ONE

The Study

This is a study of fifty people—thirty men and twenty women—who met the most stringent criterion for academic success: a Ph.D., M.D., or J.D. degree conferred from a highly regarded American university of national stature.[1] However, this is not a study of "successful" individuals in the broader sense; it is about people who chose education as a vehicle for social and economic mobility or personal fulfillment at a particular time when opportunities presented themselves and social conditions were ripe for change. This point is made because other studies have been conducted of "successful" individuals from all kinds of backgrounds (Goertzel, Goertzel, & Goertzel, 1978; Pincus, Elliott, & Schlacter, 1981; Simonton, 1994). However, such studies invariably focus on personality variables that influence broadly defined achievement behavior, and their subjects commonly originate from the middle and upper classes. In the psychological tradition, the origins of achievement behavior have been located in the individual, as distinct from the group. This study explores achievement behavior as a complex phenomenon located at the nexus of the person, the group, and the macro-society; that is, academic achievement as an expression of social self-consciousness.

It is also a study of one small group of people who broke through formidable barriers to high status educations to create part of a new educationally elite class. They are the "advance team" for a new generation of Chicano scholars, born in the fields and the barrios, but educated in the nation's elite universities. Rather than an investigation of extraordinary individuals, this is a study of extraordinary outcomes for individuals from less than ordinary circumstances.

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[1] It was deemed important to be selective (though not elitist) about the institutions attended by the sample subjects in order to avoid concerns about the legitimacy and similarity of the subjects' educational experiences. Institutions are listed in table 1.2.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SUBJECTS

All subjects in this study[2] are Mexican Americans from the first wave of the postwar "baby boom," born during the 1940s and early 1950s. This is the first documented cohort of Mexican Americans to complete doctoral level education and take their places in the professional world (Astin, 1982; Carter & Wilson, 1991). All received their college and graduate educations during the 1960s, and 1970s. The majority of the subjects were the first generation of their family to be born in the United States or they came to this country as young children.[3] However, one-third of the sample had established roots in the United States over multiple generations. All came from families in which neither parent had completed a high school education or held a job higher in status than skilled laborer. The average father of these subjects had a fourth-grade education, and the average mother had completed a little less than five years of school. Most are the sons and daughters of farmworkers and other unskilled laborers (see table 1.1).

Another demographic feature of the sample, the importance of which will become clear in the pages that follow, was the high rate of employment of the mothers in these subjects. Seventy-two percent of the mothers were engaged in income-generating occupations, whereas other data from the same period

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[2] A separate sample of younger women who are more recent graduates will be introduced in chapter 7. However, they met most of the same criteria as were established for this sample of 50, which were:

(1) Male or female of Mexican or Mexican American parentage
(2) Neither parent holding a job higher in occupational status than skilled labor during the time the subject was growing up
(3) Neither parent having completed a high school education
(4) Attended high school during the 1970s, having completed an M.D., J.D., or Ph.D. by the early 1980s
(5) Completed the majority of K-12 schooling in the United States, and
(6) not older than 36 at the time of degree completion.

[3] Attempting to establish the generation of Mexican American respondents always presents a challenge that is illustrative of the peculiar nature of the thing we call a "border." In the minds of most North Americans, the border is a reality that separates two countries both physically and psychologically. To be born or to reside on one side of a border or another has meaning in terms of both identity and citizenship status. However, reality is not experienced in the same way by many Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants. In the case of several of these subjects, at least on parent was born in the United States (and was therefore a U.S. citizen), but raised in Mexico, returning to this country in early adulthood to find work and establish a family. Hence, technically the progeny of such a parent would be considered to belong to the second generation in this country. This technicality, however, obscures the real relationship of the individual and his or her family to their Mexican origins. Hence for the purposes of this study, if one or both parents were raised outside of the United States, the children have been considered first generation in this country.

Table 1.1. *Sample Demographics*

		Generation			Father or Primary Wage Earner's Occupation			Mean Years Education		Mother Employed?		Number of Siblings
	N	Immigrant	First generation	Second generation	Unskilled	Semiskilled	Skilled	Father	Mother	Yes	No	Means
TOTAL	50	13 (26%)	22 (44%)	15 (30%)	29 (58%)	11 (22%)	10 (20%)	4.1	5.4	37 (74%)	13 (26%)	5.1
GENDER												
Male	30	6	14 (20%)	10 (47%)	14 (33%)	8 47%)	8 (27%)	3.4 (27%)	5.3	24	6 (80%)	4.8 (20%)
Female	20	7	8 (35%)	5 (40%)	15 (25%)	3 (75%)	2 (15%)	5.2 (10%)	5.6	13	7 (65%)	5.5 (35%)
DEGREE												
J.D.	12	5 (42%)	4 (33%)	3 (25%)	9 (75%)	1 (8%)	2 (17%)	4.6	5.0	5 (75%)	3 (25%)	5.0
M.D.	12	4 (33%)	4 (33%)	4 (33%)	8 (67%)	2 (17%)	2 (17%)	2.8	6.5	9 (75%)	3 (25%)	4.9
Ph.D.	26	4 (15%)	14 (54%)	8 (31%)	12 (46%)	8 (31%)	6 (23%)	4.4	5.0	19 (73%)	7 (27%)	5.2

• Occupations were categorized according to the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* (1977, 1991) place the workforce participation rate of married Mexican American women with similar levels of education (mean of 7.8 years in 1960) in the Southwest at only 24 percent (Cooney, 1975). A small portion of the difference between the groups may be attributable to the way in which the data were collected. While the data cited by Cooney are nonspecific about the meaning of "in the labor force," the data presented in table 1.1 reflect all mothers who were generating a portion of the family income. In most cases this included a typical job, out of the home, such as farmworker or cannery worker. However, in two cases the jobs were home-based: doing laundry, ironing, and other domestic chores for pay. The Cooney data also present another interesting finding: when comparing Mexican American and Anglo women *at the same education level,* Anglo women had higher workforce participation in 1960 by a substantial margin of nearly 14 percent (p. 259). Hence, even admitting some differences in definitions, when compared to data for the period, these subjects' mothers appear to have far exceeded the typical labor force participation for both Anglo and Mexican American women of their era.

The following three subjects give a flavor for the occupational and educational backgrounds from which these individuals emerged:

Luisa is a short, sturdy, moderately dark complected woman with a no-nonsense personality and a direct gaze. She exudes an air of certainty in what she says, and her memories of her childhood are clear and precise:

> At the time that we came to the United States [my father] was working at a ranch. My father's previous occupation in Mexico had been farmer, stockman, and that was the logical thing for him to do—to try to get a job as a ranch hand . . . that's what he did until I was nine and he had to leave that job so we could move into town . . . from then on he was essentially a day laborer . . . odd jobs, unskilled labor, anything he could get ahold of . . . he dug holes and cleared debris left by oil crews . . .
>
> [Interviewer: What was your father's highest level of education?]
>
> I think he had six months in all.
>
> [Interviewer: And your mother?]
>
> I think she went for two or three years, but it didn't make any great dent. She learned to read and write, but she's never been terribly good at sums . . . she would take on any and all kinds of jobs, like washing clothes . . . sewing for people . . . [she's] very resourceful.

Luisa attended college in her native Southwest and later completed graduate work at a well-known Eastern university. She became a biology professor and, already into middle age, she had not married, but continued to gain satisfaction from her job teaching and doing research at a major American university.

Adrián, tall, light-skinned, and handsome, fits the image of the corporate attorney that he is. Adrián is sure of himself and of his future. He has served on several boards of directors of major corporations, and perhaps through this experience, has honed his skill at getting directly to the point:

> My father was born in Los Angeles but shortly after he was born the family went back to Sonora, and then he came back with his family when he was ten or so. Both my mother and my father were raised in Brawley . . . that was their home base and they migrated throughout the year. But they always went back to Brawley. . . . They picked prunes for about 25 years at one ranch right above the hills of Stanford. And so they were on their way from there down to the Imperial valley and they stopped the caravan there in Madera, threw out a mattress on the highway, and I was born. After a few days they packed up and came south. . . . My grandmother delivered me, and she delivered everybody else in my family.
>
> [Interviewer: How far did your mother go in school?]
>
> About second grade.
>
> [Interviewer: And your father?]
>
> About the third.

Adrián, Ivy League educated, professionally successful, and married with two children, had already far exceeded his family's aspirations for him, but he had not yet realized his own ambitions: he confided that he "knew" he was destined for something extraordinary.

Berta is a small, energetic woman with medium coloring and short curly hair. She had first studied to become a chemist and worked in that field for a short time before switching to her real passion: literature. Berta teaches in a major university where she has become an important spokesperson on behalf of Latino students. She is married, with one daughter:

> My father had died, and my mother was pregnant . . . so my mother told my grandmother she could have me and my grandmother said, "Well, if it's a little girl; I don't want to have a little boy." My grandmother didn't like boys. But anyway, she said, "If it's a girl, I'll take her," I guess. So when I was born, my mother raised me for about a year . . . breastfed me . . . then later on, we moved and my mother stayed at her house in San Pedro. . . . [My grandmother] worked in the fields. She always worked in the fields. She worked right alongside my grandfather, whenever and wherever she could.

> [Interviewer: And she had no formal education?]
>
> No.
>
> [Interviewer: And your grandfather's education?]
>
> He was totally illiterate. He could only write his name, and that was . . . to get his legal papers, he had to learn to write his name. So he learned to sign his name. He didn't have any education.

During their schooling years the study subjects met most of the criteria which are generally acknowledged to be highly predictive of school failure and dropping out: poverty, low levels of parental education, large families, and limited exposure to English at home. It was deemed important to carefully select individuals from this kind of background for at least two reasons: (1) this is the population that presents the greatest challenge to the education system; and (2) we already know a lot about how middle class groups encourage educational attainment for their children, and the evidence suggests that middle-class Mexican Americans are no different in this regard (Laosa & Henderson, 1991).

LOCATING THE SUBJECTS

Membership lists from professional organizations, two national rosters of Chicano faculty and researchers, and class lists from medical and law schools were consulted initially for leads in identifying potential subjects. While a few subjects were located in this manner, it was a cumbersome process because such lists provide no clue as to the background of the individual and background characteristics were key to the sample selection. (see footnote 2, page 12) The most important source of respondents was through a network sampling procedure. Key individuals were contacted by the researcher at universities and government offices around the country and asked to nominate potential study subjects. These individuals, in turn, called upon others to generate names. Personal nomination had the added advantage of providing an initial screen for background characteristics of the individuals, and frequently provided an introductory phone call which was helpful in securing people's cooperation. Ultimately, hundreds of potential subjects were screened. Of these, fifty-nine were interviewed. (Nine were used in the early piloting phase; fifty were retained for the final study.) Hence, the sample is *not* random, but because the subjects grew up and went to schools all over the United States, and because all persons who were located and met the criteria for inclusion in the study agreed to participate (i.e., there was no systematic reluctance to participate from any portion of the sample), it is reasonable to assume that it is representative of Chicanos who share similar background characteristics. Only half a dozen of the respondents were known to the researcher before the study began.

These subjects were selected because they represent known academic successes, that is, they had already completed their educations, hence there was no question about eventual academic outcomes. Was it critical that they have completed *doctoral*-level educations? Probably not. Many other Chicanos from low-income backgrounds have also used the American higher education system very effectively while only completing bachelor's- or master's-level degrees. However, for the purpose of identifying a sample of individuals who represented the most educationally ambitious of their peers, and about whom there could be little disagreement with respect to the similarity of their experience and the impediments to their achievement, it was deemed prudent to set the educational criterion at an extremely high and explicit level.

The cohort was also restricted to a fairly narrow age range in order to protect against widely differing temporal circumstances; all were pursuing their educations during roughly the same time period and experienced a similar social climate and opportunities with respect to financial aid, recruitment, and competition for college entrance. The mean age of the group is forty-eight years, with the average woman being almost two years older than the average male. Table 1.2 shows the state in which subjects grew up, as well as their graduate institutions and occupations.

There are two compelling reasons for focusing on this cohort of Chicano achievers: the first wave of the "baby boom" generation represents a particular peak in the college-going behavior of Mexican American men and *women*; more recent data show a proportional decline in college enrollment (Carter & Wilson, 1991). Additionally, a heightened emphasis on government support and minority recruitment in higher education, and a cultural "valuing" of ethnic diversity were hallmarks of this period, both factors which are believed to have had a substantial impact on minority college attendance (Astin, 1982). Only once before had college enrollments for minorities seen such a dramatic increase, and this was the result of another major policy decision by the federal government: the GI Bill (Olson, 1974; Henry, 1975). Unfortunately, the GI Bill had its impact almost exclusively on men, and data were not collected on the numbers of people of color who received college degrees as a result of this government-sponsored program.

During the period that these individuals were deciding to go on to college—the 1960s and 1970s—new opportunities were opening up for American minorities and women as a result of a growing concern about equality of educational opportunity (Karabel, 1981). Unlike the GI Bill, which was an attempt to transition young men back into a peacetime economy, this new initiative was based on a belief that the country had failed to exploit much of its intellectual capital by undereducating large segments of the population: women, the lower and working classes, and people of color

Table 1.2. *Educational and Occupational Descriptors*

Subject's Home State	Degree	Graduate Institution	Occupation
MALES			
California	Ph.D. Education	UC Santa Barbara	Professor
New Mexico	Ph.D. Int. Relations	U of Arizona	US State Dept.
California	Ph.D. History	UCLA	Professor
Idaho	Ph.D. Psychology	U of Utah	Psychologist
California	Ph.D. Education	U Southern California	Professor
California	Ph.D. Psychology	UCLA	Psychologist
California	Ph.D. Sociology	UC San Diego	Professor
California	Ph.D. Education	U of Oregon	Professor
Texas	Ph.D. Community Psych	U of Texas, Austin	Psychologist
California	Ph.D. Political Science	UC Riverside	Gov't Consultant
Texas	Ph.D. Psychology	U of Texas, Austin	Professor
California	Ph.D. Comparative ED.	UCLA	Administrator
Texas	Ph.D. Botany	U of Texas, Austin	Professor
California	Ph.D. Political Science	UC Riverside	Professor
Texas	Ph.D. Political Science	Claremont/UCLA	US Foreign Serv.
California	Ph.D. Ed Psychology	UCLA	Researcher
California	J.D.	Stanford	Corporate Lawyer
California	J.D.	Harvard	Com. Organizer
California	J.D.	Harvard	Pub. Interest Lawyer
California	J.D.	Yale	Corp. Management
California	J.D.	Stanford	Corp. Management
California	J.D.	Stanford	Priv. Practice Lawyer
New Mexico	J.D.	Yale	Professor
California	M.D.	UC Davis	Physician
California	M.D.	UCLA	Physician
California	M.D.	Harvard	Physician
Texas	M.D.	U of Texas, Austin	Physician
California	M.D.	U Southern California	Physician
California	M.D.	UC Davis	Psychiatrist
California	M.D.	UC San Francisco	Physician
FEMALES			
California	Ph.D. Social Welfare	Brandeis	Professor
Texas	Ph.D. Linguistics	U of Texas, Austin	Professor
Texas	Ph.D. Spanish	UCLA	Professor
California	Ph.D. Economics	Stanford/UCLA	Researcher
Texas	Ph.D. Counsel Psychology	U of Oregon	Therapist
California	Ph.D. Education	Claremont	Professor
California	Ph.D. Literature	UC San Diego	Professor
California	Ph.D. Anthropology	Stanford	Professor
Texas	Ph.D. Biology	Rutgers	Professor
California	Ph.D. Political Science	UC Riverside	Professor
Texas	J.D.	Georgetown U	Pub. Interest Lawyer
California	J.D.	UCLA	Pub. Interest Lawyer
Texas	J.D.	American U	Gov't. Lawyer
Arizona	J.D.	U of Arizona	Pub. Service Lawyer
California	J.D.	UC Davis	Corporate Lawyer
Texas	M.D.	UCLA	Physician
California	M.D.	UC Davis	Physician
California	M.D.	UC Davis	Physician
California	M.D.	UC Davis	Physician
California	M.D.	UCLA	Physician

(Henry, 1975; Karabel, 1981). Hence, colleges and universities were actively seeking the participation of these groups, and both programs and dollars were devoted to recruitment and support of Mexican Americans and other formerly excluded groups. Given the success that was achieved through these efforts, it is important to examine the impact of such a time and circumstances on the individuals who benefited from them.

Moreover, there is great consistency in the literature on achievement motivation for both majority and minority populations involving samples of subjects studied over the last several decades; the effects of particular family, peer, and schooling variables, for example, have remained relatively stable over time, indicating that similar family and social background factors contribute to educational aspirations across generations. This suggests that the critical mediating variables in minority (Chicano) access and participation in higher education are probably socially constructed phenomena—belief systems, structured opportunities, admissions policies, and so forth. This is a hopeful sign, for these are the variables most amenable to modification by a society wishing to change course or increase equity among its citizens.

SUBGROUP DIFFERENCES

Among the fifty individuals in this study, there are three educational degree groups—roughly, physicians (M.D.'s), lawyers (J.D.'s), and academics (Ph.D.'s)—in addition to both genders. It is reasonable to question whether the subjects' experiences or attitudes might differ according to these characteristics. In other words, might J.D.'s attribute their educational success to something different than Ph.D.'s; or, might the parents of the M.D.'s have differed in some systematic way from the parents of the J.D.'s? While this does not purport to be a quantitative study, these potential differences were tested, using *chi*-square analyses, to discover if gross differences existed in the subjects' responses by degree type and gender. For the most part few differences were found between educational/occupational groups. This is not surprising in light of the small subsample sizes; only large differences can be detected with these reduced numbers. Where differences were found, they are noted in the text. However, there are distinct differences between males and females on some key variables, such as precollege educational patterns and incidence of mentoring. For this reason, special attention is paid to gender differences in chapter 6.

THE WOMEN

There are more men than women in this sample. This was not by design. Locating female subjects was a particular challenge. Most women who were contacted as potential subjects did not meet the background criteria to be included in the study. It became evident in the process of identifying study subjects that it was much more difficult for Chicanas to achieve this level of education without at least one parent breaking into the middle class before them, most typically a mother who had attained the status of a clerical or secretarial position. This led to speculation about the effects that a changing social landscape might have on the educational behavior of Chicanas from low-income and working class homes.

There have been two major sociopolitical trends in the decade and a half since most of the women completed their graduate educations. On the one hand, the women's movement has had an enormous impact on educational and occupational opportunities for women, with substantial gains in college enrollments being posted by women across all ethnic groups (Carter & Wilson, 1993) and an increasing visibility of women even in formerly all-male occupational and educational enclaves (California Postsecondary Eduction Commission, 1993). On the other hand, a new wave of conservatism has washed over the country during the same period, marked by increased challenges to affirmative action as a tool for equalizing educational opportunity, and by declining federal funds available to support the educational aspirations of low-income and minority youth (Orfield & Paul, 1988). For this reason, chapter 7 also reports on a separate study, comparing this cohort of women with a demographically similar group of Chicanas who have recently completed their doctoral educations. Herein we tested the hypothesis that women's career paths might be especially vulnerable to a changing social context. Much about the women's experiences is enduring, as the research on achievement motivation might suggest, but some things have, indeed, changed, including a somewhat different view that the younger women have of themselves.

METHODS

A follow-back, retrospective method, described by Garmezy (1974), was used to gather data through a semistructured interview format. There are, of course, both dangers and limitations in using a retrospective method: memory error, guilt, social norms, and level of interest in the subject matter can all affect the accuracy of respondents' reporting of data (Menneer, 1978). However, there is considerable evidence that the reporting of general attitudes and factual information is relatively stable over time (Gutek, 1978; Haaga, 1986). For example, in a study of Malaysian family life using retrospective survey data, the researchers concluded that "respondent characteristics [e.g., education] more strongly affected the quality of the data than did the length of the recall period . . . even . . . data pertaining to events taking place long before the time of survey, need not exact a major penalty in terms of accuracy [if the respondents are well-educated]" (Haaga, 1986, p. 54).

Moreover, guidelines for assessing the usefulness of retrospective data have been developed which are helpful in determining the appropriateness of the method for particular research. These include: (a) is the subject matter sensitive to time errors (b) will the errors be important to the study (c) can the data be corrected by comparison to other existing data sources and (d) can another, more mechanical method be used (Menneer, 1978). In reviewing these guidelines with respect to the current study, the judgment was made that most subject matter covered in the interviews was not highly dependent upon perception of single events, and hence was less vulnerable to distortion over time. Rather, the questions dealt with ongoing conditions in homes, communities, and schools that could be answered with reference to events over time. Moreover, questions were asked in ways that operationalized concepts, reducing respondents' reliance upon perception alone. For example, to ascertain the level of literacy activity in the home, subjects were asked very specific questions about the presence of particular kinds of print material in the home, the overall frequency with which each parent read, and the nature and overall frequency of family discussions. While some error may surely occur in recall, it is substantially minimized by the specificity of the questions and the personal characteristics of the subjects.

With respect to the importance of data accuracy, certainly the study would be seriously impaired if the data reported were not accurate. While there is no way to ascertain, with absolute certainty, the total accuracy of subjects' statements, there are several factors which lend support to the belief that they were indeed reasonably reliable accounts of subjects' experiences: (1) there was extremely high interest on the part of study participants. Subjects participated with enthusiasm and commonly thanked the researcher for the opportunity to review their lives in such a nonthreatening forum. There was not a single incidence of reluctance to answer any question in the protocol, nor was there a single incidence of reluctance to participate in the study. Level of interest in the study topic has been shown to be a good predictor of data accuracy (Menneer, 1978). (2) Subjects tended to converge in their descriptions of particular phenomena, such as desegregated schooling experiences, central importance of the mother, and so on, in ways that suggest accuracy in reporting. If most people independently report experiencing the same things in similar and often unpredicted ways, logic suggests that there is a reduced likelihood that individuals were failing to recall these experiences accurately. (3) Because the respondents were all well-trained in investigative procedures and were bright, exceptionally articulate individuals, who through many years of graduate training had come to appreciate the importance of academic precision, they represent a sample uniquely predisposed to accuracy in reporting. Moreover, research suggests that more highly educated respondents are, indeed, more accurate in retrospective reporting (Haaga, 1986). (4) Finally, because the researcher shared many of the same background characteristics with the subjects of the study, respondents typically expressed a level of comfort in not having to confront the issue of differing social norms between subject and researcher and were less apt to "reinterpret" information for the interviewer.

Inasmuch as the study dealt very centrally with *what it was like* for the individual subjects to have grown up in their particular circumstances, independent verification of these self-report data is not possible. While corroboration by other family members was considered as a possibility, not even the brothers and sisters of these respondents could know how their siblings internalized their developmental experiences, nor could they have shared the same microenvironments. Nonetheless, given the inherent limitations of the method, the question had to be asked: Is there a better way to collect data on this topic?

The only real methodological alternative to a study such as this one is a prospective study in which subjects are followed from childhood through graduate education. Very few such studies have ever been conducted, for fairly obvious reasons, and none has been conducted on a sample with such a low likelihood of meeting the desired outcome criterion (completion of a doctoral-level degree). Ultimately, the question of whether there was a better way to conduct this study was answered in the negative. Portions of this study can certainly be investigated in greater detail and with greater precision using different methodologies in the future, but in order to establish a roadmap for what really matters in the lives of academically ambitious minority individuals from low-income backgrounds, it was first important to pose those questions directly to the people who had experienced these phenomena.

After a fairly exhaustive review of the literature on achievement, motivation, and minority schooling, a draft interview schedule was developed which included some closed and many open-ended questions about family background, siblings, and childrearing practices; religious experiences; peer relations; attitudes toward, and experiences in, school; mentoring relationships; and personal characteristics and achievement attributions. Questions were designed to test a number of hypotheses about academic achievement motivation which were culled from the literature, but left sufficient flexibility for respondents to add things that were important to them and to suggest their own hypotheses. The interview was piloted on nine subjects, who met most of the same criteria as the sample subjects, and was revised accordingly. The final interview protocol included 141 closed and open-ended questions. (See Appendix) Interviews have been conducted in subjects' homes and places of business, usually by the author, but in a few cases by a research assistant, throughout California, Texas, and the Washington, D.C. area. Interviews ranged in duration from one-and-a-half to more than four hours and were audiotaped and transcribed.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data were first analyzed quantitatively, and by subgroup (male/female; J.D./M.D./Ph.D.), yielding numerous tables that allowed for a cursory description of similarities and differences among groups and highlighted broad areas of commonalities. Where numeric differences were substantial, *chi*-square tests of difference were conducted to determine if "real" differences existed among males and females or between educational degree groups. The most significant differences occurred between males and females, with respect to educational histories (grade-point averages and when they first decided to go to college) and access to mentoring.

Like a picture, this information constituted the broad outlines of the work. Respondents' comments were then grouped and analyzed to fill in the detail around each area of investigation. This gave the picture texture, color, and coherence. Often, the analysis of the respondents' comments—and the tone of their voices—changed entirely the apparent meaning of a particular finding, as in the subjects' interpretations of the roles of parents in shaping their educational ambitions. Without hearing the respondents' voices, it would have been impossible to discern the depth of feeling about mothers' encouragement, or the sympathetic understanding of why fathers often weren't able to be as encouraging of educational aspirations as were the mothers.

Finally, the data were juxtaposed to the existing research to detect patterns of similarities as well as areas of divergence. The process of "making sense" of the data has been a lengthy one in which these data have been continually tested against theories and findings of other researchers and even of the subjects themselves. In a very real sense, this portion of the analysis remains incomplete, as each new reader brings a slightly different lens through which to interpret the findings.