college pursuits, socioeconomic status still remains the greatest predictor of college aspirations (Greene, Huerta, & Richards, 2007). Although financial resources did not limit the participants' college pursuits, their lack of knowledge and understanding of college life in many ways did. Research recognizes that parental influences are an important factor in determining a student's access to college (Hofferth et al., 1998; Sil, 2007). In particular for the participants of this study, the lack of knowledge and information about college life that their parents possessed was a factor that disadvantaged all of them from being prepared or knowledgeable about entering into the collegiate environment. Through the interviews, all of the participants stated that they only had limited access to information about college life from their family and friends prior to arriving on the college campus. Most of the participants worked to learn information about college on their own from various sources including cultural references, teachers, and peers. However, the accuracy and usefulness of this information varied for the participants.

The relationship of socioeconomic status and lack of knowledge relates closely to Bourdieu's (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990, 1994; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, 1990) framework of Cultural Capital. Given that Cultural Capital is referred to as a system of attitudes, preferences, behaviors, and attributes that are derived in part from parents and passed along to their children (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, 1990; Lamont & Lareau, 1988), the participants' parents had little to pass along to their children prior to and during their transition to college. Because the participants' parents lacked the experiences of college life, they were not able to pass along behaviors, attitudes, or attributes that other college educated parents were able to pass along to their children. Therefore, the participants had to develop their knowledge about college life from other sources, including cultural references, teachers, and peers.

When the participants used cultural references, especially television and movies, to develop knowledge about college, their perceptions were often exaggerated from what they experienced once on campus. In particular most of the participants had exaggerated expectations about the party atmosphere and frequency of use of alcohol and drugs. The exaggerated expectations of the study participants related to alcohol use is not dissimilar from the expectations of most college students in that they overestimate how many of their peers are engaging in dangerous alcohol behaviors (DeJong, 2002). DeJong (2002) also noted that the disparity between actual and perceived drinking behaviors and norms on a college campus can be very large. However, given the limited overall knowledge of college that the participants had prior to enrolling and arriving on campus, inaccurate or exaggerated portrayals could be more detrimental and have a greater impact upon their decision to attend college.

Bourdieu (1977) did not believe that there were significant differences between the types of capital, social, financial, and cultural, but that all types of capital could be converted into another form rather easily and result in the continued acquisition of capital for benefits (Nash, 1990). Similarly, Bourdieu's (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990, 1994; Bourdieu & Passerson, 1977, 1990) framework of Cultural Capital does not differentiate between the social, financial, and cultural capital people acquire. Despite not differentiating between different types of capital, financial capital in the form of income is still viewed by some as the most important resource in that without financial capital, other types of resources and capital are hard to acquire (Hofferth et al., 1998). Information that was not gathered from the participants of this study was the length of time that their families have lacked financial resources, potentially leading to a lack of cultural capital. Therefore, it is hard to know for the families of the participants which came first, lack of financial resources or lack of cultural capital. Regardless, the participants are working to change their families' future by attending college and continuing to gather various forms of cultural capital.

Within the Bourdieun framework, acquiring Cultural Capital is also most beneficial for its ability to be converted into other potential social, cultural, or financial capital and is often used in the pursuit of educational and occupational gains, often perpetuated by classes with the most power (Walpole, 2007). The participants' lack of knowledge of college has greatly shaped and impacted their overall college experiences as they have felt unprepared, encountered transitional issues, and struggled with academics. Through the financial support of the 21st Century Scholars Program, participants have had the ability to attend college as well as being given the opportunity to increase and acquire forms of cultural capital. Although not always explicitly communicated, there are certain attitudes, preferences, and behaviors related to the college experience that are preferred as well as needed to be successful and without this knowledge, there can be various disadvantages. Participants were able to note various forms of cultural capital that they lacked prior to college, but that they now have to share with others, including knowledge about college preparation, knowledge of transitional issues, course information, opportunities to be involved in extracurricular activities, and connecting with professors. The participants identified that after completing college they will be able to reinvest this cultural capital for continued growth, development, and social class advancement of not only themselves, but also their family. A motivating force for many of the participants to attend and be successful in college is to not be like their financially struggling parents, breaking the cycle of poverty and lack of cultural capital that has existed in their families.

The desire of the participants to be different than their parents is not what O'Briant (2003) noted of Millennial's, most of who consider their parents to be their role models. Unlike the descriptions of Millennial's who talk, interact, and obtain guidance, knowledge, and information from their parents (Howe & Strauss, 2000; Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Wartman & Savage, 2008), the participants of this study did not interact with their parents in a similar way. Additionally, the participants did not view their parents as role models or sources of information as a result of their lack

of knowledge of college experiences. This is an important distinction from the description of the continued role of Millennial “helicopter parents” in their children’s college lives (Coburn, 2006; Glass, 2007; Wartman & Savage, 2008) as well as the attention and resources devoted by college administrators and faculty to providing information and assistance to parents (DeBard, 2004; Merriman, 2007) in the new environment of “in consortium cum parentibus” (Henning, 2007).

In addition to the involvement of their parents, the Millennial generation has also been described as special and sheltered (Howe & Strauss, 2000). DeBard (2004) noted that some of these Millennial generation characteristics have been seen on college campuses, again in the form of the Millennial “helicopter” parent who “hovers” over their student well into their college years and continues to be involved in their education (Coburn, 2006; Glass, 2007; Wartman & Savage, 2008). Similar to the participants’ parents not being their role models, their parents had little, if any, involvement in their education and college experience once they were in college. Participants noted that it was because their parents lacked knowledge and experiences about college life that they were not involved or that they did not ask them to be involved. The experiences of the participants is notably different from that of their peers whose parents assisted them in completing college applications, preparing for college admissions tests, and going on campus visits (Coburn, 2006).

The participants of this study were not only different from many of their Millennial collegiate peers in relation to the amount of knowledge about college that they had prior to arriving on campus, but also in the characteristics of the Millennial generation that they do not appear to possess. Being more affluent, educated, and diverse (Atkinson, 2004; Howe & Strauss, 2000, 2003) are some of the unique characteristics that have been ascribed to the Millennial generation of students. Although college students in 2002 were wealthier than their peers in 1998 with more than 45.2 percent having a family income above \$75,000 a year (DeBard, 2004; Sax et al., 2002), the participants did not come from more affluent or educated families. The average family income for the participants was \$13,617 a year,

significantly below the \$75,000 a year average for Millennial generation college students. In many ways, the lack of financial resources resulted in a lack of knowledge and access to information for the participants compared to higher socioeconomic status Millennial peers.

Another trend that has been seen among Millennial parents is to have children later in life so as to provide greater opportunities and more resources to their children, including a college degree, and two parent incomes (Atkinson, 2004; Glass, 2007; Howe & Strauss, 2000). Again, this has not been the experience of the research participants. All of the participants came from families that had significantly limited financial resources, and in which none of their parents had achieved a four-year college degree. The parents lack of educational experiences, similar to Lareau's (1987, 2000) research findings, inhibited their ability to engage in the educational experiences of their children prior to and during college. All of the Millennial generation college students in this study came from less educated and less financially stable families than their peers.

Despite the differences in the role that the participants' parents have played throughout their college experience, in contrast to that of other Millennial parents, a similarity was noted. The participants' parents placed importance upon going to college and encouraged their children to be academically successful in order to get to college. Although they could not provide practical knowledge, experiences, or involvement in the college application process as other Millennial parents did, the participants' parents did provide motivation, encouragement, and support for attending college. It was a result of this encouragement and support that many participants chose to attend college. Additionally as a result of the support and encouragement, the participants' view college as their way to achieve success, be different from their parents, and be able to provide for their families in the future.

Academic Experiences. There have been numerous benefits identified with increased parental involvement in the academic experiences of their children prior to college, including improved student behavior; improved achievement, more positive attitudes toward school, improved homework scores,

and lower absenteeism (Hoover-Dempsey & Bassler, 1987). However, the parents of the participants of this study have not played a role in most of their academic experiences in high school or college, except for encouraging the participants to be academically successful. Despite the encouragement from their families, the academic experiences described by the participants of this study both prior to and during college are very similar to the findings made by Lareau (1987, 2000) in her research of K-12 parents and students from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Lareau (1987, 2000) found that parents from lower socioeconomic status backgrounds tend to be less involved in their children's educational experiences than those parents from higher socioeconomic status backgrounds who were often involved in many parts of their children's academic and educational experiences.

The participants' parents' lack of knowledge and experiences about college, including academic coursework, could have contributed to their lack of involvement with the college educational process. Regardless, there was a lack of involvement from the participants' parents and the participants struggled with the transition from high school to college. Although the correlation between these experiences does not infer one caused the other, a relationship was noted by the participants. When thinking about their transition from high school to college, several participants mentioned that they did not have anyone in their family who attended college or who could help them understand that in college the academic coursework is more rigorous and required a different level of reading and writing competency. These differences resulted in several participants struggling academically their first few semesters in college.

Another academic experience encountered by several participants was the lack of academic accountability by college professors. In contrast, they noted that their high school teachers provided accountability related to academics. Not only did their college professors not provide academic accountability, the parents of the participants did not have the knowledge or experiences to be involved in the college experiences of their children. Again, this is consistent with Lareau's (1987, 2000) findings

that parents from lower socioeconomic status backgrounds are less involved in the educational experiences of their children. In high school the lack of parental involvement might not have been as noticeable given that many participants talked about having teachers who would help them stay accountable for their academic assignments. Additionally, a few of the participants described how they built close relationships with their high school teachers prior to college. Despite the relationships they built with teachers prior to college, few of the participants have built similar relationships with their professors. If the participants built relationships with their college professors in similar ways as they did in high school, they might be able to receive more academic accountability and support. This increase in academic accountability and support could also then result in greater collegiate academic success.

Academic experiences can impact academic success. With academic success as a goal for the participants, they also identified the need for academic support in order to be successful. When in need of academic support in college, the participants' preference to ask for help from their peers, professors, or administrators instead of their parents, also supports the findings from Lareau's (1987, 2000) study. Lareau (1987, 2000) observed that not only did parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds not get involved in their children's academic experiences, they also allowed teachers to be the educational experts and make recommendations about how to best address the needs of their children. In certain situations, Lareau (1987, 2000) noted that the recommendations of the teachers were not always the most beneficial for the students and more involvement and information from the students' parents would have resulted in more productive outcomes. The participants' parents did not actively seek to be a part of their students' collegiate coursework or provide academic guidance, and it is unknown how their involvement in providing academic support could have been beneficial to the students.

In addition, the participants' parents lack of college knowledge and experiences influenced who they sought for academic support. Participants looked to peers and friends instead of their parents because they felt that their friends had a better understanding of what they were going through in

college and could relate to their struggles. Additionally, these friends and peers helped to motivate the participants during challenging courses and experiences and provided encouragement and support. If the participants did not seek out friends for academic support, they turned to professors and college administrators, people who they viewed as being expert sources of knowledge and information.

Although the participants knew that their professors were resources for academic support and issues, most had not yet worked to build relationships with their professors that they know will be crucial to their future. These relationships could be critically important to the participants' future academic experiences. Again, some of the struggle with developing these relationships is a result of the participants not currently feeling, identifying, or valuing the importance that these relationships can have upon their present educational experience and achievement. This lack of importance may again be a result of the lack of knowledge or importance placed upon these relationships by the participants' parents. In addition, given that the participants have made it into college without much academic support from others, they may feel that they can continue with less support than their peers. This continued lack of support and inability to create relationships with professors or others within the college academic community has the potential to adversely impact the participants' academic experiences during the remainder of their college career.

Regardless of their experiences and knowledge prior to college, the participants feel that their ability to obtain a college degree will positively impact their earning potential and increase the financial support that they are able to provide to their family members. Additionally, most participants indicated that it was important to them to be a positive role model to siblings and other family members as a result of going to and completing college. Although they did not know it, the participants were describing ways in which a college education can help to provide them and their families with more cultural and financial capital. As Bourdieu (1977), Bourdieu and Passeron (1977, 1990), and Lareau

(1987, 2000) suggested, socioeconomic status and class position can become forms of cultural capital within school settings.

Failure to obtain a college degree by the participants was also identified as a negative impact for not only them, but also their families and the people they would be disappointing. This intense pressure to succeed in college, not only for themselves, but others, again reinforces the increased amount of cultural capital for these low socioeconomic students. Despite the low socioeconomic statuses of participants during childhood, they are hopeful that their college achievements will help provide various advantages and forms of financial and cultural capital to their families.

Although the participants did not demonstrate Millennial characteristics (Howe & Strauss, 2000), they do seem to have one characteristic in common with their Millennial counterparts, educational ambition. Not only is obtaining a college degree important for the study participants but similar to their Millennial generational peers, with more than 75 percent of first-year students reporting an interest in 2002 of pursuing a degree past their bachelor's degree (Sax et al., 2002), they are also academically ambitious. All participants described how a bachelor's degree is the first part in their academic pursuits, with most planning to attend graduate or law school in the future. The desire of the participants to attend graduate and law school is interesting given that their parents had limited knowledge of the undergraduate college experience. Although the participants had limited knowledge about college prior to attending, during their first few semesters in college they learned about advanced degree opportunities. It was not clear from the study participants where this desire or knowledge of advanced degree opportunities was acquired. However, several participants mentioned that teaching assistants in their courses or professors had mentioned or briefly discussed advanced degrees. It is also possible that some of their knowledge of advanced degrees was acquired through their involvement and participation in the 21st Century Scholars program. Despite not being as affluent as their Millennial

peers, participants did demonstrate ambition similar to their peers in their plan to pursue a degree past their bachelor's.

The findings of this study supports Lareau's (1987, 2000) research and findings as to the impact that socioeconomic status has upon parents involvement in their children's education, as well as her suggestion that socioeconomic status and class position becomes a form of cultural capital within the school setting. Socioeconomic status becoming a form of cultural capital within the school setting was also suggested by Bourdieu (1977) and Bourdieu and Passeron (1977, 1990). However, with the information gathered in this study, it appears that the impact of socioeconomic status, and in turn the impact that socioeconomic status has upon the formation of cultural capital, is no longer limited to the K-12 educational experience. Similar impacts of socioeconomic status upon educational experiences and parental involvement in those educational experiences, only previously observed in K-12 school settings, were also shared by the research study participants. The similarity in experiences for the research participants to that of their low socioeconomic status K-12 peers highlights the continued impact that socioeconomic status has upon students after leaving high school and well into their collegiate careers.

Types of Support. The most important types of support for the participants of the study were financial and emotional. Although the participants currently have access to financial resources as a result of the 21st Century Scholar's Program, prior to college the participants lacked financial resources. The lack of financial resources available to the participants prior to college required many of them to find ways to support not only themselves, but also sometimes other family members. Three of the participants grew up independent from their parents and were on their own, supporting themselves prior to leaving for college. In addition, most of the other participants also chose to get jobs before college to help pay for expenses as a result of the lack of financial support from their parents.

Taking on more adult roles at an earlier age and “learning to stand alone” as a self-sufficient individual are characteristics that Arnett (1998) identified as marking entrance into adulthood within the American culture. As a result of taking on more adult responsibilities or becoming independent at an earlier age, the participants were not able to experience a period of “emerging adulthood” (Arnett, 2000a) in which they were able to engage in exploration, experimentation, and change while still having the financial and emotional support of their families (Arnett, 2000a, 2000b). Participants who received some emotional support from their families reported it was often from a distance and not on a regular basis, limiting again their ability to explore and experiment during adolescence.

Arnett (2000a, 2000b) also suggested that socioeconomic status and the amount of financial resources available to adolescents may not only impact their ability to engage in “emerging adulthood,” but may be more important than the impact of race or ethnicity upon this period of exploration. Financial resources did clearly impact the participants’ decisions to get jobs while in high school and limited other activities that they participated in prior to college. Since they needed to acquire jobs from an early age, these participants were not allowed the same “emerging adulthood” opportunities often common for adolescents from middle or higher classes (Arnett, 2000a). Although not identified as a period of “emerging adulthood” by Arnett (2000a), the ability to attend college could be seen as an activity allowing for similar experiences to that of “emerging adulthood.” Now that the participants are in college, they are able to be involved in a variety of activities that allow them to explore, experiment, and change, experiences unavailable to their low socioeconomic peers who did not attend college.

Similar to Arnett’s (2000a, 2000b) observations about the impact socioeconomic status can have upon opportunities, Morch (1995) noted that people in industrialized countries and also part of a minority group tend to get fewer opportunities than those from majority groups. The ability to partake in various opportunities is related to the type and amount of support provided to adolescents by others, including parents or other family members (Arnett, 2000a, 2000b). Erikson (1968) also believed that

industrialized societies allow for a prolonged period of adolescence in which they can explore who they are and what their role is in society. Given that the participants are from a low socioeconomic status background, they are also part of a minority group within the United States, one that often is overlooked. Although part of an industrialized society, the participants have not had opportunities to explore as Erikson (1968) described. Again, participants' lack of financial resources and their socioeconomic status influenced the decisions that they made about experiences, jobs, or other opportunities prior to college.

Despite their lack of financial resources available prior to college, all participants now are in college as a direct result of the 21st Century Scholar's Program. Every participant noted that the only way that they are able to attend college was the financial support they are receiving from the 21st Century Scholars Program. Additionally, the financial resources available to the participants in college, even with additional living costs, are more than they have ever had access to before in their lives. It is the hope of the participants to make the most of the financial support and opportunities that they have been given to earn a college degree. With a college degree, the participants then hope to be able to reinvest the skills and knowledge they have acquired to help other family members in the future.

Collegiate Involvement. Many middle-class Millennials have been sheltered by their parents and in addition, these parents have spent countless hours scheduling activities and events for their children and taking them to sports and music practices while also providing them with constant direction and support (Coburn, 2006; DeBard, 2004; Elam et al., 2007; Jacobson, 2003). It is not known if this type of parental involvement continues for middle-class Millennials in college; however, for the participants of this study, they did not have the same type of parental involvement prior to or during college. The participants' parents did not influence their choice to be involved in organizations or activities in college. The participants' choice to be involved in college was a self-motivated decision and in order to be involved, they sought out ways to get involved. The six participants who did participate in

activities outside of the classroom sought these opportunities on their own with little help or guidance from parents, teachers, or other adults. Self-motivated involvement is a different experience for the low socioeconomic Millennial participants of this study than from the Millennial generation whose parents have worked to schedule their involvement in activities from an early age (Coburn, 2006; DeBard, 2004; Elam et al., 2007; Jacobson, 2003).

The participants independently sought involvement opportunities once in college, but what most were not concerned with was finding opportunities that were for pay. It was a result of the financial support the participants received from the 21st Century Scholar's Program that allowed them not to have to find jobs or work to support themselves financially. Since they did not have to work to pay for school, the participants sought involvement opportunities that allowed them to gain valuable skills and experiences. This development and acquisition of skills and experiences for the participants would be considered forms of social and cultural capital in Bourdieu's (1977) Cultural Capital framework. Participants, who chose to be involved, noted that they often selected organizations or activities that related to their academic program, major, or future profession. Through involvement in these organizations and by developing relationships with people in these groups, the participants are learning about desired behaviors, attitudes, and attributes of people in their field and major, types of social and cultural capital.

Not only did the participants select involvement opportunities that provided them the ability to develop skills and experiences, but also ones which related to their future careers. The participants knew and understood that being involved was important and could have a positive impact upon their future. However, none of them, identified in contrast to Astin (1984), that involvement increases their chances of graduating from college. Although all of the participants were motivated to earn a college degree, six of them have taken it upon themselves to increase the likelihood of graduating by becoming involved on campus.

A variety of potential factors that can influence student experiences and success within college have been identified (Astin, 1993; Tinto, 1993), including the importance of involvement in activities outside of the classroom (e.g., extracurricular and organizational involvement). As Kuh (1996) noted, creating a seamless learning environment between various parts of the university can increase student success. A seamless learning environment is one in which the classroom and out-of-classroom experiences are bound together to appear seamless (Kuh, 1996), and the student can relate information and knowledge from one experience to another. Several participants have increased their potential for success in college by working to create these seamless learning environments. They talked about how they had experiences in the classroom that they were able to relate to their involvement in activities, organizations, or other experiences on campus and vice versa. Again, through their self-directed involvement, the participants have been able to increase their social and cultural capital, increase their potential for success in college, and work to positively impact their future.

Summary. Overall, the findings of this study provide legitimate support that the lived experiences of low socioeconomic Millennial generation college students are not the same as the Millennial experiences documented and described by literature, especially in regards to the role of their parents in college. Despite having different experiences and working to fill gaps in information and knowledge about college life, the low socioeconomic status Millennial participants are extremely motivated and have not let their socioeconomic status limit them. In part, they are motivated as a result of their families financial struggles and through their support and encouragement of their parents, while also wanting to pass along valuable information and resources about college onto siblings and friends. If anything, being from a low socioeconomic status has played an important role in their ability and decision to go to college with the financial support of the 21st Century Scholars Program.

Additionally, with this financial support the participants have chosen to be involved in college activities that relate to their coursework and future careers instead of working to finance their

education. Although some have struggled with the transition to collegiate academic coursework, overall the participants have found support and encouragement from their friends. With this encouragement and support, the participants hope to graduate and continue on to obtain advanced degrees, continually increasing their financial, social, and cultural capital along the way.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

There were several differences found between the experiences and characteristics of Millennial generation college students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and that of the Millennial generation descriptions in the literature (Atkinson, 2004; DeBard, 2004; Glass, 2007; Howe & Strauss, 2000; Newton, 2000; Nicoletti & Merriman, 2007). The findings of this study lead one to ask questions about the Millennial generation. In particular, given that the experiences and characteristics of low socioeconomic status students are so different from the descriptions of Millennials in the literature, are there common themes among the Millennial generation, and if so, are the characteristics and experiences described by Howe and Strauss (2000) representative of the Millennial generation population? For Millennials of low socioeconomic status backgrounds, what is the role and impact of cultural references, especially television, movies, and media, in their knowledge and understanding of college? Additionally, if there are common themes in the experiences and characteristics of the Millennial generation, in what ways do differences in socioeconomic status influence those experiences and characteristics, especially for Millennials from middle class families in contrast to their high socioeconomic status peers? Finally, does the role of the parent change in relationship to the socioeconomic status of the college student, (e.g., higher the socioeconomic status, the larger the role of the parent)?

Another area of potential research related to Millennial characteristics is to follow up with these study participants. Through this study, it has been determined that college is a way for students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds to gain forms of social and cultural capital. Conducting similar

research with these study participants at the end of their collegiate experience could help to determine if they display more Millennial characteristics. It is possible that the display of more Millennial behaviors could be a result of continuing to acquire social and cultural capital throughout their college career. Not only will it be important to learn accurate characteristics and experiences for various subsets of the Millennial population to better assist them through their educational journey, but also to provide more knowledge to parents and teachers, as well as inform the practices of college administrators. From a more accurate understanding of many different types of Millennial students, student affairs professionals can work to better address the needs and learning styles of these students when they arrive on college campuses.

As a part of better understanding Millennial students as well as students from various socioeconomic backgrounds, it is recommended that some student development theories be reexamined to determine how generational and socioeconomic factors impact development. Strange (2004) noted that with the rise in the Millennial generation, theories about learning, growing, and the development of a student may have a different focus on others than the self. As Erikson (1968) noted, industrialized countries and socioeconomic status can impact development. As a result, it is important to continue to examine factors that impact development. From this study, it is clear that socioeconomic status does have an effect upon students and parts of their development, whether moving them more quickly through adolescence or delaying their acquisition of knowledge and information. The impact that generational characteristics may have upon students' development is an area that needs additional research.

Despite the development of various programs and initiatives to support and increase the college enrollment of low socioeconomic class students, this group is still underrepresented across college campuses (Baker & Valdez, 1996; Carnevale & Rose, 2003; Hofferth et al., 1998; Oldfield, 2007; Rowan-Kenyon et al., 2008). To show their worth and value within the university community, it is suggested

that other specialty programs that support low socioeconomic groups conduct similar qualitative research or evaluations of their programs. This research and evaluations can then be used to describe the resources and information that these programs provide to students, potentially demonstrating their worth and value within the university community. Demonstrating a program's worth and value is even more important now as educational budgets and funding for programs and scholarships to support marginalized socioeconomic groups, such as the 21st Century Scholar's Program, are examined, scrutinized, or cut.

The importance of faculty involvement with students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds is an area for future research. Increased faculty-student interactions can positively impact student engagement and successful attainment of a college degree (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005). Although a few participants mentioned that they had started to interact with faculty on campus, continuing to research the impact that increased faculty-student interaction could have upon this subset of college students could be important in working to increase college degree attainment and success for low socioeconomic status students.

From the personal experiences of the study participants, the impact that the 21st Century Scholar's Program has had upon them is significant. Without this program and financial support provided to these students, attending college would not be an option. In addition, State University should be recognized for the institutional development and support of the Covenant program that provides financial support for room and board costs to their students. Without this program it is possible that low socioeconomic students might chose to attend regional state campuses and commute to reduce overall college costs. Depending upon their financial circumstances, some may even chose not to attend college. Students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds need to continue to be given the opportunity to get a college education, and additional research can help to justify the importance of continuing to provide such opportunities.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Given the personal experiences and responses of the participants and the findings of this research study, there are several recommendations for practice for low socioeconomic families and students, college faculty, student affairs professionals, and the 21st Century Scholars Program staff. Overall, despite the socioeconomic background for the participants, they have still found a way to attend college, especially with the assistance of the 21st Century Scholars Program, and continue to be motivated and determined to be free of financial struggles in the future. In part, the participants were encouraged and supported to attend college by their parents as well as motivated by the financial struggles of their parent's to be successful in college. The participants see college as their way "out," a stepping stone to a better future and a way to break the financial difficulties that have afflicted their families. With socioeconomic status influencing test scores (Duncan & Magnuson, 2005), only one third of low socioeconomic youth are accepted to college with only 15 percent of that group ever graduating with a degree from a four-year institution (Bedsworth et al., 2006), continuation and further expansion of programs like the 21st Century Scholar's Program is recommended. Additionally, it is recommended that programs that provide opportunities and support low socioeconomic status students to attend college continue to be sustained. Despite financial and budgetary constraints, it is also recommended that financial support for programs similar to the 21st Century Scholars Program, increase the amount of financial aid available to attend college, in turn in increasing the socioeconomic diversity on college campuses.

As another way to increase socioeconomic diversity on college campuses, states, universities, and private donors are encouraged to find ways to continue to reach out to low socioeconomic students and help them not only learn about college, but also prepare them to be viable future college students. By reaching out to low socioeconomic status students and working to close the knowledge and information gap by providing them accurate knowledge, information, and adequate preparation for

college, this population of students will have a greater opportunity to attend college. If there is greater opportunity to attend for low socioeconomic students, then there is also the potential for an increase in the financial diversity on campus. From the experiences of the study participants, without both the financial support and initial outreach of the 21st Century Scholars Program to these students, they would not have the opportunity to attend college. If not for this program, these participants would have become a part of the nearly two thirds of low socioeconomic status youth that are denied admission to college.

Given the increased pressure to succeed placed upon low socioeconomic status college students, as well as the significant disadvantages in knowledge, resources, academic preparation, and support they receive from family and friends, more academic, social, and personal support is needed. These various types of support should not only be offered to the students themselves, but also provided to their parents. By increasing these support networks to the students and parents, both will have more people and resources to assist with questions, issues or concerns during the college experience. In addition to this support, reducing the gap in knowledge about collegiate experiences and academic expectations are important. As such, it is necessary that all individuals involved in the education of low socioeconomic status students, especially college faculty and student affairs professionals, work together to provide accurate information of the college experience and help prepare both the students and parents for collegiate success. This support can take many forms but most importantly, providing resources to both parents and students should continue during the students' entire tenure at the university.

All of the participants mentioned that they lacked knowledge about the collegiate experience, despite their involvement in the 21st Century Scholar's Program. Although some participants mentioned meeting with a 21st Century Scholar's staff member, these meetings were reported to be infrequent. Additionally, information about college application and financial aid processes shared by the 21st

Century Scholar's staff members was not retained by the participants. Most participants reported remembering between one and three meetings with 21st Century Scholars staff members between 8th grade and graduation from high school. Although the meetings may occur more frequently than the participants recalled, it is recommended that 21st Century Scholar Staff meet more frequently with 21st Century Scholar's from the time of acceptance into the program, during high school, and also throughout their collegiate experience. This recommendation may also require an increase in 21st Century Scholar Program staff to provide the opportunity for more frequent meetings and developing personal connections with the students. It is also recommended that any meetings occurring prior to college focus on transitional issues for students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds and strategies for academic success in college. The regular meetings should also continue once in college, but provide the students the opportunity to discuss challenges, strategies for success, as well as connect with various campus resources including faculty and student affairs professionals. The networks of support created in these meetings among 21st Century Scholars Program participants and staff could potentially increase overall academic achievement.

The 21st Century Scholars Program does provide some staff support at State University, however, it is limited for the amount of students currently in the program. Although some meetings do occur with 21st Century Scholars participants once they are in college, it is recommended to increase interactions among the group participants as well as the group participants and staff. Utilizing upper-class 21st Century Scholars to help mentor the freshman and sophomore participants might help to bridge the knowledge gap that currently exists when they arrive on campus. Participants of the study that did seek help from the 21st Century Scholars Program staff, whether before or during college, were able to get information that was useful and important to their success. Although the amount and type of support received through the 21st Century Scholars Program varied among the participants, there is few staff at State University whose job is to exclusively work with the 21st Century Scholar students. At

the time of this study, there was one program director for the entire State University program. Therefore, expanding the amount and availability of services from what is currently available for the 21st Century Scholar's is recommended. By expanding the resources and support for low socioeconomic college students, this could help reduce the disparity in achievement, described by Ladson-Billings (2006, 2008) as an educational debt.

Given that socioeconomic status still remains the greatest predictor of college aspirations (Greene, Huerta, & Richards, 2007), low income and low social class students are still underrepresented on college campuses (Baker & Valez, 1996; Carnevale & Rose, 2003; Hofferth et al., 1998; Oldfield, 2007; Rowan-Kenyon et al., 2008) and with the knowledge provided by the research participants of the unique challenges they have encountered throughout their college experience, discussing socioeconomic status within the collegiate setting needs to occur more frequently. All university departments, not just enrollment and financial aid, need to engage in conversations about how to ensure that low socioeconomic status students are being recruited and encouraged to attend their university. Additionally through these conversations, university department need to discuss ways to ensure that students are not unintentionally excluded from majors, campus housing, activities, organizations, or events as a result of their financial resources or low socioeconomic status. Together, university departments should work together and discuss ways to prepare, enroll, and retain students from a variety of socioeconomic status backgrounds. By reaching out to students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds, universities have the ability to positively impact and influence their knowledge and understanding of the college experiences, while also working to increase representation and making campuses more economically diverse.

SUMMARY

The personal stories and experiences of the study participants were at times unbelievable as well as inspiring. They have overcome significant challenges, most obviously growing up with little to no

financial resources; they “beat the odds”. Somehow they found a way to be in college working to pursue a better life for themselves and others. Utilizing knowledge and information about Millennial generation characteristics (Atkinson, 2004; DeBard, 2004; Glass, 2007; Howe & Strauss, 2000; Newton, 2000; Nicoletti & Merriman, 2007), as well as Bourdieu’s (1977; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, 1990) Cultural Capital theory and framework, helped provide understanding to the lived experiences of Millennial generation college students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds. The experiences of the participants also provided a unique perspective as to the challenges faced by students from low socioeconomic classes within a higher education setting. In addition, differences were observed between the descriptions of Millennial generation students and the experiences of the research participants related to socioeconomic status.

Through this research, the goal is to bring attention to an often forgotten minority group, those from low socioeconomic status backgrounds, with the goal of informing, enhancing, and improving the services and support provided to these students within the university community. In addition, this study supports the need for more research related to socioeconomic status within higher education as well as reexamining student development theories to take into consideration socioeconomic status. Most importantly, this study validated the importance of the 21st Century Scholars Program, and programs like it, as it is vital to the success of low socioeconomic students in college.

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APPENDIX A: Interview One Guide

Interview Guide for Interview One:

Focused Life History (Past) and Details of Experience (Present)

1. To start, please tell me about yourself and why you chose to attend Indiana University.
2. While growing up, what did you learn/know about college?
Potential Probes:
 - a. Who was the first person to talk to you about attending college?
 - b. What was your main motivation for coming to college?
 - i. What is your main motivation now for being in college?
 - c. How did you first learn about the 21st Century Scholars Program?
 - i. From who/m did you learn this information?
 - d. What role did your parent/guardian play in preparing you for college?
 - e. What were your impressions of college prior to getting to campus?
 - i. From who/m did you learn this information?
 - ii. How accurate were those impressions?
 - f. Now that you are in college, what did you not know that you wish that you would have known before coming to college?
3. Describe a particular situation that you had prior to coming to college when you needed some type of support from people. How did you work through this experience?
Potential Probes:
 - a. Who did you go to for support?
 - b. Why did you choose this person/these people?
 - c. How did you know that they would be there to help you?
4. Prior to college, who did you think your main support network would be when coming to college?
Potential Probes:
 - a. Since coming to college, who would you include as your main support network?
 - i. How have these support networks changed?
 - ii. Have relationships changed with these people since you have come to college?
 - b. What roles have your parents or guardian played in regards to providing you support now while you are in college?
 - c. Since coming to college, have the type or types of friends you have changed?
 - i. In what ways have they changed?
5. What financial resources did you have prior to coming to college?
Potential Probes:
 - a. Who provided those for you?
6. Describe the similarities of your high school and college academic experiences. Describe the differences in your high school and college academic experiences.
Potential Probes:

- a. What has been the most difficult adjustment you have had to make from high school to college?
 - b. What has been the easiest adjustment you have had to make from high school to college?
 - c. Now looking back, what advice would you give to other students like yourself before they arrive at college?
7. When thinking about your college classmates, how do you feel you compare academically?
Potential Probes:
- a. Why do you think this?
 - b. What has been the hardest transition between your high school coursework and college coursework?
8. What does it mean to be successful academically in college?
Potential Probes:
- a. What has helped or hurt you in your academic pursuits in college?
 - b. How have you determined success in college?
9. What are the social norms of college? What are the social norms of the campus you attend?
Potential Probes:
- a. How are these norms similar or different at your campus compared to other campuses?
 - i. Why do you think this?
 - ii. How did you learn this?
 - iii. What would your peers say the social norms of this campus are?
10. What financial resources have you had during college?
Potential Probes:
- a. Who has provided those for you?
 - b. How did you learn about these resources?
 - c. How would your college experience be different if you had more financial resources?
11. Describe a situation that you have had since coming to college when you needed support. How did you work through this experience?
Potential Probes:
- a. Who did you go to for support?
 - b. Why did you choose this person/these people?
 - c. How did you know that they would be there to help you?
12. What types of activities are you currently involved in outside of your academic coursework?
Potential Probes:
- a. Which of those activities do you receive money for participating in?
 - b. Who told you about these opportunities?
 - c. How did you choose to participate in these activities?
 - d. Why did you choose to participate in these activities?
 - e. What are the benefits of participating in these activities?
 - f. What have you valued most about your college experience thus far?
 - g. Is your involvement similar or different from that of when you were in high school?
13. What skills and knowledge have you learned as a result of experiences outside of the classroom?

Potential Probes:

- a. What has been the most educational experience or event that you have had outside of the classroom?
- b. What made this experience or event so memorable?

Presented Probes:

Before you return for the second interview, please think about the following question.

How will your childhood and pre-collegiate experiences (including financial and social resources) impact your experiences after you graduate from college?

APPENDIX B: Interview Two Guide

Interview Two:

Reflection on the Meaning (Future)

1. In what ways has your family background impacted your understanding of college life?
Potential Probes:
 - a. What are some of the ways that your family environment has impacted your understanding of college?
 - b. How will you having a college degree impact your relationships with others in your family or community?
 - c. How will you having a college degree impact your friendships?
 - i. How will these relationships with family and friends change?
2. In what ways will graduating from college impact your future career and lifestyle?
Potential Probes:
 - a. How will having a college degree impact your future earning potential?
 - b. How will having a college degree impact your siblings? family?
 - c. How will your future be different if you do not complete your college degree?
 - d. What is your biggest motivation for getting a college degree?
3. What people and support networks have you developed during college that you feel will be important to you in the future?
Potential Probes:
 - a. What impact will these support networks have upon your completion of a college degree?
 - b. How have you determined that these people or networks are sources of support?
 - i. How do you know people to turn to?
 - c. What support network(s) do you anticipate will have the greatest impact upon you in the future? Why?
 - d. How do you anticipate your support networks will stay the same or change in the future?
 - e. What role will your college professors play in your future?
4. How will your involvement in activities outside of the classroom impact you in the future?
Potential Probes:
 - a. What activity or experience do you foresee having the most impact?
 - b. Why do you feel that this will have the most impact?
 - c. How would your college experience be different if you did not become involved in activities outside of the classroom?
5. What has it meant to your personal development to be involved in activities outside of the classroom? What has it meant to your professional development to be involved in activities outside of the classroom?
Potential Probes:
 - a. What were common experiences that you have had in these activities?

6. What do you think is the most important thing you have learned since coming to college that will impact your future?
7. How have your financial resources impacted your college experience?
Potential Probes:
 - a. How will your access to financial resources during college impact you in the future?
 - b. What are you most concerned about when you think about life after college?
8. Have your expectations for the future changed as a result of coming to college? In what ways have they changed?
 - a. What is your dream job?
 - b. Do you foresee an advanced degree in your future?
 - i. Why do you think this?

APPENDIX C: National Poverty Levels

Qualifies for Free and Reduced Lunch

(<http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/11poverty.shtml>)

2011 HHS Poverty Guidelines

Persons in Family	48 Contiguous States and D.C.	Alaska	Hawaii
1	\$10,890	\$13,600	\$12,540
2	14,710	18,380	16,930
3	18,530	23,160	21,320
4	22,350	27,940	25,710
5	26,170	32,720	30,100
6	29,990	37,500	34,490
7	33,810	42,280	38,880
8	37,630	47,060	43,270
For each additional person, add	3,820	4,780	4,390

SOURCE: *Federal Register*, Vol. 76, No. 13, January 20, 2011, pp. 3637-3638

APPENDIX D: National Low-Income Levels

Qualifies for TRIO Programs

(<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/trio/incomelevels.html>)

Federal TRIO Programs Current-Year Low-Income Levels

(Effective January 20, 2011 Until Further Notice)

Size of Family Unit	48 Contiguous States, D.C., and Outlying Jurisdictions	Alaska	Hawaii
1	\$16,335	\$20,400	\$18,810
2	\$22,065	\$27,570	\$25,395
3	\$27,795	\$34,740	\$31,980
4	\$33,525	\$41,910	\$38,565
5	\$39,255	\$49,080	\$45,150
6	\$44,985	\$56,250	\$51,735
7	\$50,715	\$63,420	\$58,320
8	\$56,445	\$70,590	\$64,905

For family units with more than eight members, add the following amount for each additional family member: \$5,730 for the 48 contiguous states, the District of Columbia and outlying jurisdictions; \$7,170 for Alaska; and \$6,585 for Hawaii.

The term "low-income individual" means an individual whose family's taxable income for the preceding year did not exceed 150 percent of the poverty level amount.

The figures shown under family income represent amounts equal to 150 percent of the family income levels established by the Census Bureau for determining poverty status. The poverty guidelines were published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in the [Federal Register](#), Vol. 76, No. 13, January 20, 2011, pp. 3637-3638.

Appendix E: Informed Consent Form

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Project Title: The Lived Experiences of Low Socioeconomic Class Millennial Generation College Students

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study which will take place from January 9, 2012, to August 31, 2012. This form outlines the purposes of the study and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant.

This study is designed:

- 1) To fulfill part of a doctoral research project through Kansas State University.
- 2) To gain insight into the college experiences of Millennial generation students from a low socioeconomic class.

The methods to be used to collect information for this study are explained below. No identifiable information will be used in the reporting of this data as names and other potentially identifiable details will be changed.

This study will consist of participants completing a demographic survey, providing a copy of their Student Aid Report (SAR) from their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) application, and participating in two interviews with the researcher. Interviews will be recorded using a digital voice recorder and computer recording system that will then transcribed to text. An incentive will be offered for each interview. \$15 will be paid for participation in the first interview; \$20 will be paid for participation in the second interview, for a total incentive of \$35 for each participant.

There are no foreseeable risks involved. As a result of participating in the project, it is hoped that participants may learn more about themselves and about the research process. The study will also enhance understanding of college students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and provide insight through which colleges may better serve and assist these students in addition to resources that may be helpful throughout college.

Any participants with questions about the rationale of the study or who want to discuss any aspect of this research may contact Dr. Kenneth Hughey at 785-532-6445. Also, participants with questions about the rights of participants or the manner in which the study is conducted may contact Dr. Jerry Jaax, Associate Vice Provost for Research Compliance, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, 785-532-3224.

TERMS OF PARTICIPATION: I understand this project is research, and that my participation is voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and

stop participating at any time without explanation or penalty. I verify that my signature below indicates that I have read and understand this consent form, and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described, and that my signature acknowledges that I have received a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

Participant Name: _____

Participant Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Witness Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix F: Demographic Survey

Demographic Survey

Name: _____ Age: _____

Race (circle one): Caucasian Hispanic/Latino Black
 Asian Native American/Alaskan Native More than one race

Major(s): _____

Hometown: _____

Family Annual Income (pretax): \$22,000-\$26,999 \$27,000-\$31,999 \$32,000-\$36,999
 \$37,000-\$41,999 \$42,000-\$46,999 \$47,000-51,999 \$52,000-\$56,999

Did you receive free or reduced lunch in high school? YES / NO (circle one)

Are you or have you been a part of the Indiana University Groups program? YES / NO (circle one)

Are you or have you been a part of the Indiana University 21st Century Scholars Program? YES / NO (circle one)

High School GPA: _____ on a _____ scale

High School Activities:

Current College GPA: _____ on a _____ scale

College Activities:

Do you work while attending college? YES/ NO (circle one) If so, how many hours per week? _____

What is the primary source of money that you use to pay for college (including tuition, room and board, living expenses)? (check one)

_____ Parents _____ Personal Savings _____ On-Campus Job
_____ Federal Work Study(FWS) _____ Scholarships _____ Grants (Pell)
_____ Off-Campus Job _____ Other Family Members _____ Grants (Not Pell)
_____ Student Loans _____ Bank Loans
_____ Other- Please Describe: _____

On average, how many hours a week do you spend studying in college?

None 1-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 21 or more

On average, how many hours a month do you spend interacting with college faculty or staff outside of class?

None 1-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 21 or more

Current Living Situation (check one):

____ Residence Hall (number of roommates: _____)

____ Fraternity/Sorority House (number or roommates: _____)

____ On Campus Apartment (number or roommates: _____)

____ Off Campus Apartment (number or roommates: _____)

____ Other-Please Describe: _____

Parent's Marital Status (circle one): Married Divorced Separated Widowed/Widower Never Married

Single Parent Deceased Guardian/Foster Parent

Father's Occupation: _____

Father's Annual Income (pretax): _____

Father's Highest Education Attained (circle one):

Never Completed High School High School Diploma/GED Some College Associate's Degree

Bachelor's Degree Graduate Degree PhD, EdD, JD, MD

Mother's Occupation: _____

Mother's Annual Income (pretax): _____

Mother's Highest Education Attained (circle one):

Never Completed High School High School Diploma/GED Some College Associate's Degree

Bachelor's Degree Graduate Degree PhD, EdD, JD, MD

How many siblings lived with you during all four years of high school? _____

Please provide additional information about the siblings noted above:

Sibling Age_____ male/female (circle one) Sibling Age_____ male/female (circle one)

Sibling Age_____ male/female (circle one) Sibling Age_____ male/female (circle one)

Sibling Age_____ male/female (circle one) Sibling Age_____ male/female (circle one)

Appendix G: Release for Verification of Family Income

Student Consent to Release Student Aid Report (SAR) for Verification

Pursuant to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), I,
_____, hereby consent to the release of
my Student Aid Report (SAR) to verify that my family income reported in the demographic survey is
accurate.

Party to whom such records may be released:

Name: **Kelly Thacker**

Relationship: **Researcher**

I understand that such records may not be released except on the condition that the party to whom the information is being released will not permit any other party to have access to such information without my written consent, and I do hereby consent to its use in research with the above named party. I also understand that, at my request, I shall be provided with a copy of the verification record released pursuant to this consent.

This permission may be revoked with written request at any time. This permission is valid until May 31, 2012, or such time as I otherwise discontinue attendance at Indiana University.

Signature of Participant: _____

Date: _____

Student ID Number: _____

Appendix H: First Email Template for Solicitation of Participants Sent

Subject: Request for Participation in Study

Hello 21st Century Scholar- Please read the email below about an opportunity to participate in a research study with an Indiana University staff member.

Sincerely,

Chris Enstrom

Dear Potential Participants-

My name is Kelly Thacker and I am a PhD student at Kansas State University. In addition, I am also a staff member at Indiana University working full-time on the Bloomington campus. Currently, I am working to complete a study for the completion of my PhD at Kansas State University.

I am writing today to ask that you consider participating in a research study that I am conducting. The purpose of this study is to gather information about the experiences of Millennial college students who are from low socioeconomic status backgrounds. By gathering information about the experiences of this population of students, the goal is to better inform universities of the support needed for students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds. This study has also received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, Approval <#> for the use of human participants.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. During the preliminary interviews students will complete an informed consent form, and a demographic survey, and provide a copy of their Student Aid Record (SAR) from their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form. After the preliminary interview, verification of family income with that of income information provided in the demographic survey will occur to determine if a student meets the eligibility requirements for the study. If a student does meet the eligibility requirements, the student will be emailed by the researcher to set up the first interview.

Participants will also be asked to complete 2 separate interviews with the researcher. Participants will be offered a cash incentive for participation in the study. For completion of the first interview, participants will receive \$15, and upon completion of the second interview will receive \$20

for a total cash incentive of \$35. Participants will have the opportunity to remove themselves from the study at any time.

If you are interested in participating in this research study, please contact me via email by **Friday January 27, 2012**. Preliminary interviews will be scheduled on a first-come, first-serve basis until all participants have been determined. Please respond as soon as possible if you are at all interested. If you have additional questions about this study, please also feel free to contact me via email at kelthack@indiana.edu or by phone at 812-855-5527.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Kelly Thacker

Appendix I: Second Email for Solicitation of Participants Sent

Subject: Request for Participation in Study

Hello 21st Century Scholar- Please read the email below about an opportunity to participate in a research study with an Indiana University staff member. 2-3 more participants are still needed.

Sincerely,

Chris Enstrom

Dear Potential Participants-

My name is Kelly Thacker and I am a PhD student at Kansas State University. In addition, I am also a staff member at Indiana University working full-time on the Bloomington campus. Currently, I am working to complete a study for the completion of my PhD at Kansas State University.

I am writing today to ask that you consider participating in a research study that I am conducting. The purpose of this study is to gather information about the experiences of Millennial college students who are from low socioeconomic status backgrounds. By gathering information about the experiences of this population of students, the goal is to better inform universities of the support needed for students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds. This study has also received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, Approval <#> for the use of human participants.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. During the preliminary interviews students will complete an informed consent form, and a demographic survey, and provide a copy of their Student Aid Record (SAR) from their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form. After the preliminary interview, verification of family income with that of income information provided in the demographic survey will occur to determine if a student meets the eligibility requirements for the study. If a student does meet the eligibility requirements, the student will be emailed by the researcher to set up the first interview.

Participants will also be asked to complete 2 separate interviews with the researcher. Participants will be offered a cash incentive for participation in the study. For completion of the first interview, participants will receive \$15, and upon completion of the second interview will receive \$20 for a total cash incentive of \$35. Participants will have the opportunity to remove themselves from the study at any time.

If you are interested in participating in this research study, please contact me via email by **Friday February 10, 2012**. Preliminary interviews will be scheduled on a first-come, first-serve basis until all participants have been determined. Please respond as soon as possible if you are at all interested. If you have additional questions about this study, please also feel free to contact me via email at kelthack@indiana.edu or by phone at 812-855-5527.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Kelly Thacker

Appendix J: Participant Receipt of Money Form

RECEIPT OF MONEY

Project Title: The Lived Experiences of Low Socioeconomic Class Millennial Generation College Students

I, _____ (name) have received payment from Kelly Thacker, researcher, in the form of \$ _____ cash on _____ (date).

Participant Name: _____

Participant Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Witness Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

RECEIPT OF MONEY

Project Title: The Lived Experiences of Low Socioeconomic Class Millennial Generation College Students

I, _____ (name) have received payment from Kelly Thacker, researcher, in the form of \$ _____ cash on _____ (date).

Participant Name: _____

Participant Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Witness Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix K: Demographic Information of Research Sample

NAME	GENDER	AGE	YR in COLLEGE	MAJOR	MINORITY STUDENT	REPORTED COLLEGE GPA	GROSS FAMILY INCOME	# of Persons in Family
Kevin	Male	18	Freshman	Political Science	No	3.38	\$34,381	5
Tanya	Female	18	Freshman	Studio Art/ Fashion Design	No	2.18	\$13,184	2
Juan	Male	19	Freshman	Psychology	Yes	2.4	\$17,970	2
Emma	Female		Sophomore	English	No	2.0	\$18,196	4
Sherri	Female	19	Freshman	Nursing	Yes	2.4	None~	5
Zander	Male	18	Freshman	Criminal Justice/ Studio Art	No	2.9	\$27,469	3
Louise	Female	18	Freshman	Secondary Math Education	No	3.2	\$5,779*	7
Matthew	Male	20	Sophomore	Psychology/ Political Science	No	Not Reported	\$53, 232^	7

~No Gross Family Income on FAFSA. Participant stated that parent is on disability.

*Although Gross Family Income on FAFSA is this number, combined income of mother and father is reported as \$43,886. The difference in the number on the FAFSA and combined income was identified by the participant as a result of the parents being self-employed. Through the self-employment, the parents complete additional jobs for money that was not included in the income used by the government on the FAFSA.

^Although Gross Family Income on FAFSA is this number, combined income of mother and father is reported as \$28,255. The difference in the number on the FAFSA and combined income was identified by the participant as a result of the family owning a farm. With the farm, the family receives additional funding from the government.

APPENDIX L:

Composite Case Study of a Millennial Generation College Student from Low Socioeconomic Status Background

In order to share my findings and gain feedback this composite case study was created. The themes that emerged from the research data are presented. Please provide me with feedback after reading the composite case study of Pat and let me know if these ideas hold true for you and other Millennial generation college students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds.

Information About College:

As a Millennial generation college student from a low socioeconomic status background, Pat's life experiences prior to coming to college, and in particular, the role of parents or guardians, has impacted enrollment in college. Pat's parents and other family members did not go to college themselves and were unable to help Pat prepare for college by sharing their own personal experiences. Pat, as a first-generation college student, gathered information about college life from various sources, including college athletics, movies, and cultural references. Teachers during K-12 education also encouraged Pat and pushed the importance of a college degree. Some teachers were also able to share with Pat their personal experiences about college that provided information about the college experience. Some of Pat's expectations about college were accurate; however, others were not. In particular, Pat's expectations related to academic coursework prior to coming to college were different than what was encountered once on campus. Some of the differences in academic coursework related to the size of the classes, academic accountability from professors, freedom and free time, and the level of reading and writing expected in courses.

Role of Family Members:

Despite not being able to share personal experiences about college life, Pat's family highly valued a college education, thought it was important to go to college, and helped to ensure that Pat was prepared for college by encouraging academic success in high school. Pat's parents and other family members also helped Pat prepare for college by helping with the enrollment process for the 21st Century Scholar's Program. Pat's college education is funded almost completely by the 21st Century Scholarship and Covenant Program money. This relieved Pat of financial stress and worry about how to pay for college. The motivation for Pat being in college and pursuing a college degree is in large part related to a desire to not become Pat's parents and struggle financially. In addition to financial stability, Pat wants to help other members of the family, including siblings, pursue a college degree. By attending college, Pat is then serving as a role model for other family members and siblings. Also, Pat wants to be able to share with these family members personal experiences and knowledge about college so that they have more information and a more comprehensive understanding than Pat did when coming to college.

Academic Experiences:

During the first year in college, Pat encountered some transitional issues related to academic expectations, freedom, or the social and party atmosphere of college. While in college, Pat has depended upon friendship networks that include both friends from high school and friends that have been made while in college. In particular, Pat has used friends as motivation and support to be academically successful.

Overall, Pat has been academically successful in college, despite some of the early transitional struggles. At times Pat has struggled with some of the differences between high school and college academic expectations, but has used various resources on campus to work through those challenges. Currently, Pat has not worked to develop close relationships with professors, but knows that these relationships will be important in the future. Pat knows they will be able to serve as references, write letters of recommendation for graduate programs, or help Pat connect with people and jobs. Pat intends to work on developing relationships with professors prior to graduating from college.

Types and Forms of Support:

Financially, Pat is not supported by family in anyway while in college and depends upon the 21st Century Scholarship to pay college bills. Presently, Pat is satisfied with the amount of money that is available while in college through the scholarship and has not sought a job on campus to help supplement the financial aid income. As a result of the scholarship money, Pat has more financial resources than ever before in life. Pat's friends have been an important support network who can relate to Pat's academic experiences and struggles, an area that family members do not have knowledge or experience. At times Pat still may depend upon family members for support; but that support is in the form of regular check in's and ensuring that Pat is emotionally well.

Collegiate Involvement:

In college Pat independently has sought opportunities for involvement on campus. Pat has decided to get involved in a variety of organizations, including academic clubs, intermural sports, marching band, or other leadership opportunities on campus. Sometimes Pat has been able to relate the knowledge, skills, and information has been acquired through involvement in these activities to what is being learned in college courses. Pat knows that involvement in collegiate activities will help develop a variety of skills, and will positively impact the future, especially when applying for jobs or further educational opportunities after receiving a bachelor's degree. When thinking about the future, Pat cannot imagine not graduating from college and knows that a college degree will be important and necessary to achieve other life goals. By acquiring a college degree, Pat will have more opportunities for financial stability and an increased quality of life from that experienced as a child.