

THE REPRESENTATION OF HISPANIC FEMALES IN GIFTED AND TALENTED
AND ADVANCED PLACEMENT PROGRAMS IN A SELECTED
NORTH CENTRAL TEXAS PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL

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Analysis of a particular north-central Texas public high school revealed a strong representation of Hispanic females in advanced academic programs, i.e., AP and GT in proportion to their representation in the overall student population. Research seems to indicate that a progressive approach to academic-potential identification; culturally effective mentoring, traditional Hispanic values, and newly emerging personal and social characteristics all seem to be contributing factors. This study seems to indicate that a new type of Hispanic female is emerging who is more assertive academically, more visible in the classroom, and less marriage-and-family oriented as might be believed by teachers, society, their peers, and perhaps even their parents.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Based on most available research, several minority and ethnic groups are under-represented in advanced academic programs, such as gifted and talented (GT) and advanced placement (AP). Researchers have found that it is not unusual for children from linguistically and culturally diverse (LCD) backgrounds to be under-represented in programs for the gifted, and gifted minority students are typically seriously under-represented in programs for gifted students (Lopez, 1994, p. 139; Frasier & Passow, 1995, p. v). More specifically, the Office of Civil Rights has reported that “evidence exists that indicates that minorities and girls are underrepresented in accelerated or special focus academic programs” (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2005, p. 1). A report published by the American Association of University Women states that “Latinas are lagging behind other racial and ethnic groups of girls in several key measures of educational achievement and have not benefited from gender equity to the extent that other groups of girls have,” and furthermore, “compared with their female peers, Latinas are under-enrolled in gifted and talented courses and underrepresented in AP courses” (Ndura, Robinson, & Ochs, 2003, p.21; Ginorio & Huston, 2000, p. 1; Castellano, 2002, p. 94.). Much has been written about the under-representation of certain minority and ethnic groups in advanced academic programs in recent years, but precise, statistical information is rare, making the exact nature and scope of the problem difficult to ascertain. Two recurrent themes seem to emerge from most published literature on this subject, and they are that females are often underrepresented in advanced academic programs, and being a minority female can jeopardize an adolescent female’s chances of identification and access to advanced academic services to an even greater extent.

If females are typically under-represented in advanced academic programs as most literature would suggest, and that minority females are even more likely to be under-represented, then of particular interest might be a school with a relatively low Hispanic enrollment, but with a significant participation rate for adolescent Hispanic females in advanced academic programs. For the purpose of study, a north central Texas public high school with a low Hispanic enrollment, but with a very strong participation rate for Hispanic adolescent females in advanced academic programs, GT and AP, has been identified. In this particular school, the percentage of Hispanic females enrolled in advanced academic programs exceeds their proportion of the general student population.

Information provided by the district in Table 1 shows the following 2003-2004 enrollments:

Table 1

Student Enrollment at the Selected High School under Study: 2003-2004 Data

Demographic Group	Selected High School Total Student Enrolment	Percentage of Students in Total Student Enrollment
White	1,637	82.7%
Hispanic	244	12.3%
African American	51	2.6%
Other	48	2.4%
Total	1980	

The demographic designations are the ones used by the school district, and also the term (i.e. white) used by the state (Texas) to report data also. To facilitate statistical computations, it will be assumed that not more than 50% (122) of the 244 students reported as being Hispanic are female. This means that 29.5 % (36/122) of the Hispanic females in Grades 9 through 12

participated in an advanced academic program, either GT or AP, during the 2003--2004 school year. During the following school year, when the research was conducted, the number of Hispanic females who were enrolled in advanced academic programs, either GT or AP, had grown to 46. Is this strong representation the result of aggressive, pro-active interpretation of policy, or perhaps just a statistical anomaly? This research project examined student and family characteristics, school policies and procedures, and this school's particular culture in an attempt to identify the underlying reasons for such a strong representation of Hispanic females in advanced academic courses and programs.

Statement of the Problem

When there exists an under-representation or over-representation of a particular group in a program or course of study in a public school, its cause or causes should be researched and identified. If under-representation is a problem, interventions should be put into place to remedy the inequity. Over-representation might indicate inefficient use of resources. If representation is equitable and satisfactory, what the school is doing should be studied and the information discovered should be used to create a model for success that can be implemented elsewhere to improve achievement and equity.

Being a gifted Hispanic female can place one at risk of being overlooked or even denied some specialized educational services. Hispanic females belong to two of three groups of students sometimes referred to as the "invisible gifted": minorities, the disabled, and females (Davis & Rimm, 1989, p.277). However, in the case of the selected north central Texas public high school, in terms of percentage, they are not "invisible."

Involuntary minority status and strongly held cultural and social beliefs seem to contribute to the problem of under-representation, but what might account for such a strong representation? In terms of under-representation, it is impossible to declare that one obstacle is more detrimental than another. At this time, the strongly held cultural and social beliefs of Hispanics may be the least researched contributing factor; therefore, it may be the least understood factor by the mainstream educational establishment. Reason or reasons for such a strong representation in the instance of the school participating in this study are among areas of interest explored in this study.

Purpose of the Study

Most research indicates that a substantial number of Hispanic females with advanced academic potential pass through public schools unnoticed and under-served. In order for this population to be served, they must first be identified and later placed in appropriate programs and courses of study. A passive approach to this problem does not suffice. Schools must develop and employ proactive policies and practices if necessary. The purpose of this study has four separate components: (1) to identify personal, social, and cultural characteristics of Hispanic females who choose to participate in advanced academic programs--both GT and AP; (2) to assist teachers, counselors, and administrators in identifying Hispanic females with strong academic potential and placing them in appropriate courses of study, especially Hispanic females who may be gifted and overlooked; (3) to identify and analyze factors that Hispanic culture has upon the intellectual development and academic orientation of Hispanic females who qualify for admission into a GT program or take AP coursework; and, (4) to describe the current status of advanced educational opportunities (both GT and AP) for Hispanic females at the selected north

central Texas public high school and examine factors associated with the evolution of Hispanic female participation in the school's advanced academic programs.

Research Questions

1. What is the current status of Hispanic female representation in advanced academic programs, advanced placement (i.e. advanced placement (AP) and gifted and talented (GT), in a selected north central Texas high school?
 - A. In past years, how were candidates for admission into advanced academic programs (i.e. AP and GT) identified, recruited, and placed into these programs?
 - B. If different from 1A., what is the current selection process for identifying, recruiting, and placing students into advanced academic programs?
2. In general, how do parents of Hispanic females with advanced academic potential (i.e., those who have daughters enrolled in GT or AP programs, in the selected north central Texas public high school) view the intellectual/academic capabilities of their daughter(s)?
 - A. How do the mother and father of a Hispanic female participate in their daughter's academic activities?
 - B. How does Hispanic culture view the intellectual/academic capabilities in males differently from that of females?
3. What factors determine whether a Hispanic female with advanced academic potential (i.e., either Hispanic female students who are formally identified as being GT or who are enrolled in one or more AP classes actually selects or declines to participate?
4. Do Hispanic females with advanced academic potential elect to hide or conceal their their intellectual/academic capabilities at home and at school?
5. Based on information obtained from focus group interviews, what intervention strategies have or have not proven successful in promoting significant academic achievement in gifted Hispanic females at a selected north central Texas public high school.

Definition of Terms

Defining the terms critical to the understanding of this research is a difficult endeavor, complicated by many sensitive factors that are beyond the scope of this research project. For the purpose of this study, the methods of ethnic and racial group identification will adhere to

principles set forth by researcher Sonia Nieto (2004). Nieto uses both Hispanic and Latino more or less interchangeably to refer to people of Latin American or Caribbean heritage, and her choice of term depends largely upon the most appropriately perceived and intended contextual interpretation required. A more radical example of how critical context is to interpretation of meaning is suggested by Ilan Stavins (1995) who proposes that the choice of Latino over Hispanic is intended to convey intellectual and rebellious connotations, thus Latino is intended to be more expressive than descriptive. Choosing to be called Latino rather than Hispanic or Hispanic rather than Latino is not merely a matter of preference, it can be intended to be an affirmation of ethnicity, an indicator of national origin, or a personal value statement.

From a historical perspective, the term “Hispanic” probably originates from the term “Hispanis,” which is the name given to the Iberian peninsula in ancient times when it was part of the Roman Empire (Chavez, 1984, pp. 88-90). Its modern use is perhaps more of a convenient way to group and classify a large and diverse group of people primarily based upon a common language and a shared culture. Chavez (1984) argues that the term Hispanic was popularized by the dominant Anglo culture because it makes us [Hispanics] easier to classify and categorize on paper. To the dominant European American culture, Hispanic or Latino is simply a matter of convenience, but to the individual Hispanic or Latino, the choice to identify oneself as being Hispanic or Latino is a personal statement reflecting persona, ethnic, and/or cultural values. Tafoya (2004) states that typically in most federal policy documents and most social sciences, the term Hispanic is not used to constitute a separate race, and can in fact, be more than one race. Tafoya (2004) goes on to write that for Hispanics and Latinos, “race is also related to characteristics that can change such as economic status and perceptions of civic enfranchisement” (p.1).

Defining the term “white” is complicated by many factors; therefore, it has been deemed preferable to use the term “European American” (EA) in its place. Still working within Nieto’s (2004) conceptions of race, ethnicity, and terminology, it is presumed that “race is a social construction,” and that “a racial group is socially and not biologically determined” (p.27). Not being able to rely on skin color, hair texture, or any other superficial characteristic, the concept of EA in this research study is based upon an individual’s choice not to identify himself or herself as being black, Asian, American Indian, or Pacific Islander (four of the five federally defined racial categories; white being the other), as well as the chosen “habits, values, and behaviors...that are grounded in European mores and values” (Nieto, 2004, p.26).

Advanced placement (AP) is a board-approved high-school-level preparatory course for a college placement test that incorporates all topics specified by the college board in its standard syllabus for a given subject area (Texas Education Code 28.051, 2005).

Gifted and talented refers to a child or youth who performs at or shows the potential for performing at a remarkable high level of accomplishment when compared to others of the same age, experience, or environment who: (1) exhibit high performance capability in an intellectual, creative, or artistic area; (2) possess an unusual capacity for leadership; or (3) excel in a specific academic field (Texas Education Code 29.121, 2005).

Finally, for the purpose of this study, “culture” refers to “ a shared way of life of a group of socially interacting people” (Segall, Lonnor, & Barry, 1998, p. 1,104).

Assumptions

For the purpose of this research, it shall be reasoned that “while academic achievement does not necessarily indicate giftedness per se, it provides evidence of positive characteristics

that may demonstrate that potential gifted-level ability among ethnically diverse students is present and recognizable” (Hunsaker, et al, 1995, p. 14).

1. It is assumed that any Hispanic female who is a college graduate and is or has been employed as a practicing professional within the fields of medicine, research or science, law, business, or post-secondary education may have met established criteria for entry into a GT or AP program or course of studies in a Texas public school.
2. It is assumed that any Hispanic female currently enrolled in an AP program would possess some, but not necessarily all, of the qualities considered compatible with those of being gifted and/or talented.
3. When a student is identified as being gifted and talented, it is assumed that the student is gifted, talented, or both. For the purposes of this study, no distinction shall be made to differentiate between the two related concepts, even though most specialists in the field of GT education would note the difference.

Limitations

Limitations that may affect this study may include:

1. There was a lack of baseline data sources to make meaningful comparisons.
2. There is a lack of longitudinal data to trace emerging trends.
3. Interviews and observations were subject to the “halo effect” (Isaac & Michael, 1984, p. 85) which usually describes the tendency for a commonly irrelevant feature of a unit of study to influence the more relevant feature under study in a favorable or unfavorable direction.
4. Students and interview participants may be subject to the “Hawthorne Effect” (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003, p. 373) which suggests that an observed change in the research participants’ behavior may be based on the participant’s awareness that they are participating in an experiment or that they are receiving out-of-the-ordinary attention in some detectable manner.
5. There existed the potential that limited English proficiency of some students and some parents might inhibit participation and might also render some survey responses vague or imprecise.
6. There was the potential that the primary subjects, who are the high-achieving Hispanic females, and some family members, may be in this country illegally and this might influence their decision to participate or not to participate, or might have influenced the depth and veracity of their responses.

7. Low participation rate of Hispanic parents with survey instruments and in interviews was anticipated, particularly with regard to fathers of the Hispanic females. This might limit the potential to generalize findings to other contexts and applications.
8. Prevailing political considerations relating to immigration might have influenced participation rates of research subjects as well as potential research subjects. Low participation rates may have the potential to skew data and severely restrict some generalizations.

Description of Design: Subjects and Setting

This study should be considered exploratory for several reasons. Author and researcher Rachel Simmons (2002) writes that when minorities of color are researched or studied, it is usually to investigate typically unflattering topics such as at-risk behaviors, some form of deviant behavior, or their involvement in or association with various social problems. As a result, little is known about many areas of positive behavior such as that of adolescent Hispanic females in something such as GT and AP programs. Research in the area of minority females with advanced academic ability and potential is somewhat limited. The political sensitivity of the subject of intelligence and its distribution in society and ethical considerations inherent in conducting true experimental research makes this type of research problematic. As a result, surveys and interviews were determined to be the most suitable way to collect data from the subjects.

The primary subjects of this study were Hispanic females enrolled in Grade 9 through Grade 12 at a public high school in north central Texas. Also included in this study were education professionals routinely involved in the delivery of curriculum and instruction of the primary subjects; Hispanic female professionals and entrepreneurs; and the parents of the primary subjects.

Data accrued from interviews, questionnaires, internal and external documents produced by the school, and various forms of media publications.

The research project involved focus group interviews with students in Grade 9 through 12 who were enrolled in GT programs or AP courses of study. The number of students involved in each focus group interview session was between 5 and 7. In addition to the focus group interviews, interviews with parents of high achieving Hispanic female students were conducted. Furthermore, practicing, Hispanic professionals completed self-administered questionnaires to provide supplemental data. It was anticipated that through the use and analysis of multiple focus group interviews with high-achieving Hispanic female students, personal interviews with the parents of high-achieving Hispanic females to give family perspective, interviews with practicing professionals to give a social perspective, relevant themes and patterns of behavior would emerge that would yield insights into how giftedness in females is viewed by Hispanic culture. Results and suggestions for further study are reported in subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER 2

RELATED LITERATURE: SOCIO-CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

Compared to other issues in public education, such as school finance, school violence, and school accountability, a critical and possibly under-researched area of educational practice has been access to advanced academic programs for adolescent Hispanic females with advanced academic potential. Ideally, there is no logical reason (Aguirre, 2003; & Frasier, 1997) to expect that the number of any minority group of students in a public educational setting should not be in proportion to their overall representation in the student body.

When it comes to the denial of some academic opportunities for certain groups, the effects of discrimination cannot be ignored. To better understand how one significant aspect of this phenomena originated and persists, the concepts of immigrant/voluntary and involuntary minority status as set forth by sociologist and cultural anthropologist John Ogbu (1994) should be explored. According to Ogbu, immigrant minorities who have come to the United States of their own volition (i.e. voluntary minority status), especially those who have entered the United States seeking improved economic opportunities and increased political freedoms are generally viewed upon favorably by the dominant European American culture. A good example of a voluntary minority would be many groups of Asian descent. Conversely, Ogbu (1994) asserts that immigrant minorities, both individuals in current residence and the descendents of individuals who were either brought to this country or who were conquered or displaced from position of power, are generally not viewed upon favorably by the dominant European American culture. Examples of involuntary minorities include African Americans, some Native Americans, Hispanics of Central American origin, and those Hispanics of Mexican ancestry. Making Texas unique in this context is that Hispanics of Mexican ancestry were once the

majority group in Texas, only to become a minority group later when displaced by European Americans Ogbu (1994) points out that it is common for involuntary minorities to develop what might be called survival strategies. These survival strategies are used to deal with difficult and stressful everyday situations. Frequently for individuals of school age, these survival strategies or patterns of behavior may manifest themselves in ways that are counterproductive to academic achievement. However, to the dominant European American culture, they seem curiously counter-intuitive: i.e. not based on rational thought processes because they seem to actually operate to arrest or limit intellectual potential and academic achievement. Ogbu writes (1994) that often non-voluntary minority students believe that by achieving academically and conforming to the typical middle-class norms of behavior that are expected in public schools, they are rejecting their culture and cultural identity.

While Ogbu's research primarily focuses on African American youth, researchers Fordham and Ogbu speculate that when Hispanic students exhibit what might be referred to as academic handicapping, it is because they believe that the European American [i.e., White or Anglo in this instance] educational establishment is intentionally acting as an agent of assimilation intent upon diminishing the relevance of their culture, language, history, and cultural identity (cited in Bennett, 2003). Thus, to do well in school may be interpreted by others of the same ethnic group, as a rejection of their common culture.

Is it possible for a person's strongest asset also to be their greatest liability? The prevailing perception, both within and outside of the Hispanic community, is the strength and positive influence that a Hispanic family unit has on all of its members. However, some researchers have noted that many Hispanic students see parents as obstacles to their education when the parents establish that family financial needs outweigh the child's educational needs, or

that families have lower aspirations for girls than for boys, or when peers act as obstacles to the attainment of full academic potential (cited in Denner, Cooper, Dunbar, & Lopez, (2005). A Hispanic female capable of achieving at a high academic level must at times overcome numerous obstacles to participate in advanced academic coursework, some of which are discriminatory in nature, but some can be cultural also.

Other reasons for under-representation of Hispanic females in advanced academic programs might include other forms of bias, both systematic and cultural, that exist primarily for the benefit and advantage of the dominant social class. It should be acknowledged that this form of discrimination is not a uniquely American or Texan invention; it seems to arise spontaneously wherever cultures coexist. An example of this suggested by Salinas (2000) is that in state-adopted history textbooks which after reading, students might reach the conclusion that virtually no relevant history transpired in Texas worthy of inclusion in the historical record before the coming of the first European American settlers. It might be concluded that this selective-memory is reflected in some of the curricula taught in many Texas public schools, and furthermore, it often excludes or minimizes the contributions and influences of numerous non-majority ethnic groups. Curricular omissions that might include contributions by members of minority groups may lead others to the conclusion that members of these minority groups have not made significant cultural, scientific, and historical contributions worthy of inclusion in instructional materials.

Societal expectations vary from culture to culture. Characteristics valued by one culture may or may not be valued in the same way, or perhaps not even at all by another culture. Family and gender roles in Hispanic culture are probably more rigid than in European American culture. Hispanic author Judith Ortiz Cofer (1995) writes in “The Myth of the Latin Woman: I Just Met a

Girl Named Maria”: “As a girl I was kept under strict surveillance, since virtue and modesty were, by cultural equation, the same as family honor” (p. 204). Viewed from outside Hispanic culture, the everyday lives of females is more structured than the everyday lives of males. It has been suggested by Rodriguez (2003) that the origin of this “rigidity” lies in “the many centuries of Muslim influence on Spanish, and consequently, Latin American cultures” and continues to “mark family socialization practices” (p. 33). Rodriguez goes on to make several key points along these lines:

- Females tend to receive more family supervision and protection through childhood and adolescence than boys.
- There is a belief that a girls’ chastity and reputation must be protected and preserved.
- Parents continue to try to enforce these cultural traditions regarding females, but are often perceived as being unable to control their children by their cultural community if they are not successful (pp. 33-34).

Rodriguez (2003) makes two more salient assertions: first, females seem to have less freedom to explore alternative behaviors outside of their own culture, and second, these stricter behavioral controls are enforced not only by the female’s parents, but also the culture at large. Traditional and cultural norms seem to be enforced on females with less flexibility than on males. Furthermore, the Muslim influence suggested by Rodriguez may account for at least some of the even more rigid and inflexible cultural expectations for Hispanic females, but not applicable to Hispanic males in the same age groups.

Rodriguez’s beliefs are illustrated by Dr. Ana Nogales (2004) who writes that in Latino cultures, a woman who expresses a preference to not have children is considered to be odd or acting selfishly, and this behavior can make parents question whether or not they have failed as parental role models (p. 2). In most situations, the strong emphasis that Hispanic culture places

on family serves as a source of strength and bonding, but in some instances, family expectations may also exert excessive pressure to conform which, can limit personal opportunities.

A very strong sense of family permeates Hispanic culture. A common saying in Mexico is, “la familia es primero” [Family comes first.]” (Richardson, 1999, p. 66). Manning and Barruth (2000) speculate that it is through interaction with parents and family members, Hispanic children commonly assimilate cultural values that are reflected by “a deep sense of family obligations to family members, a special and often preferential treatment afforded to elderly and male members of the family, often rigid beliefs of sex roles, and the father’s seemingly unquestioned position as the head of the household (p.146). Some of these values and behaviors, in particular the strong sense of family may be explained as adaptations of a member of a weak minority who is trying to survive within the context of a stronger, dominant culture. An illustration of the strong sense of family and familial obligations can be found in the Pew Hispanic Center/Kaiser Family Foundation’s (2004) *National Survey of Latinos: Education*, it was reported that “Latinos (33%) are almost twice as likely as whites (17%) to say that remaining close to the home and family is more important than going away to college, and this is a major reason why many Hispanic sons and daughters do not get an opportunity to earn a college degree” (p. 10). To a greater degree than is realized, Hispanic females seem to be the recipients of culturally based messages that family responsibilities, traditions, and deference to male authority figures should take precedence over some individual and educational aspirations.

While many European Americans might narrowly define education purely in terms of what happens at school, such as curriculum, instruction, and evaluation or the attainment of a terminal certificate or degree, Hispanics tend to think of education in a far more broader scope. For example, many Hispanics have the view that to be educated, or to them, “educado,” means:

To be 'educado' goes beyond school, and may or may not involve school at all; it means to be well mannered, respectful, considerate, and knowledgeable about practical things. For their part, Hispanics may resist school programs that are merely cognitive in orientation--programs in their terms, that may add to one's 'schooling,' but not to one's education" (Ruiz, 1989, p.62).

To illustrate what this means, gifted and talented (GT) and advanced placement (AP) programs place more emphasis on individual achievement than on a collective gain. Moreover, advanced academic programs are designed to differentiate students from their peers and confer a form of status not available to all students. Since not everyone is capable of producing the quality and quantity of work required to excel in advanced academic programs, these programs by nature have an inherent exclusory and elitist nature. Another reason, and perhaps the strongest in regard to its influence on the academically capable Hispanic female adolescent is that advanced academic programs are designed not only for personal academic growth and development, but also for preparation for college. Enrollment in college, however, may or may not be the goal the adolescent female's family has in mind for her, especially if the college is not near the girl's home and family and the family has financial limitations.

Similarly, Gallimore and Goldenberg, (2001) suggest that being "bien educado" [well educated] does not precisely translate into the traditional education establishment context, but rather it means to the Hispanic parent that the child "knows right from wrong, is respectful to parents, teachers, and others, and behaves properly at home, at school, and in public (p. 48).

Similarly, writer and researcher, Julia Potter writes in "Building Bridges between Cultures," that frequently for the families of girls of color, education is perceived in a broader fashion to include a humanistic perspective that includes concepts such as loyalty, respect, and integrity (cited in Shaffer & Gordon, 2005). When dealing with a Hispanic parent, it would be easy for a non-

Hispanic educator or administrator to misinterpret or not fully comprehend what a parent means when that parent stresses the importance of his or her child's education.

Another obstacle that Hispanic females encounter with regularity pertains to the importance that Hispanics typically place on family unity and relationships. Often a Hispanic female may be forced to choose between fulfilling her ambitions or fulfilling the expectations of her family. Having experienced the dilemma of the family-versus-independence conundrum, syndicated columnist Macarena Hernandez (2005) writes:

I was embracing the American way, asserting myself and demanding a college education. But all my father saw was a 17-year-old *mosca*, a kid defying her parents. I was a single woman, a *mujercita*, choosing a life far from my family and close to temptation. Classic case of culture clash. (p. 25A)

In some cases, embracing the American ideal of independence and individuality can create conflict and stress between the young Hispanic female and her family.

On one hand, strong family unity is a source of safety and security, but on the other hand, it can also be a deterrent to career and educational opportunities. Hispanic females may receive more encouragement to marry well than to study well. Academic activities may be forfeited for social opportunities. Probably more so in some cultures than in others, it could be argued that not all "cultures perceive intelligence as an attractive characteristic in a woman; men tend to marry their equals or inferiors in ability" (Kerr, 2000, p. 654). This idea may explain the tendency of some Hispanic females to hide their giftedness, routinely practice self-handicapping behaviors, or employ various other impression-management strategies. In some drastic instances, in order to pursue their education more vigorously, some gifted women from Latina groups have reported a practice of inventing imaginary boyfriends which enable them to satisfy their desire to pursue various other interests, including academic, while simultaneously catering to their parents' belief in the necessity of pre-marital social relationships with members of the opposite

sex (Reis, 2002, p. 24). These imaginary boyfriends allow Hispanic females to meet one set of socio-cultural expectations while simultaneously addressing a personal need to excel academically.

Would a reversal of some cultural attitudes and expectations provide more Hispanic females with advanced academic potential the type of support they need? Family members certainly believe that they are acting in the young woman's best interests, but there is a growing body of evidence that supports the idea that "women who become eminent or achieving in Hispanic...culture are those who receive family encouragement that is out of the ordinary (Kitano and Perkins, 1998, p.34). By nontraditional, Kitano and Perkins (1998) mean less rigid in sex- role beliefs, more occupational opportunities, and relaxed behavioral expectations. In a study of 63 Hispanic, female doctoral graduate candidates, researcher Thorne (1995) found that these high achieving young women had varying levels of motivation, seemed to prefer and expect more personal freedoms regarding traditional female sex-role expectations, and did not necessarily believe that personal accomplishment would not diminish other culturally accepted measures of success. It would seem that participation in advanced academic courses and/programs for adolescent Hispanic females is in many ways incompatible with some aspects of Hispanic culture; furthermore, a strong academic orientation may place a Hispanic female at risk of some degree of alienation from family members.

At least some of the problem for the under-representation of Hispanic females in GT and AP programs lies in discriminatory identification practices and procedures that began in the past seem to persist to this day. One reason for the low percentage of Hispanic students in GT and AP programs has been a long tradition of "discrimination and disinterest from the educational system and society at large" (Castellano and Diaz, 2002, p. 3). It was not until 1948 that

mandated segregation of Mexican Americans in Texas public education was declared illegal in the case of *Del Gado v. Bastrop Independent School District*. Hispanic females, traditionally, have not been considered an economic threat to the status quo, and perhaps more importantly, they have not been seen as a threat to the procurement of coveted educational services. Even when Hispanic students are properly identified and placed in GT and AP programs, there may be still many established, institutionalized and social barriers that must be overcome.

There are still other reasons why Hispanics find entry into GT and AP programs difficult. Chapter 42, Section 156 (C) of the Texas Education Code stipulates, “Not more than five percent of a district’s students in daily average attendance are eligible for funding under this statute” (Texas Education Code, 2003). Of course a district can identify more than 5%, but this would require additional funding that would draw funding away from another area of the school budget. Relating to the finance conundrum, the funding of GT programs, and to a lesser extent AP programs, may carry elitist connotations which do not always curry favor among the general population. The “macro” issue of financing of Texas public schools has been a contentious issue in Texas politics since *San Antonio I.S.D. v. Rodriguez* went all the way to the United States Supreme Court in 1973.

Many European American students have had the “enrichment opportunities and linguistic experiences that enhance their natural abilities in ways that support scoring well on tests designed by European American middle or upper class experts” (Castellano and Diaz, 2002, p. 98). It should also be noted that the parents whose children are the primary beneficiaries of traditional identification procedures and are currently receiving enhanced academic services are usually inclined to prefer and usually defend the status quo because they fear their children will be excluded if other groups are included (Castellano and Diaz, 2002, p. 98). Thus, better

preparation and stronger advocacy both function to create a perpetual cycle that benefits those already receiving GT and/or AP services and benefits.

Other reasons why Hispanic students are underrepresented in GT and AP programs, and Hispanic females even more so, are the reliance upon test scores for identification, IQ-based definitions and theories of giftedness, and poorly conceived and poorly researched identification policies and practices. According to authors English and Steffy (2001) most standardized tests are created by a small group of educational elitists who determine what is valuable and worthy to be included on these tests (pp. 8-9). Superior performance on some form of standardized test is probably the most widely used tool for identification of individual students who are entitled to receive GT services in public schools. These types of standardized tests are, for the most part, inexpensive, easy to administer, and defensible against most accusations of bias. It has been reported (Ford) that a vast majority school districts use intelligence or achievement test scores for placement decisions, and these test scores which do have a legitimate function in education, but on the other hand, “near exclusive reliance on test scores for placement decisions keeps the demographics of gifted and talented programs predominantly White and middle class” (2002).

Using intelligence tests or achievement tests to identify potential candidates for GT and AP programs places “minority students at a disadvantage because diverse students tend to score lower than White students on traditional standardized intelligence and achievement tests” (Ford, 2002). Based on available research, it seems unwise to rely exclusively upon one instrument to determine the magnitude of a single characteristic of any student.

Yet another reason for under-representation of Hispanic students in GT and AP programs is how giftedness is defined. What it means to be talented differs from what it means to be gifted in the mind of most experts, has come to be defined almost singularly in terms of high IQ scores.

The problem with such a limited definition of giftedness is that it “tends to ignore the strengths of those who are culturally diverse, who live in poverty, or who are poor test takers” (Ford, 2002). Perhaps a broader definition of what constitutes giftedness should be considered and implemented. For example, Gardner’s multiple intelligences (MI) theory should be considered when assessing the potential of Hispanic females. Gardner’s (1993) broader definition of giftedness “entails the ability to solve problems or fashion products that are of consequence in a particular cultural setting or community” (p. 15). Adherence to Gardner’s definition significantly increases to pool of gifted candidates.

Hispanic females with advanced-academic potential may be the group most likely to pass through the educational system without realizing their true potential. Many school districts have poorly conceived and structured GT and AP programs. In particular, their referral practices may be a major obstacle Hispanic females must overcome. Frequently, classroom teachers, not GT specialists, who may or may not have sufficient training in the GT area, are charged with the responsibility of identifying and referring students with advanced academic potential for special services. Numerous researchers have noted both the subjectivity of and the disadvantages of teacher referrals in the identification process. The teacher referral is sometimes the first, and frequently the only, step in the identification process (Ford, 2002). Siegle and Powell (2004) have found that a problem with the teacher-referral method is that many classroom teachers tend to focus on student weaknesses while GT specialists are more inclined to rely on student strengths for assessment purposes. The result of this being that classroom teachers may overlook advanced academic characteristic and potential because they are overly influenced by one or more negative academic characteristics exhibited by their students, while GT specialists may be

more accurate when they assess because they tend to concentrate more on students' strengths, rather than their weaknesses (p. 27).

The role of the family unit in the lives of young, Hispanic females cannot be ignored. Societal expectations often differ greatly for girls, in particular. Davis and Rimm (1998) speculate that expectations of docility and conformity for all girls throughout early childhood might work to the detriment of the girl by initiating the gifted girl into an eventual underachieving role in society (248). The home life of a gifted Hispanic female often plays a pivotal role in the social development and attitude toward education. Social roles seem to be more rigid in Hispanic culture than in European American culture, with the roles and expectations of males and females being more narrowly defined. These two typical characteristics, docility and conformity, might go a long way in explaining how GT females can be overlooked by poorly trained teachers since these two characteristics inhibit the ability to lead and stand out among competitors and have ability or potential noticed. The final product being the number of teacher referrals is not commensurate with the actual representation in the population. Taking Reis's advice (1998), "in order to develop into successful women, smart girls need to at times challenge convention, question authority, and speak out about things that need change" is to defy custom and culture (p.21). Author Gloria Anzaldua (1990) recalls vividly a double standard involving Hispanic females who choose to stand out from the crowd:

En boca cerrada no entran moscas (flies don't enter a closed mouth) is a saying I kept hearing when I was a child. *Ser habladora* was to be a gossip and a liar, to talk too much. *Muchachitas bien criadas*, well-bred girls don't answer back. *Es una falta de respeto* to talk back to one's mother or father. I remember one of the sins I'd recite to the priest in the confession box the few times I went to confession: talking back to my mother, *hablar pa' tras*, *repliar*. *Hociona*, *replona*, *chismosa*, having a big mouth, questioning, carrying tales are all signs of being *mal criada*. In my culture they are all words that are derogatory if applied to women--I've never heard them applied to men. (p. 25)

This aspect of Hispanic culture, and which is also applicable to other cultures also in varying degrees, makes it difficult for the Hispanic female to stand out, be noticed, and have a voice at home and at school.

A recent study found that “there is strong evidence that women who become eminent or achieve in Hispanic culture are those who receive family encouragement out of the ordinary (Kitano and Perkins, 1996, p. 40). For example, according to Thornburgh (2001), noted author Sandra Cisneros fits this mold of an out-of-the-ordinary, culture-defying upbringing because Cisneros’s mother did not insist that Sandra spend all her time helping with what is usually regarded as traditional “women’s work,” but instead encouraged her and provided the resources necessary to develop her intellect and imagination, especially through by reading (p. 7).

Examples of other out-of-the-ordinary encouragement might include defying or ignoring cultural and social norms such as placing personal goals ahead of family goals, pursuing an education in lieu of marriage and starting a family, choosing a nontraditional, non-feminine occupation or profession, and non-deference to male authority figures.

By defying cultural and social norms, the gifted Hispanic female can also risk being rejected by her peers which can be a powerful motivational force, especially during adolescence when many individuals are profoundly preoccupied with their appearance, their acceptance within their peer group, and their overall public image--yet still under the control of their parents. This mismatch between personal needs and numerous family expectations may hinder or deter a gifted Hispanic female from fully striving to reach her full intellectual potential.

Other research in the area of giftedness in Hispanic females has been extremely rare. Two dissertations related in theme have been identified and their findings analyzed in relation to this study. Another dissertation related in theme, but involving slightly younger subjects, middle

school students, has also been identified and studied. A fourth study, concentrated on Hispanic/Latino fathers was also identified and analyzed.

A dissertation presented by Marain Warren (1987) at the University of San Diego and was titled *Influences Affecting Career/Life Planning Aspirations as Perceived by Intellectually Gifted, Ethnically Diverse Adolescent Girls: A Case Study*. It centered around many “specific variables which affect the life planning and future aspirations of young gifted black, Hispanic, and Pan/Asian women” (p. 1). Some of the findings of this research are as follows:

1. The majority of girls did not know the requirements needed to reach particular goals.
2. The girls perceived their parents as being generally supportive of what they wanted to do.
3. There were double messages from parents about the importance of a career but remaining at home if they had children.
4. There were double messages from the community regarding equal career choice opportunities.

Another more recent dissertation was presented by Arthur Bronkhurst (1997) at the University of Southern California and was titled *Cognitive and Motivational Processes in African-American and Hispanic Advanced Placement Students*. It focused on thought and motivational processes of students who choose to enroll in academically demanding coursework. Some conclusions reached by Bronkhurst were that many academically successfully African-American and Hispanic students “are more likely to be more adaptive to situational demands thus relying less on established behavioral patterns when new situations were encountered, and they were less likely to be influenced by their less academically capable peers, especially those peers holding oppositional points of view.”

A dissertation that focused on gifted students in the north central Texas area by Brenda Lierin Curry (1999) and titled *An Analysis of Program Options for Gifted Middle School Students* covered some similar content as this research project, however the subjects were

younger and not restricted by gender or ethnicity. In Curry's literature review chapter (1999) she contends that it is a "fact that Hispanic and African-American students are typically under-represented in gifted programs throughout the country..." (12). Curry (1999) goes on to state that educators have for some time struggled to make gifted programs more inclusive to diverse populations of students (17). Both of these statements are consistent with statements included in the Introduction and Review of Literature in the present study, specifically that some minority groups have been and may still be victims of obsolete concepts of what constitutes giftedness and outdated and perhaps even biased identification practices and policies.

Significant findings in Curry's research (1999) include the contention that gifted students usually exhibit a pronounced and demonstrated inclination toward seeking and obtaining positions of leadership, a focused and aggressive middle school gifted program typically keeps gifted students on the GT track, and GT students do not automatically seek opportunities to achieve at their highest potential, but rather need guidance and, in some cases, mentoring. Some of these findings can be related to the findings and implications of the present study (Chapter 5).

A recent research study titled *Fathering across the Border: Latino Fathers in Mexico and the US* that focused on Hispanic fathers was conducted by Brent Taylor (2005). Taylor's study, which consisted of 32 subjects, focused on two areas: first, paternal involvement, which included their roles in the education and disciplining of their children; second, influences upon their fathering practices. Taylor (2005) refers to many of his findings as evidence of "progressive fathering": a significant increase in the amount of active participation of fathers in the lives of their families (p.1) Taylor also speculates that fathers who immigrate to the United States are different from fathers who remain in Mexico in several key aspects. Cited in Taylor's article is a finding by Buriel (1993) that "immigration is a selective process; adult immigrants often are

either very well educated or more or less uneducated but displaying strong and unusual motivational inclinations and personality characteristics. Some of Taylor's other findings (2005) about Latino fathering practices that relate to this study included:

- Evidence of a "gender progressive" attitude which is characterized by viewing women as being equal to men and both parents typically having equal aspirations for both sons and daughters, and by working together, they can increase the opportunities available to their children.
- Fathers described their interactions with sons as being oriented toward activities, but with daughters, their involvement centered around what Taylor describes as an "interchange of perspectives about their everyday lives" (p. 7).
- Many of the fathers who immigrated did not typically change or modify their parenting behaviors because they arrived with parenting behaviors that conformed well to their new environment.

Of all the values that fathers indicated that they wanted to transmit, the most prominent one was that of a good education. In both Mexico and the United States, "education was perceived as the most prized achievement that their children could attain." Taylor states that when discussing their children's education, it "seemed like the fathers were reading from a teleprompter" (p. 9).

Taylor's research is important because it provides information about the role of fathers in Hispanic/Latino culture. To summarize Taylor's findings, the parenting style of men who immigrate may be described as being more progressive in some ways than men who choose to remain in Mexico. Men who immigrate seem to have a new perspective on gender equity. And finally, a constant both in the United States and Mexico is the supreme importance of education for their children.

The four research studies mentioned all provide valuable insight to the present research study. Warren's (1987) dissertation is relevant in that it included the demographics of interest. Also, Warren's (1997) study seemed to revolve around the ordinary, but influential, rhythms of

home, school, and community life as experienced by the demographic under study. Bronkhurst's (1997) dissertation is more recent and focuses on advanced placement (AP) students. Some of Bronkhurst's (1997) findings were that the more academically advanced ethnic students may be more adaptive to their educational environments than their less-capable peers, and that they may be less inclined to be influenced about school matters by oppositional-natured peers. Curry's (1999) research supports the themes of under-representation of some groups and potentially biased identification practices and policies discussed in this research study. Taylor's (2005) research suggests that Hispanic/Latino fathers are becoming more progressive in regard to their parental practices, and in both the United States and in Mexico, the education of their children is supremely important.

Because little research has been done in the area of Hispanic female involvement in advanced academic programs and the role that Hispanic culture plays in the shaping of advanced academic interests, this new research may be able to provide useful data and analysis for educators and researchers about a rapidly growing segment of the public school population.

CHAPTER 3

DESIGN OF STUDY

Subjects

The primary population studied was high-achieving Hispanic females enrolled in Grades 9-12 at a large north central Texas public high school. The criteria for being selected to participate in the study was either formal gifted and talented (GT) identification by district staff or current enrollment in one or more advanced placement (AP) or pre-AP courses.

Other populations that were researched to gain additional data included the parents of the high-achieving Hispanic females, education professionals directly involved with the primary population, and female Hispanic professionals and entrepreneurs. Education professionals selected to participate included classroom teachers with AP experience, the current secondary GT coordinator, and two former elementary GT coordinators.

Each of the education professionals had a working knowledge of the district's current advanced academic programs as well as related school policy and practice. The female Hispanic professionals selected to participate included representatives from various fields such as medicine, education, legal, political, and engineering. In addition, one locally established entrepreneur was identified and invited to participate. All of these individuals are of special interest because they may possess non-academic or highly specialized talents that may have gone unnoticed and have not been addressed during their formal education. It is assumed that these female Hispanic professionals possess in the mature stage the academic, social, and cultural characteristics that the high-achieving Hispanic females now in high school have in the developmental stage. Also, it was anticipated that through analysis of multiple data streams

representing various, distinct, and unique points of view, sufficient data and information would be accumulated to generate multiple and valid generalizations.

Setting

The reasons this particular school was selected are as follows:

1. Access to a population often considered vulnerable: ethnic minority and female.
2. The school district has a small, but increasing, Hispanic population similar to numerous other school districts throughout the state and nation.
3. Though possessing qualities of both suburban and rural communities, the school district cannot be described accurately as either. Either association, rural or suburban, would severely inhibit generalizations and limit applicability of intervention strategies.

Conditions Researched

Based on research gathered during the literature review phase, it was anticipated that the number of Hispanic females enrolled in advanced academic programs and courses of study, GT, pre-AP, and AP at this particular high school would be low. The purpose of this research was two-fold: either confirm or contradict this assumption. If confirmed, analysis of existing policies, practices, and conditions can be used to generate possible interventions. If contradicted, that being participation of the primary population in advanced academic programs and courses of study was either satisfactory or better, analysis of existing policies, practices, and conditions could be used to generalize to similar and broader contexts allowing for successful replication elsewhere.

Anticipated conditions that were researched are as follows:

High-Achieving Hispanic Females Enrolled in Grades 9-12:

- Personal (demographic) characteristics: age, years in district, GT or AP status

- Academic characteristics: thoughts about higher education and career planning
- Cultural characteristics: parental and societal expectations
- Social characteristics: issues relating to popularity and acceptance
- Perceptions of the school: relationships with educators and school ecology

Educators

- Level of education
- Specialized training or preparation
- Knowledge of typical gifted characteristics, products, and behaviors
- Knowledge and perceptions of Hispanic culture

Hispanic Parents

- Level of involvement (actual)
- Level of involvement (desired)
- Intervening variables that prohibit parental involvement
- Father's role and expectations regarding daughter(s)
- Mother's role and expectations regarding daughter(s)
- Cultural conflict resulting from competing needs, interests, expectations, and traditions
- Differential treatment of males and females based on cultural, social, and academic influences

Hispanic Female Professionals

- Evolution of how schools have dealt with Hispanic females with exceptional capabilities
- If and how their educational, personal, social, and cultural experiences and perceptions differ from those of the primary population under study

Procedures

Data Source 1

Data was collected from multiple sources that included focus group interviews, questionnaires, and personal interviews with some participants. Also, various media publications were collected and analyzed.

Hispanic females enrolled in Grades 9-12 who met established criteria were invited to participate in focus-group interviews. For the purpose of this study, a focus group interview was defined as a “carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment” (Kreuger & Casey, 2000). Each focus group interview included approximately 5-7 participants. It included females of various ages and grade classifications, and it lasted approximately 45-60 minutes. The focus group interviews took place on the school campus being studied on a regular school day. The focus group interviews were facilitated by a school professional, a school academic counselor, with whom a majority of the subjects were familiar and with whom they would feel a sense of security. The primary researcher attended, observed, and took notes. The interviews were not electronically recorded because it is believed that this modification or procedure would inhibit the spontaneity of the participants as well as inhibit the flow and exchange of ideas. The focus group interviews included both structured and unstructured components. The facilitator read a question and encouraged discussion among participants. Participants were asked to note their thoughts and feelings on a questionnaire designed to gather personal, social, academic, and cultural information. The purpose of the focus group interviews was to foster a free-flowing, spontaneous, and open exchange of ideas and perceptions in an open, relaxed, non-threatening

environment. Data collected was used to construct a second survey instrument intended to gather additional data or clarify existing data.

Care was taken to neutralize the existing power structure differential between researchers, who are employed by the school, and the subjects in the following ways:

- The researcher dressed casually, yet professionally (no suit and tie).
- The primary researcher was identified only as a school employee.

The focus group interviews took place in a private, comfortable environment (a conference room in the counseling area).

- No high-ranking school authority figures were present.
- A statement which guaranteed confidentiality was read prior to participation.

Data Source 2

A second source of data was the parents of the high-achieving primary subjects who participated in the focus group interviews. Parents were invited to attend an informal interview session at the primary subjects' school. The parental interviews were facilitated by the researcher and the same school academic counselor who facilitated the focus group interviews with the primary subjects. The interviews took place separately, but in close proximity: in adjoining conference rooms in the school's academic counseling area. Each group was asked to complete a brief questionnaire and respond to a series of both closed and open-ended questions. The survey instrument was brief, designed to be culturally sensitive, and written at a level of comprehension conducive to maximize semantic exchange, and was made available in Spanish.

In order to make the participant feel at ease and enhance the amount and quality of information collected, the following interview protocol were observed:

1. It was stressed that participation was voluntary and that participants were not required to respond to any and/or all questions.
2. A statement reminding the participants about confidentiality was read prior to the initiation of proceedings to create a potentially more relaxed, less-threatening atmosphere. (This was done in addition to collecting signed permission forms.)
3. The scheduled time of interviews was after regular school hours and at a time (5:30 p.m to 6:30 p.m) that was intended minimize interference with employment-related responsibilities of the participating parents.
4. A male researcher interviewed the male parental representatives; a female researcher interviewed the female parental representatives.
5. Refreshments were provided.
6. The interviews took place in an informal, relaxed location: adjoining conference rooms in the school's academic counseling area.
7. High-ranking school officials, assistant principals, principals, central administration administration personnel, etc. were neither in attendance nor visible to participants.
8. The interviews were not electronically recorded.
9. The individual interviews did not exceed one hour.

Data Source 3

Education professionals directly involved with the population under study were identified with the assistance of the school principal. Following identification, self-administered questionnaires will be used to gather information. Follow-up interviews were scheduled to gather additional information and to clarify existing data. The methodology for follow-up interviews was also a self-administered questionnaire. To fill in gaps and increase clarity of prior responses, a follow-up questionnaire was also administered. It was assumed that this form of data collection would be effective because it was a pen-and-paper type exercise, with which most teachers are experienced, and furthermore, it allowed time for reflection.

Data Source 4

Practicing female Hispanic professionals were identified through various means, including public record of affiliation with professional organizations, membership in a chamber of commerce, advertisements of professional services in local media, and referrals made by other contacted female Hispanic professionals. The individuals were contacted by telephone at their place of business or employment during regular business hours. After contact was made, an explanation of the nature and purpose of the research was presented, and the potential subjects were asked to participate. When a potential subject agreed to participate, they were sent by mail a self-administered questionnaire to complete. Follow-up questionnaires were scheduled as necessary to gather additional data or to clarify existing data. Self-administered questionnaires were judged to be the least intrusive method for gathering data.

Methods Employed to Analyze and Present Data

The Miles and Huberman framework for qualitative data analysis (MHF; Miles & Huberman, 1994) was used to organize the data collected, control analysis of data, and provide a framework for some selected presentation of information. Summarized by Punch (2005), the three major components of the MHF are as follows: “data reduction” which involves the “editing, segmenting, and summarizing the data”; “data display” which is used to “organize, compress, and assemble the information”; and “drawing and verifying conclusions” (pp.198-199). The MHF was selected for its adaptability to this study, the type of data expected to be collected, its potential to combine creativity and disciplined inquiry, and its potential for replication of this study in other studies and contexts.

The actual processing of collected data using the MHF was as follows. The information/data collected from each data source was transcribed onto a separate document. Following transcription, the information/data were coded. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest two types of coding: “descriptive and pattern” (p. 57). Descriptive coding, which precedes pattern coding, was used to “identify words and phrases of potential significance” and pattern coding which, “pulls together a lot of material into more meaningful and parsimonious units of analysis” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.69). In this study, pattern coding was used to isolate and identify themes, patterns, and any other clusters of potential significance. The coded information was assembled and presented in the organizational pattern most suited for that data field. The Miles and Huberman framework requires multiple tactics for drawing and verifying conclusions and multiple tactics for testing and confirming findings. Anticipated tactics for generating meaning, as well as testing and confirming findings through the use of the Miles and Huberman framework (1994) and applicable to this study include:

Tactics for Generating Meaning

- Noting patterns and themes
- Seeing plausibility
- Clustering
- Counting
- Making contrasts/comparisons
- Finding intervening variables
- Building a logical chain of evidence

Tactics for Testing or Confirming Findings

- Checking for representativeness
- Checking for researcher effects
- Getting feedback from informants
- Checking out rival explanations
- Checking the meaning of outliers
- Looking for negative evidence
- Weighting the evidence (pp. 247-75)

Design of Study Conclusion

The use of multiple data streams processed through the Miles and Huberman framework for qualitative data analysis produced sufficient data to satisfactorily address all research questions and identify potential avenues for research to improve school policy and practice

relating to the identification and placement of Hispanic females with high-achievement potential into appropriate programs and courses of study appropriate to their needs and abilities.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF DATA

Research data was collected from multiple sources with the primary subjects who were Hispanic females in Grades 9 through 12 in a selected north central Texas public high school. The second group of subjects included teachers who had frequent contact with the primary subjects, as well as current and past gifted and talented (GT) coordinators. A third group of subjects included practicing Hispanic female professionals. A fourth group that contributed data included the parents of the high-achieving Hispanic females previously identified as the primary subjects. Also, various school-generated documents and statistics were researched. From the primary subjects of the study, data was collected from focus group interviews and questionnaires. Information was collected from teachers and administrators through self-administered questionnaires. Data was collected from practicing Hispanic professionals through self-administered questionnaires. Data was also collected from internal and external school documents and publications. All data was collected during and between October 2005 and May 2006.

Research Question 1: What is the current status of Hispanic female representation in advanced academic programs, advanced placement (AP) and gifted and talented (GT), in a selected north central Texas public high school?

The research population of Hispanic females in Grades 9 through 12 consisted of 46 students. Of the 46 formally identified as being GT or taking at least one AP or pre-AP class, 42 (91%) chose to participate in the study. Of the remaining 4, 2 were absent on the day of the focus group interviews, and 2 declined to participate in the study. The school counselor who assisted the primary researcher in this study conjectured that the 2 subjects who declined participation did

so because of parental objection. The average age of the subjects was 15.5, and the most common grade classification was sophomore. (See Table 2).

Table 2

Age and Grade Classification of Primary Subjects (n = 42)

Age			Grade Classification		
Age	<i>n</i>	Percent	Classification	<i>n</i>	Percent
14	10	23.8	Freshmen	10	23.8
15	13	30.9	Sophomore	13	30.9
16	11	26.2	Junior	11	26.2
17	7	16.7	Senior	8	19.1
18	--	--			
19	1	2.4			
Totals			42		

A reasonably equitable distribution among the four grades existed. Furthermore, the average time spent in the district by each of the subjects surveyed was 5.76 years. (See Table 3).

It was determined that 6 of the subjects (14%) were in their first year of attendance in this school district. Since the survey was conducted early in the school year, these 6 students would not have been very familiar with their teachers, and the teachers would not have been familiar with them yet. Six of the students, it appeared, had spent 12 or more years attending school in this district. Ten of the 42 subjects had spent ten or more years attending schools in this district which indicates that a significant Hispanic population has always been present. A substantial influx of new high-achieving females (i.e., 14 in the past two years) followed several years of slow, steady enrollment increases.

Table 3

Average Time in District of Primary Subjects (n = 42)

Years in District	<i>n</i>	Total Years (Years in District x <i>n</i>)
1	6	6
2	8	16
3	3	9
4	3	12
5	4	20
6	2	12
7	2	14
8	2	16
9	2	18
10	1	10
11	3	33
12	3	36
13	2*	23
14	1**	14
Totals	42	242 / 42 = 5.76 Years in District

Note. * Denotes Kindergarten + 12 Years in District. **Denotes Pre-Kindergarten + Kindergarten + 12 Years in District

The female Hispanic students were asked whether or not they ever felt invisible or overlooked on campus; in addition, they were asked to elaborate on this topic. Results are found in Table 4.

Table 4

Hispanic Female’s Feelings of Invisibility or Being Overlooked on Campus

	Yes	%	No	%	Sometimes	%
# Responses	13	31	22	52	7	17

Approximately one half (52%) of the subjects reported that they did not feel invisible or overlooked while on campus. The 7 responses reported as “sometimes” were as follows: (1) Student population is too large; (2) I do not get called on to answer questions; (3) Teachers and administrators seem not to notice me; (4) Teacher seems not to hear me when I answer questions; (5) There are religious issues; (6) I have few friends outside of AP classes; and (7) There is a language barrier. The statement about feeling invisible or overlooked because of religious reasons is difficult to interpret. The other reasons given are contextually consistent with being a member of a minority group on a large campus.

Research Question 1A: In past years, how were the candidates for admission into advanced academic programs, AP and GT, identified, recruited, and placed into these programs?

The school district’s policy has not changed during the past 5 years. The definition of giftedness used then is still the definition used now, that is, the definition found in the Texas Education Code. Both then and now, initiation into the program is a multi-step process.

Information found in the *Gifted and Talented Educational Services Procedures Manual, Fall 2001*, and published by the district under study and distributed to district administrators and GT coordinators, details the procedures used. The 2001 procedure listed these 6 steps:

1. Nomination/referral form (taken all year from parents, teachers, and students).
2. Begin gathering data (standardized test scores and work samples).

3. Permission for assessment form sent to parent/guardian.
4. Monitor progress (confer with teachers and parents).
5. Conference request form completed (parents meet with district GT specialists).
6. Three GT specialists meet to decide upon and make recommendations (p.10).

The procedure employed in the past was a multi-step process requiring both teacher and parental cooperation and the successful completion of multiple forms. Multiple test scores were utilized: Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), and the Cognitive Abilities Test (CoGAT). It was a deliberate process containing safeguards such as standardized test scores and work samples. Also, expert testimony from a GT specialist was used to ensure that an accurate and appropriate placement decision was made.

Admission into pre-AP and AP coursework were greatly relaxed in comparison to achieving admission into the GT program. Admission into pre-AP and AP coursework was dependent upon a satisfactory grade average and/or teacher recommendation. Ordinarily, a satisfactory a grade average and/or a teacher recommendation would suggest adequate academic potential for success in the program.

To summarize, entry into the GT program in 2001 was a deliberate process containing multiple safeguards to accurately screen potential candidates for admission. Entry into pre-AP and AP programs has remained virtually unchanged to the present, with grades and teacher recommendations at the center of the process.

Research Question 1B: If different from Research Question 1A, what is the current selection process for identifying, recruiting, and placing students into advanced academic programs?

While the overall framework for identifying and placing students with advanced academic potential in appropriate programs of study has changed very little, the policies and procedures for identifying and placing students into the GT program in this particular school

have evolved in multiple ways. In district-published literature, the *2005-2006 Course Selection Guide* for this particular district states, “Nominations for the Gifted/Talented program should be submitted to the principal, counselor, or assigned Gifted/Talented staff at the high school. Identified students will be served in the pre-advanced placement and advanced placement program” (p.1). In the same publication, the pre-advanced placement and advanced placement requirements are stated as follows: “A previous year grade in the subject of 90 or higher at the regular level, 80 or higher at the pre-advanced placement or advanced placement level, and/or teacher recommendation” (p. 1). In practice these prerequisites have not changed significantly.

While the Cognitive Abilities Test (CoGAT) is still in use, the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) and the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) are not.: the TAAS has been replaced by the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). Performance on the TAKS has no bearing on placement in advanced academic programs. Two new tests, however, have been implemented. Now in use are the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking (TTCT) and the Naglieri Nonverbal Test Grades K-12 (NNAT). The TTCT is designed to measure “creative, figural, and verbal aspects of intelligence,” and furthermore, the TTCT is promoted as being “blind to culture” (Crevar, 2006, p.4). Similarly, the NNAT is described as being a culture-fair and language-free means of determining students’ non-verbal reasoning and problem-solving ability, regardless of language or educational or cultural background” (Hoagies Gifted Education, 2006, p.2). The decision to implement the TTCT and the NNAT would, in theory, eliminate any cultural, racial, and socio-economic bias in the testing and identification process. Potentially, both tests could identify students whose academic potential and giftedness manifests itself in nontraditional, non-mainstream ways.

Another change in policy and practice that impacted the school's advanced academic programs was the addition of a true, GT specialist. In the past, the student's classroom teacher with some GT training was primarily responsible for determining who was and who was not gifted material. The position created was called a campus instructional teacher (CIT). The CIT was not a classroom teacher, but rather someone who worked with all teachers on campus to provide specialized support services for all educational programs, including GT and advanced placement. The ability to accurately assess a student's gifted potential may be compromised by the classroom teacher's closeness to a particular student for an extended period of time, but the professional distance and detachment of being at least one step removed from being the child's actual classroom instructional provider may increase the objectivity of the CIT, which in turn, increases the accuracy of identification.

To summarize, the school district had implemented two changes in the identification and placement procedure. First, standardized tests which measure nonverbal intelligence and creative potential were implemented. Second, an instructional specialist was added to each campus to support and enhance the quality of all academic programs, including the GT) and AP programs.

Research Question 2: In general, how do the parents of gifted Hispanic females who qualify for admission into a GT program or take AP coursework view the intellectual/academic capabilities of their daughter(s)?

The 35 Hispanic girls who completed the follow-up questionnaire were asked to deliver an invitation to their parents to attend focus group interviews to be held at the participating north central Texas high school being studied. Data was collected directly from the two mothers of Hispanic girls who attended the focus group interview session. No fathers of the Hispanic girls

attended. It was anticipated that parental attendance at an event intended to gather research data pertaining the parents' personal, social, and cultural characteristics would be low. To supplement the direct parental data, additional data was gathered regarding the views that parents hold about their daughter's academic activities indirectly from both the focus-group interviews with the 42 Hispanic females held early in the school year and the follow-up questionnaire completed at the end of the school year by 35 Hispanic females who chose to continue participation in the research study.

The follow-up questionnaire administered in May 2006 focused on the Hispanic females' parents. It was completed by 35 of the original 42 Hispanic females who chose to continue participation in the study. Parental information collected included the data about the ages of parents, the size of their families, how much the father worked, and whether the father's work habits affected his ability to assist with school work. The participating Hispanic female students were also asked to identify the ages of their parents. The results are shown in Table 5.

The largest cluster of parental ages for both mothers and fathers was the 36-40 range. Approximately 35 % of the fathers and approximately 41% of the mothers fall in the 36-40 range. Thus, the largest cluster of high-achieving Hispanic females were born at some point between their parents being 18-22. No student research participant reported a parent under the age of 30. Approximately the same number of fathers (9) and mothers (9) were listed as falling in the 41-45 range. From the data gathered, it would appear that most parents represented the 36-45 age cluster, with approximately 61% of the fathers and approximately 65% of the mothers falling within these two clusters. In the 30-35 years of age cluster, a ratio of 1 father to 6 mothers was found; there were far more young mothers than young fathers in this age group. Conversely, there were twice as many fathers reported as being 46 or older than mothers in the same age

range (i.e. 12 fathers versus 6 mothers). Overall, the ages of the fathers was slightly more evenly distributed across the entire range of age clusters, and the fathers were more likely to be older than the high-achieving Hispanic females' mothers.

Table 5

Ages of Father and Mother

Age of Father * (<i>n</i> = 34)			Age of Mother *(<i>n</i> = 34)		
Age Cluster	<i>n</i>	%	Age Cluster	<i>n</i>	%
Less than 30	0	0	Less than 30	0	0
30-35	1	2.9	30-35	6	17.6
36-40	12	35.3	36-40	14	41.1
41-45	9	25.7	41-45	8	23.5
46-50	6	17.6	46 -50	3	8.80
Over 50	6	17.6	Over 50	3	8.80
Totals	34			34	

Note. One female research participant left the parents' ages question blank.

The Hispanic female students in this study were also asked about the number of siblings they had. Results are summarized in Table 6 and Table 7.

Table 6

Family Size: Number of Brothers and Sisters

# Sibs Reported	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
# Mentions	4	8	10	8	4	1	35

Table 7 reports the total number of children in the families being studied as well as the number of brothers and sisters each research participant had at the time of the study.

Table 7

Number of Boys and Girls in Each Family Unit Surveyed

	Brothers	Sisters	Primary Research Participants	Total
Total	43	30	35	108

The 35 participants reported a cumulative total of 108 children in their families. The average number of children in each family was 3.17. Of the 108 total siblings, there were 65 females (60%). In addition, Hispanic female research participants reported a total of 43 brothers (40 %). The 35 Hispanic female research participants reported having a total of 30 sisters. Of the 35 family units researched, 10 (29%) had no brothers making the high-achieving Hispanic female research participant an only child at the time of the study. One female research participant reported having a family with 6 children total, and 4 research participants reported a total of 5 children in their respective families. Four female research participants reported being an only child. The 35 Hispanic females research participants reporting 30 sisters and 43 brothers (See Table 7). In sum, the ratio of female to male siblings in the researched families was 3:2.

Parents of the Hispanic girls were asked several questions to determine their comfort level with their daughter's demonstrated academic abilities as well as the impact the daughter's education might have on their family. The Hispanic parents were asked whether they believed that if their daughter became too educated, the daughter might choose to establish her home far away and raise her family there. Both mothers stated that they did not believe this would be the case. Along the same lines, both mothers were asked if their daughter became too educated, if

they thought that their daughters would be less willing to ask for and accept advice from their parents about marriage and family. Once again, both answered that they felt this would not be the case. Both mothers agreed that they were “very comfortable” with their daughters’ growing independence.

Research Question 2A: How do the mother and father of a Hispanic female view their daughter’s intellectual capabilities?

The purpose of this line of questioning was to explore in what ways the academic behaviors demonstrated by the high-achieving Hispanic females was influenced by close family members, especially their parents and grandparents. Since it was believed that the academic interests and inclinations of the high-achieving Hispanic females might be influenced by their parent’s levels of education and their parent’s values regarding education, the high-achieving Hispanic females were asked to provide information regarding the academic histories of their parents and grandparents. The information was supplied through responses to questions found on the follow-up questionnaire completed by 35 of the subjects still participating in the study in May 2006. The primary research subjects were asked to report the level of educational attainment of their father and mother, and at least one grandfather and at least one grandmother. They were also asked to report any enrollment in higher education as well as any college degrees earned by both parents and grandparents. The results are summarized in Table 8.

Table 8

Level of Education Attainment of Father, Mothers, and Grandparents

Level	Father	Mother	A Grandfather	A Grandmother
No formal school	0	1	3	3
Unsure	3	2	15	15
1 st -6 th grade	5	3	5	5
7 th -8 th grade	4	3	0	0
9 th grade	2	0	0	0
10 th grade	1	0	1	0
11 th grade	1	0	0	0
Some high school	3	3	1	0
GED	0	3	0	0
High school graduate	3	7	8	10
Vocational school	3	2	0	0
Some college	6	6	0	1
Junior/community college	0	1	0	0
College graduate	3	4	1	0
Totals	34*	35	34*	34*

Note: *One respondent left these three sections blank.

From the responses of the high-achieving Hispanic females provided on the follow-up questionnaire about their father's involvement in their education, the cumulative pattern was positive. However, 5 of the 35 Hispanic females (14%) reported that their father did not take an active interest in their education-related activities. Typical daughters' descriptions regarding their fathers' participation in their education and academic interests are found in Table 9.

Table 9

Descriptions of Paternal Involvement in the Academic Lives of the Primary Subjects

Subject Indicator*	Paternal Descriptor/Comment
5	He pushes me so hard to do better than he has done. He sees that I am intelligent and tells me to run with it. He knows I'm going to become something.
6	He helps me with anything that he can help me with.
28	He wants me to get a good education, to graduate from high school, and go to college.
30	My father was education first, then everything else.
31	It is important to him, but he can't help me much, but he tries if he can with homework.

Note: *Because students participated anonymously, the subjects have been assigned numbers to facilitate reporting of results.

Based on the responses provided by the Hispanic females, their fathers were involved in their daughters' educations to the extent that they chiefly provided motivation, encouragement, and direction.

Descriptions and comments about the mothers' roles in the education of their high-achieving daughters were usually more specific and elaborate. Typical statements made by the primary subjects in regard to their mother's involvement in their education-related activities are found in Table 10.

Table 10

Descriptions of Maternal Involvement in the Academic Lives of the Primary Subjects

Subject Indicator*	Paternal Descriptor/Comment
9	Very involved. She sacrifices everything to push me as far as possible in my education. She always gives me positive feedback about my work and grades.
11	My mom tells me I have to hard so I can have a career so I won't have to depend on anyone, and I could survive on my own hard work.
12	My mother is very supportive in my education and supports me in all my academic goals. She hopes that I will be able to receive the best education and that I take advantage of it.
23	[She] Always stresses the importance of education and is determined to help me stick to my dreams. She is my inspiration.
32	She's always talking to me about what's going on in the world and always buying me books to broaden my mind.

Note: *Because students participated anonymously, the subjects have been assigned numbers to facilitate reporting of results.

The Hispanic female research participants were asked to comment upon their fathers' involvement in their education. Each Hispanic female student was asked about her father's work schedule, about his ability to assist her daughter with work sent home from school, and whether or not the research participants' fathers believed that it was his role or responsibility to assist his daughter with her schoolwork. The results of these questions are found in Table 11.

Two students did not respond to this series of questions. Based on the responses of the remaining 33 Hispanic females, one-third of the subjects reported that their fathers worked too many hours and were not home much when there was an opportunity to assist them with work sent home from school. One can infer that, for about two thirds of the subjects' fathers, time spent at work did not directly interfere with their opportunity to assist their daughters with work sent home from school. However, whereas time was not an obvious issue with about two thirds

of the subjects, 23 of the 33 female students (70 %) reported that their fathers were too tired when they arrived at home to assist them with their school work. It appeared that the father being too tired to assist directly with his daughter’s homework assignments may have be more of a problem than the number of hours worked or number of hours away from home.

Table 11

Hispanic Father’s Work Routine, Ability to Assist with School Work, and Perceived Role/Responsibility (n = 33)

Behavior	Yes	%	No	%
Works too many hours and is not home much	11	33	22	67
Is too tired to help with school work when he gets home	23	70	10	30
Work sent home from school is too difficult for him to help with	16	48	17	52
Does not consider it his role/responsibility to assist with work sent home from school	6	18	27	82

Approximately 16 of 33 subjects (48%) reported that their fathers were unable to assist them directly with their work from school because it was too difficult. This figure roughly corresponds to the number of fathers (19) whose level of educational attainment did not reach that of a high school graduate (See Table 8.). Six of the 33 subjects (18 %) reported that their fathers did not consider it to be their role or responsibility assist their daughter with work sent home from school.

To summarize the father/daughter educational relationship, it appears that the Hispanic father’s role in the education of his high-achieving daughter is of a supportive nature. He is involved, but not as involved as the girl’s mother. The data seems to reveal that the nature of the father’s work, perhaps physically demanding in nature, may be more of an obstacle than the time

he has available to help her with assignments from school. Furthermore, approximately one half of the fathers not being able to assist their daughters with homework is probably accurate since it so closely correlates with the number of fathers who reported to having not finished high school. The fathers may struggle with work for their daughters sent home from school since they lack exposure to and practice with work at this level. Six of the 33 female Hispanic students (18%) reported that they believed that their father did not perceive it to be his role or responsibility to assist his daughter with her work sent home from school. Participation on the fathers' part may be influenced by fatigue brought on by work, or the fathers may find the work sent home by the school to be too difficult to assist. They may even in some instances believe that formal education is the responsibility of the school, not of the girl's family.

Overall, if the father's role can be called supportive, the mother's role can best be described as involved. Only one female Hispanic student reported that her mother was not involved in her education. The responses made by the girls regarding their mothers' roles were usually more elaborative, specific, and concrete, whereas the responses made about their fathers' roles were more general and nondescript.

Research Question 2B: How does Hispanic culture view the intellectual/academic capabilities in males differently from that of females? Do the expectations for academic achievement in males differ from that in females if they have similar academic potential?

On the follow-up questionnaire completed by the 35 participating female Hispanic students, the responses were almost evenly split with 18 (51%) expressing the opinion that there was gender bias some kind and 17 (49%) reporting that there was no preferential gender-specific bias. Typical statements reflecting a gender bias in favor of males were as follows:

- Student 6: Yes, Hispanic boys are usually held on a pedestal in parents' eyes, especially if they are smart, because the boys carry on their name and legacy.
- Student 9: Yes, the boys are praised, while the girls are ignored. Girls are expected to become good housewives, not smart individuals.
- Student 20: Yes, because they expect the boys to make the living and the women to stay at home and not work as the man should.
- Student 23: Yes, I think they still expect the girls to take care of things at home, and boys need to take care of helping out with [other] work.
- Student 25: Yes, just because with Hispanic culture the guys are the ones that are supposed to be at the top, not the girls.
- Student 26: Yes, because he is the guy and is expected to do better because he will be the man in the family.

Responses such as the preceding statements by the primary subjects seem to suggest a gender bias. Since males are expected to assume the role of head of household, they do receive preferential treatment to some extent based upon future role expectations. The preferential treatment is justified by some on the basis of preparation for the traditionally masculine responsibility of providing for a family.

As indicated earlier, 17 (49%) of the research participants stated that they did not perceive preferential treatment as being bestowed on males with similar academic capacity -- for achievement or potential. The following statements are representative of responses that suggest that no gender bias exists:

- Student 2: No, I don't think so because I have a lot of cousins that are very smart and they are guys and they don't have anything I don't have.
- Student 3: That is never the case in my family or with my relatives. But I wouldn't know with other people. In my family, everyone is treated equally in that respect.
- Student 4: That is never the case in my family or with my relatives. But I wouldn't know with other people. In my family, everyone is treated equally in that aspect.

Student 7: No, well in my case, my brother is a very smart guy, and my parents treat us the same.

Student 11: Not really, I feel that we are treated equal.

Student 16: Not really because I don't think they would treat them different just because they are smart.

Nine of the research participants answered the question with the word, "no." The remaining 8 participants provided an explanation and clarification as exemplified in the preceding statements. Several of these research participants acknowledged that the possibility for preferential treatment existed outside of their own family.

Practicing female Hispanic professionals were also asked to respond to a question regarding gender bias on the self-administered questionnaire they were asked to complete. The same basic pattern emerged, but with a variation on the affirmative- response theme. There were more affirmative responses, 5 of 7 (71%), that seemed to confirm gender bias existed. The variation that emerged from the practicing female Hispanic professionals' responses that was not found in the school-age females was that gender bias had existed, but seemed to be on the decline. This pattern of decline was reported by 2 of the 7 (29%) of the practicing female Hispanic professionals.

As stated previously, 5 of 7 (71 %) of the responses made by practicing female Hispanic professionals and reported on the self-administered questionnaire reflected that a belief bias does exist. The following responses and commentary are representative of this thematic response pattern: A local entrepreneur stated that, "Our culture tends to favor men over women," and cited both "male domination" and a "*machisimo* attitude" as being causes. A certified public accountant wrote, "Yes, mostly because there still exists a belief that women will get married, have children, and not work. Where men will always work and develop their careers." She concluded with this reasoning: "Men are a better long-range investment for the family." An

engineer remembered her mother trying to persuade her not to enter into a “man’s field,” and instead, become a “teacher.” She concluded, “So she was holding me back because I am a girl.”

A psychologist practicing in the north central Texas area asserted that boys are treated differently, but said it cannot be linked to academic capacity or academic potential:

Yes, Hispanic boys tend to be treated differently...but that is a general perception regardless of intellect. There is pride in children, but males continue to be responsible for earning wages and providing for families. A smart male provides better potential...Parents push boys more towards higher education, higher earning professions, and higher status positions- that is my observation.

The psychologist’s statement mirrors the certified public accountant’s statement cited earlier: “Men are a better long-range investment for the family.” The psychologist does seem to suggest differential treatment, but this treatment is not based solely on academic ability. It could perhaps better be described as being socio-cultural and socio-economic in design, but regardless of purpose or intent, it is still gender bias. A Hispanic family life specialist for a local Catholic Church made the following observation about how males and females with academic potential or ability were, and are now, treated: “Years ago, maybe, but not so much in today’s society. I feel both are, for the most part, treated equally.” The Hispanic family life specialist’s remarks may be interpreted to represent that a basic, family-dynamic shift is already underway -- a way of thinking and responding that enhances the likelihood that Hispanic females with discernible academic potential will have greater access to higher education and more career options today and in the future.

Research Question 3: What factors determine whether a Hispanic female enrolled in Grades 9-12 who qualifies for admission into the GT program or takes AP coursework actually selects or declines to participate?

The high-achieving Hispanic females enrolled in advance academic coursework were

asked how they came to be identified as being GT or how they came to be placed in AP coursework. To reiterate, to be considered GT, nominations were submitted to the principal, counselor, or GT coordinator. Parents, teachers, or counselors nominated students, but confirmation through testing was required. For pre-AP or AP placement, a satisfactory grade average and/or teacher recommendation was required, according to district policy. The rationale underlying this question was to determine who was involved in the decision to pursue advanced academic placement, especially with regard to the roles the student, the school, and the girl's parents played in the process. If the decision was not made independently by the subject herself, it was also of interest to the researcher if the decision was a collaborative one, and if so, who was involved and what was their role in the process.

During the focus group interviews, the high-achieving female Hispanic students were asked how they came to be enrolled in advanced academic coursework. It was then determined, based on the Hispanic female students' perceptions, that it was the girl herself that was most responsible for her placement (33 %), with teachers being second in influence (12 %); it appears that the family was not as involved in the decision as the girl herself or as a teacher with whom the female student has some type of relationship. (See Table 12.)

Table 12

Whose Idea It Was to Pursue Advanced Academic Course Work

Source	Collaborative (C) or Individual (I)	# Mentions	% of Total
Self	I	14	33
Teacher	I	5	12
Self & Family	C	5	12
Self & Teacher	C	3	7
Parents	C	2	4
Self & Counselor	C	2	4
Mother	I	1	2
Sister	I	1	2
Friend	I	1	2
Self & Mother	C	1	2
Self & Counselor	C	1	2
Sister & Mother	C	1	2
Boyfriend & Mother	C	1	2
Self, Mother & Teacher	C	1	2
Self, Parents & Teacher	C	1	2
Self, Parents, Teacher & Friend	C	1	2
Totals	11 (C); 5 (I)	42	

It appears that the desire of the girl herself is the most significant determinant in whether she takes advanced academic courses. It should also be noted that teachers played a significant role, working both alone and/or in collaboration with others. When the subjects were asked why they chose to take advanced academic course opportunities, teachers once again figured prominently. (See Table 13.)

Table 13

Why Hispanic Females Choose to Take Advantage of Advanced Academic Course Opportunities

Source	# Mentions	% of Total
Teacher encouragement	13	25
Student wanted challenge	12	23
College preparation	7	13
Self-improvement	7	13
Regular classes too easy	5	10
Parental encouragement	3	6
New direction for family	2	4
Competition with others	2	4
Novelty of experience	1	2
Total	52	

Following teacher encouragement (25 %), the reasons given for choosing to participate in advanced academic courses were the student wanting to be challenged (23%) and preparation for college (13 %). Parental encouragement received only 3 of the 52 mentions (6%). High-achieving female Hispanic female students received more encouragement from teachers to challenge themselves academically than from parents or family members. The 7 mentions (13%) of college preparation may indicate that these students saw the opportunity to enhance their academic abilities during high school as preparation for higher education.

An engineer reported on the self-administered questionnaire that she recalled receiving encouragement from a teacher to take advanced academic coursework, but she also stated that it was she herself who “took the initiative” with her education. The engineer also recalled a school counselor who discouraged her from taking extra math classes. Similarly, a current city council member of a major American city described her placement in advanced academic coursework as

being a collaborative decision. She took the initiative, but she too was encouraged by a teacher. A former GT coordinator in the district being studied stated that, based on her experience, Hispanic girls need more encouragement from the teacher than other students with similar abilities. This person went on to say that a relationship with the teacher and a level of trust usually precedes the girl's willingness to take risks. As with the numerous other students in the study, several Hispanic professionals took control of their educations, but they also frequently received support along the way from at least one teacher.

Not all Hispanic females who have advanced academic potential choose to take coursework that is more challenging. Speculative reasons suggested by the district professional educators from the self-administered questionnaire included those summarized in Table 14.

Table 14

Teachers and GT Coordinators Beliefs Why Able Hispanic Females Decide Not to Take Advanced Academic Course Work (n = 12)

Reasoning	# Mentions
No anticipated need	4
No family support	3
Preference for easy classes	2
No habit of independence (including need to fit in, i.e., peer group pressure)	2
Pregnant	1
Married	1
Boyfriend disapproves	1

The most common response to the question regarding the education professionals' beliefs as to why an academically capable Hispanic female might choose not to take advanced academic coursework was, "no anticipated need." This belief was followed by the belief that that family support was absent or insufficient. Supporting the "no family support" pattern of thinking, a

former GT coordinator in the district recalled situations in which the family refused GT services because they felt that it was "treating their daughter differently." The GT coordinator in the district at the time the research was underway stated that taking advanced academic coursework sometimes means that the student "fights cultural expectations." "Cultural expectations" might mean that the daughter is expected to marry and begin a family rather than exploring higher education possibilities.

One teacher responded to the question about why capable Hispanic females choose not to take advanced academic coursework with the following: "They won't fit in at home, nor in their peer groups, and that is critical to them. Sometimes it is even an issue of physical, not just social safety." Implied in this remark, a Hispanic girl's decision to pursue advanced academic coursework is a complicated decision because it may violate cultural norms.

When the high-achieving female Hispanic students were asked if they regretted taking advanced academic coursework during the focus group interviews, the responses indicated that the majority did not. Of the 42 girls surveyed, 29 (69 %) stated that they did not regret taking advanced academic coursework; 13 (31 %) stated that they had at times regretted the decision, and none stated that they regretted taking advanced academic coursework. (See Table 15.) The most common reasons cited for regretting the decision at times were excessive homework and diminished amount of free time

Table 15

Hispanic Female Students Regretting Their Decision to Take Advanced Academic Course Work (n = 42)

	Yes	%	No	%	Sometimes	%
# Responses	0	0	29	61	13	31

Another factor that appears to contribute to whether or not a Hispanic female participates in advanced academic coursework involves the contribution of one or more classroom teachers. On the self-administered questionnaire completed by the education professionals, the educators were asked to describe what it was that differentiated a gifted student from other students. The teacher responses for student characteristics were classified as being either cognitive, intuitive, affective, or other. (See Table 16.)

Table 16

Teacher Perceptions of Gifted Student Differentiation from Other Students (n = 12)

	Cognitive	Intuitive	Affective	Other
Motivation				7
Family values				5
Curiosity		4		
Natural ability	4			
Unusual interest in material	4			
Supportive environment				3
Task commitment	2			
Intrinsic knowledge	2			
Creativity		2		
Sensitivity			1	
Educational attainment				6
Level of parents				1
Totals	10	6	1	22

The most common responses were cognitive behaviors and characteristics such as natural ability, task commitment, and an unusual level of interest. Frequently mentioned also were intuitive characteristics and behaviors such as creativity and curiosity. There were 16 mentions were behaviors and characteristics not exclusively gifted-and-talented in nature. Among these

characteristics and behaviors not usually directly attributable to giftedness were subject area knowledge, study habits, reaction to a supportive work environment, and being school-centered. Teachers also mentioned motivation with great frequency, but motivation should not be considered synonymous with task commitment. Task commitment can be described as prolonged pursuit of an objective, with an unusually high level of intensity and intrinsic drive. Motivation might encompass this behavioral characteristic, but to a far less intense degree. An experienced professional educator should be able to distinguish between task commitment and motivation. Research indicates that teachers are probably much better at identifying advanced placement candidates than genuinely gifted individuals. One teacher defined the typical advanced placement student as someone willing to apply hard work to a subject that they are smart enough to understand. Curiously, this teacher's definition of a typical advanced placement student could also be used to define a competent and committed public school teacher. If this description is accurate, they may be responding in some degree to their own inherent characteristics.

Education professionals, including nine current teachers and three GT coordinators, who previously taught in the district were asked to complete a self-administered questionnaire regarding their experience and credentials. The teachers were experienced, and for the most part, were not new to the district. Cumulatively, five did have some GT training, but only three had received training in working with gifted minority students (GTMS). Refer to Table 17 for education professionals' credential descriptors.

Those surveyed were two former GT coordinators, as well as the current GT coordinator. Several staff members had GT training, but only two of them were currently in the classroom. The other three were currently serving as administrators. Of the three who had training working with gifted, ethnic minority students, all were current or former GT coordinators. Since so many

teachers had little or no training in working with gifted students, this may explain why they were typically unable to identify many generally accepted gifted behaviors and characteristics with a great deal of accuracy.

Table 17

Teacher and Administrator Experience and Credentials (n = 13)

Respondent	Total Yrs	Yrs in District	Level of Education	Specialized Training			
				GT	AP	ESL	GTMS
History	14	14	BA		Yes		
Art	12	12	BA				
Math	21	11	BA				
Foreign language	9	1	BA				
Foreign language	11	3	BA				
English	20	5	MA	Yes	Yes		
Art	20	8	BA	Yes			
Science	9	9	BA				
Geography	9	9	BA				
Administrator*	13	6	MA	Yes			Yes
Administrator*	20	10	MA	Yes		Yes	Yes
Administrator**	13	11	BA	Yes			
Averages/Totals	14.3	8.3		5	2	1	2

Note. *Denotes former GT coordinator in the district. **Denotes current GT coordinator in the district.

Research Question 4: Do Hispanic females with advanced academic potential and ability hide their intellectual/academic capabilities at home and/or at school, and if so, why?

The 42 high-achieving female Hispanic students were asked in the focus group interviews

if they ever concealed their intelligence or presented a diminished sense of ability, and if they did, from whom and what was the reason underlying this behavior. This behavior has been labeled “academic self-handicapping” for the purpose of this study. Academic self-handicapping can be described as a type of strategic under-achievement used to obtain a goal or goals. It was of interest whether this behavior, academic self-handicapping, was a personal decision, a reaction to peer pressure, or the result of cultural expectations . The rationale behind this question was to determine if most high-achieving Hispanic female students in this study preferred not to stand out in class or received preferential treatment, as suggested by research reported in this study’s “Literature Review.” The results showed that these students did hide or conceal their intelligence or abilities with significant frequency. (See Table 18.)

Twenty-two of 42 of the subjects surveyed (52%) admitted to concealment, which seems to indicate a problem. The reason for this behavior could be a relationship or trust issue, or it could be a coping mechanism to earn or maintain peer approval. Whatever the reason, the more this behavior occurs, the more significant it becomes. A gifted under-achiever presents one of the most frustrating situations that a teacher can encounter, and it is also likely to cause consternation at home as well.

Table 18 shows that when academic self-handicapping occurred, it most frequently involved a teacher. To a lesser extent, the high-achieving adolescent girls concealed their abilities from their friends and family members. Possibly related to the teacher response is the “self doubt or lack of confidence” answer that was the most common reason cited by the subjects for concealing intelligence and abilities. The “fear of being singled out” may be similarly highly related to the desire of the subjects to conceal their academic and social distinction from their friends, or at least to minimize its effect. The choice to utilize this behavior modification may be

cultural in nature, or it may speak more to the climate and culture of the school, the classroom, or a particular teacher. The “strategic ignorance” response is an umbrella term used to describe attempts to manipulate the situation or to leverage some form of advantage to achieve an end. “Not wanting to bear the pressure of having to be smart all the time” is an example of a response provided by one of the subjects. One possible solution for this behavior may be to moderate feelings of anxiety in stressful situations.

Table 18

Academic Self-Handicapping: From Whom, and Why

		<i>n</i>
Conceals Intelligence	Yes	22
	No	20
From Whom	Teachers	13
	Friends	6
	Counselors	6
	Parents	5
	Others	3
Reason	Self doubt or lack of confidence	12
	Fear of being singled out	8
	Strategic Ignorance	4

To understand how social relations and peer pressure have affected these subjects, a question was posed to determine whether their intelligence, abilities, or present academic path has in any way been affected by their popularity with males and other females in their peer group. It was assumed that these subjects have been driven to “fit in” and be accepted by their

peers. The rationale behind this line of questioning was twofold: first, to determine to what degree their intelligence and aspirations have driven their behavior; and second, to determine to what degree their need for male and female peer group approval and acceptance have influenced their academic choices and ultimately their career path. One GT coordinator speculated that a girl's success in advanced academic coursework depends on the student achieving a balance between academic and social needs. The primary subjects indicated that they believed that distinguishing themselves academically had no significant effect on their popularity with boys. A different result was found in terms of popularity with adolescent girls. (See Table 19.)

Table 19

Does Taking Advanced Academic Course Work Affect Popularity with Peers?

	Yes	No	Sometimes	Positive Effect	Negative Effect
With males	6	34	2	6	0
With females	13	28	1	1	12

As shown in Table 19, six of the subjects surveyed indicated that they felt their academic differentiation had a positive effect on their relations with males from their peer group, and none of the subjects believed that it had a negative effect on their popularity. On the other hand, one of the practicing, female Hispanic professionals, a professor who completed the self-administered questionnaire, recalled that being smart made a girl “not date material” in her high school, and that being in a school honor society meant “stay away -- she is too smart.”

The social dynamic slightly differed with respect to other females in these students’ peer group. Of the 42 subjects surveyed, 13 (31 %) indicated that their abilities and actions did impact their peer relations with females, and 12 subjects (29 %) believed that it hindered or had some

type of negative effect on their relations with their female peers. Overall, the girls believed that their intelligence, abilities, and campus conspicuousness had a negative effect on their popularity with their adolescent female peer group; however, the same high-achieving Hispanic females' popularity with their adolescent male peer group was overwhelmingly positive, with no reports by subjects of negative effects resulting from one's intelligence, academic abilities, or campus conspicuousness.

Related to the social acceptance theme explored in the previous question, the 42 high-achieving Hispanic female students were asked during the focus group interviews if they felt that they were being pressured to marry and begin a family. The results showed that marriage and family did not seem to be in the short-term plans. Only four of the 42 (10%) subjects interviewed reported being pressured to marry, while 37 (88 %) indicated that they did not feel this type of pressure. (See Table 20.)

Table 20

Hispanic Females Receiving Pressure to Marry from Parents (n = 42)

	Yes	No	Already Married
# Responses	4	37	1

One of the practicing, female Hispanic professionals who completed the self-administered questionnaire recalled being pressured to marry while she was in high school, but the pressure originated from grandparents. Another practicing female Hispanic professional who completed the self-administered questionnaire also recalled that there was an understanding in her family that the girls would complete at least one year of college before they married. Four of the 42 (10%) high-achieving Hispanic female students who participated in the focus group

interviews reported that there was pressure to marry. Data gathered from the high-achieving Hispanic female students during focus group interviews also indicated that currently marriage was neither in the forefront of their plans, nor was their marriage a preoccupation with their family. (See Tables 20 and 21.)

The high-achieving female Hispanic students who participated in the focus group interviews were asked to predict what they would be doing regarding their education and marital status both five and ten years in the future. The rationale behind this question was to ascertain how the subjects planned to balance a desire for academic and intellectual growth with cultural and social expectations. As shown in Table 18, 41 of the 42 (98%) Hispanic female students who participated in the focus group interviews stated that they intended to attend college. (See Table 21.)

Table 21

Short- and Long-Term Goals and Plans Regarding Education and Marital Status

Short-term Goals (5 Year Plan)		Long-term Goals (10 Year Plan)	
Marriage	3	Married and working	22
No marriage	39	Not married and working	15
College	41	Married and attending college	4
No college	1	No marriage plans and working	1

As shown in Table 21, the subjects indicated that marriage and family were not in their immediate plans. The same subjects' ten-year plans had over 26 of 42 (62 %) expecting marriage and family to be part of their lives. The paradigm change that is seems emergent is the expectation of entry in college preceding marriage and family.

Research Question 5: Based on information obtained from the research conducted, what intervention strategies have or have not proven successful in promoting significant academic achievement Hispanic females with above-average academic potential in a selected north central Texas high school?

Based on information and perceptions supplied by education professionals within the district who completed the self-administered questionnaires, the representation of Hispanic females in advanced academic programs, significant GT and/or AP participation, at this particular high school can potentially be attributed to several factors. First, the use of the Naglieri Nonverbal Test Grades K-12 (NNAT) and the Torrance Tests for Creative Thinking (TTCT) have probably opened the doors for many students with academic potential that might have passed unnoticed, especially individuals who are gifted and creative, but may not be linguistically advanced. These tests help signal the presence of out-of-the ordinary potential. Another intervention that likely has enhanced the success of identifying students with advanced academic potential has been the addition of a Campus Instructional Teacher (CIT). As explained earlier, the campus CIT routinely receives GT training, and one of the assigned roles of the CIT is to identify students with giftedness of some nature, as well as to assist the classroom teacher in the delivery of a modified curriculum and instructional methods. As described earlier, classroom teachers may lack training in the identification of giftedness and may have difficulty with the process. Some typical GT characteristics mentioned by teachers surveyed were as follows: family values, reaction to supportive environment, and educational attainment level of parents. Though these remarks may be frequently associated with gifted students, they are not precisely GT characteristics. Instead, they are conditions that may usually support the gifted characteristics the students already possess, but they are not exclusive to gifted students or the home lives of gifted students.

Overall, the teaching staff cannot be considered diverse. It is predominately European American in composition. There were few minority staff members, which potentially could have translated into fewer role models and persons with whom the students might form a trusting, mutually beneficial relationship. It seems that many staff members possess an affinity to bond with the Hispanic females under study. Results showed that when asked why they chose to take advanced academic coursework, the Hispanic female students' most cited reason was "teacher encouragement." As reported earlier, the relationship between the Hispanic female and a particular teacher seemed to be paramount in importance. As also noted earlier, the current GT coordinator for the district was quoted as saying, "Hispanic girls seem to need more encouragement from the teacher than students with similar abilities..." The relationship with the teacher and level of trust usually precedes the girl's willingness to take risks." Even though the representation of minority members on staff was not high, numerous staff members demonstrated capacity to bond with their exceptional students in ways that promoted a willingness to excel academically and to strive to reach a fuller level of potential. This may account for an unusually high number of female Hispanic students choosing to take advanced academic coursework.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

After reviewing the available literature, it was anticipated that the percentage of Hispanic females enrolled in advanced academic programs, (i.e., gifted and talented (GT) and advanced placement (AP)) in a large, predominately European American school, would be very low. However, that was not the case. Instead, the representation was very strong. During the 2003-2004 school year, 36 of the estimated 122 Hispanic females enrolled in advanced academic courses and/or programs. In fall 2005, when the first surveys were conducted, the number had risen to 46. The findings seem to indicate that the school had done a more than satisfactory job in identifying and placing adolescent Hispanic females with advanced academic potential in courses of study appropriate to their academic characteristics.

During the evolution of the schools' advanced academic programs, GT and AP, two significant changes took place. First, a position entitled campus instructional teacher (CIT) was created, and one CIT was assigned to each campus. One responsibility of this individual was to be very involved in the GT program at each campus. The CIT, in turn, received additional training in the area of GT. The CIT assumed the primary responsibility for identifying students with GT potential and getting them into the program; thus, for the most part, the CIT relieved teachers of this task. The CIT, being a step removed from constant interaction with the students as well as parents, may have increased objectivity by allowing the evaluator to be more strongly influenced by products and less by the personality and behavior of the potential GT candidate, and/or the expectations of the parents. Furthermore, positioning someone to specialize in the area of GT identification probably increased the accuracy of the process and added to the diversity of those identified.

The second significant change was in the area of testing. The Naglieri Nonverbal Test (NNAT) and the Torrance Test of Creativity (TTAT) were introduced into the identification phase. Both tests are designed to eliminate much of the cultural and linguistic bias associated with other tests of similar purpose. When put in place, these tests probably did not exclude Hispanic students to the same degree as past testing arrangements. Having a good test is critical because this research suggests that classroom teachers, especially those with little or no GT training, can be poor evaluators of GT potential, ability, and products.

As for the AP program, there seemed to be no significant change in policy or procedure. At the center of the process, a satisfactory grade average and/or a teacher recommendation remain the leading criteria. One difference might be that the girls were making significantly higher grades than in the past. If, and why the girls are making higher grades at the time of the study than in the past is unknown. Another reason could be that teachers were more likely to recommend Hispanic girls for AP classes than in the past. The increase in teacher recommendations for Hispanic girls might have been the result of knowledge that underrepresentation is a problem, or it could have been a reaction to the cumulative influence of multiculturalism in contemporary education policies, practices, and formal teacher education and preparation programs.

Author D.H. Figueredo (2002) writes of a concept called “*confianza*.” “*Confianza* means trust, but it also means more: ‘*confianza*’ is not merely the placement of trust in a person but it’s suggestive of a sentiment, a kind of kinship” (p. 153).” Figueredo also writes, “*confianza* also helps cement friendship with individuals who are not blood-related” (p. 153). Part of the success of the school’s staff might be attributable to the staffs’ ability to create and maintain *confianza* with the Hispanic female students This trusting relationship perhaps encouraged academic risk-

taking, which in turn might have resulted in a significant percentage of Hispanic female students being willing to take academic and, in some cases, social and cultural risks to achieve academic success.

There seemed to be a special relationship that existed between this Hispanic, female, high-achieving character-type and the teachers who worked with them. The Hispanic female students seemed to function best when the teachers played the part of mentors. However, the mentorship was not in a traditional, corporate sense of the word. The teacher was not a guide or advisor, but rather a source of trust and safety for the Hispanic females who took their classes. A teacher who fulfills this requirement seems to be illustrative of a point that author Beverly Tatum (1997) makes that “simply hiring a diverse teaching staff is not the answer to bridging the cultural divide between students and staff that exists at some schools, but getting teachers with superior preparation and teachers with whom students can relate to is a better investment of time than simply hiring minority teachers based entirely on their ethnicity” (p. 125). In this particular context, two factors may be in effect simultaneously. The first is the possibility that the high-achieving Hispanic female possesses a strong “interpersonal intelligence” (Gardner, 1993) which can be described as the ability to understand and cooperate with other people in various circumstances and under multiple conditions. The second factor is a desire for a mentor (Romo, 2005) who has certain characteristics, such as being considered successful, authoritative, and trustworthy, as well as someone who can validate the student’s merit or worthiness, place in the class or school, and their ethnic authenticity. While the ethnicity of the teacher may carry weight with many, the ability of teachers, ethnicity aside, to relate to student diversity should be not underestimated.

Of course, the parents of the Hispanic female students appear to be tremendous influences on their daughters, far more so than the school or the staff. For the most part, this study showed that the parents were relatively young. The Hispanic females reported 36 to 40 as being the most common age cluster for parents. These families were not on average extremely large with 3.17 children per family. The relatively small number of siblings might have allowed for more attention for each child as well as the ability of the parents to devote more financial resources to each child. The small size of the family units might also be attributable to the relative youth of the parents. Ten of the 35 family units investigated (29%) had no brothers, and four reported being only children. This means in 14 of the 35 households researched (40%), the females did not have to compete with a male sibling for parental attention and the allocation of financial resources. The size of the family, as well as the lack of male competition for attention and resources, might have been partially responsible for the strong representation of Hispanic females in advanced academic programs.

The range of education attained that was attributed to the parents and grandparents of the adolescent girls surveyed was extremely broad and relatively evenly distributed from elementary to college graduates. (See Table 8.) In general, of the two parents, the mothers could be described as being slightly more educated. Of the fathers, 3 of the 34 (9 %) were reported as being college graduates, with 6 more (18%) having attended some college; 4 mothers (11 %) were reported to be college graduates, and 6 more (17 %) were reported to have attended some college. Of the parents, 3 fathers (9 %) and 7 mothers (20 %) were described as being high school graduates. Of the fathers, 19 of 34 (56 %) and 15 of 35 (44 %) were described as having earned less than a high school diploma. Based on the data collected from the high-achieving Hispanic female students on the follow-up questionnaire, the fathers probably should not be

described as being highly educated, only 15 of 34 (44 %) had earned a high school diploma or better. This data does not match Taylor's (2005) findings that fathers who immigrated were either "highly educated or more or less uneducated."

Perhaps Taylor's (2005) findings about fathers who immigrate having a more progressive attitude toward gender equity can be seen as parallel to this study's finding that of the fathers researched, most seemed to prefer women who had achieved a higher level of education than they had. However, this could be a product of the fathers leaving school early to work and provide for their families. It could also be attributable to Taylor's (2005) suggestion that some fathers believe that by working together with a spouse who is an income earner outside of the house, more opportunities can be made available for their children.

None of the girls reported a parent or grandparent with a degree beyond a bachelor of arts (BA). Both the fathers and mothers of the girls seemed to be better educated than their parents. However, it is interesting to note that a high percentage (10 of 35 or 29.7%) of the girls reported a grandmother who had graduated from high school. Perhaps this information, coupled with the slightly higher academic achievement of the girls' mothers, reveals in the girls' lineage a tradition of female academic achievement that has been transmitted to the Hispanic female students being studied.

Neither of two mothers of the girls who were interviewed reported any negative feelings about their daughters' growing independence. Furthermore, none reported undue concerns about their daughters attending college in the near future. The mothers also indicated that they did not fear that their daughters would forsake cultural and family traditions if they became too educated or were required to move away to go to college or pursue a career. No fathers of the girls participated in personal interviews. This might be attributable to work schedules, or it might be

attributable to the belief that school matters are to be handled by the girl's mother. Also, it should be noted that the family interviews were scheduled during a period of social unrest regarding immigration reform measures being debated at all levels of government. These events might also have contributed to low parental turnout.

While the attitudes toward education by both parents were basically identical, it was generally the mother of the girl who understood the complexity of the process far better than the girl's father. Both parents revered education, but to the father, as the adolescent female Hispanic subjects described it, higher education seemed to be an abstract concept whereas to the mothers, education was a process, a path, and a participatory event. To the mothers, education was something you do; to the fathers, education was something you have.

Of the two parents, it is the mother who seemed to have the more difficult job. Pipher's (1994) research makes two compelling points relevant to this research project. First, (1994) Pipher believes that the physical presence of the father is not always the most critical variable in the father-daughter relationship, but rather emotional availability. This "emotional availability" (p. 23) permits the father to work long hours, do shift work that keeps him away from home at odd hours, or even work out of town or out of state. The father can still be close to his female children if there is a strong emotional bond. Similarly, Taylor's (2005) study mentions that involved Hispanic fathers interact with their daughters through what he refers to as an "interchange of perspectives about their everyday lives" (p.7). The similar concepts of Pipher's "emotional availability" (p. 23) and Taylor's "interchange of perspectives about their everyday lives" (p. 7) are both consistent with the findings of this research study.

Another point made by Pipher (1994) is that while a father is generally praised for any involvement he has with his daughter or daughters, the mother must balance her involvement.

Mothers are often criticized unless their involvement is precisely the correct amount. With too little, they may be scorned, and with too much, they may be labeled as smothering. If Pipher is correct, then even the perceived contribution and level of involvement by the father may be overestimated in many instances. The academically successful Hispanic adolescent females in this study seemed to have mothers who were able to be involved and supportive without being controlling. And as for the fathers, the critical variable is the connection with the daughter described earlier as “emotional availability” (Pipher, 2004, p. 23) or consistently providing an opportunity for an “interchange of perspectives about their everyday lives” (Taylor, 2005, p. 7).

The point of view held by fathers in this study is consistent with Taylor’s (2005) findings that fathers stress the importance of education, but when doing so, they make it sound as if “they were reading from a teleprompter” (p.9). What the fathers said about education in the current study was probably genuine, but they knew or understood little about how to achieve significantly in high school or prepare for higher education. These findings, both the findings in this research study and the research done by Taylor (2005), may reflect Ruby Payne’s (1998) theory that parents of low socio-economic standing (in this case the father especially), tend to revere education and stress its importance to their children. But in their presentation the words and concepts come across as more abstract than real and practical (59). In this research study, it seemed that the father’s chief role in education was that of family goal-setter, and the mother’s chief role was that of career coach.

It was the mother of the girls who acted as if the education of the daughter was a daily project, a concrete series of activities and events that required maintenance and guidance. It was, for the most part and with rare exceptions, the girl’s mother who made sure that the books on the summer reading list were obtained; it was the girl’s mother who drove her daughter to

tutorials when necessary; it was the girl's mother who initiated and maintained contact with the girl's teachers; etc.

Earlier studies done by experts in the field in of GT have indicated that mothers and fathers of gifted children have radically different perspectives about how their children differ from other children. Silverman (1986) contends that the mother knows that her child is different in a gifted sense from infancy when the mother first begins to notice developmental differences between her child and other children. But, from the father's point of view, there is only potential giftedness until the child's potential has been proven by adult achievements. Silverman (1986) also remarks that it is the mother who grows "uneasy" and begins to question if she and her husband and the school are doing enough to support their gifted children (pp. 56-57). The findings of this research study seem to parallel Silverman's ideas about parental involvement. These ideas suggest that the father is more likely to take a wait-and-see attitude toward the exceptionality of his children, while the mother is more apt to be proactive with regard to her child's education.

Another issue related to family, culture, and tradition that has been researched was gender bias. There is research in the area of gender bias that frequently reports that males are treated differently than females. As for males in Hispanic culture, it is often reported that male children have more freedom to come and go as they please (Sue & Sue, 1990, p. 233). Similarly, Shaffer and Gordon (2005) suggest that in Hispanic/Latino culture families do allow for different social privileges based on gender, particularly as they grow older. This research seems to confirm that gender bias does exist. Of the high-achieving female Hispanics surveyed in the current study, approximately one half (51%) stated that they believed that Hispanic boys received preferential treatment. When practicing Hispanic female professionals were asked the

same question, 5 of the 7 (71%) stated that, in some ways, boys are treated differently than girls. Even though the percentage of Hispanic females who believed that males receive different or preferential treatment from their parents seems to be on the decline, it should be noted that 10 of the 35 girls (29%) surveyed had no brother in their family, and 4 of the 35 (11%) were the only child in their family. If these 14 girls had brothers with whom to compete, the percentage of those believing in different or preferential treatment might have been higher.

In this study, examples of how males and females were treated differently seemed to center around preparation for future roles in the family for males and cultural traditions for females. Justification for preferential treatment for males involved preparation to assume the role of head of household. Two of the seven practicing Hispanic female professionals stated that males were the better investment of family resources. When the high-achieving Hispanic females were asked about gender bias, their responses were more varied, but they seemed to cluster around cultural and traditional themes, more than on allocation of financial resources. Gender bias may not be as detrimental to academic and personal success of the academically-capable, adolescent, Hispanic female. Along this line, one should note Bronkhurst's (1977) finding that this demographic seems to be more adaptive to novel situations and to be less reliant on established behavioral patterns when encountering adverse situations. The implication of this research is that gender bias may not be an almost insurmountable obstacle.

Perhaps most importantly, a theme emerged from this research study regarding the girl's mother and the daughter's education – the theme of independence. The mother's interest and involvement that is reflected in this study is consistent with Silverman's (1986) theory about parental involvement, especially from the mothers' perspective. In the current study, a recurrent

theme in the girls' responses was how their mothers stress that education can lead to independence and self-determination.

A line of questioning in the current study, centered around why these high-achieving Hispanic females were choosing to pursue advanced academic coursework. Findings indicated that it was the Hispanic girl herself that was chiefly responsible for initiating advanced academic opportunities. Of the 42 subjects surveyed, 14 (33%) stated that it was their idea to take advanced academic coursework. Teachers and parents combined for 10 mentions (24%), with each receiving the same number of mentions (5). While it seemed to be the girl's idea to seek advanced academic opportunities, this research also suggested that teachers were central to the process also. Teacher encouragement was the leading reason cited by the girls as to why they were involved in advanced academic programs. It would seem that while it was usually the Hispanic female's idea to pursue advanced academic course work, the teacher's role may be to validate the girl's decision. None of the Hispanic females surveyed indicated that they regretted taking advanced academic courses, even though doing so meant a sacrifice of free time and more rigorous coursework.

Another area of interest was whether or not Hispanic females with advanced academic potential were concealing their abilities, and if so, from whom and why. This research showed that approximately one half (52%) of the girls surveyed indicated that they selectively employed academic self-handicapping. When this behavior occurred, the girls deliberately concealed their ability and potential from teachers and friends most frequently. The two most common reasons cited for this behavior were self-doubt (lack of confidence) and fear of being singled out. Concealing ability and potential from teachers because of self-doubt or lack of confidence is consistent with a desire to maintain a positive self image with someone they respect or hold in

high regard. That they actively and purposefully concealed their ability and potential from their peers for fear of being singled out is not a surprise. Simmons (2002) states in *Odd Girl Out* that of all the insults that girls can hurl at each other, oddly one of the worst is “she’s all that” (p. 10). Simmons describes a girl who is “all that” as being someone who is assertive, supremely self-confident, eager, and willing to differentiate herself from her peer group, and, perhaps above all else, seeming immune to peer pressure. The girls surveyed indicated that there was some negative effect on their popularity with other girls because they were involved in advanced academic courses and programs, but the overall effect was not strong enough to suppress the girls’ desire to distinguish themselves from their peer group and stand out academically. Although it did seem to exist on this campus and it did impact the thoughts and actions of many of the girls surveyed, being “all that” did not seem to be the force on this campus that it may be elsewhere.

Recommendations for Future Research

Recommendations for further research that could potentially be of benefit to the educational community might include the following. It is suggested that one area for future research should be to determine more precisely the role of the father in the education of daughters who are capable of advanced academic coursework. In doing this research project, direct interaction with the father proved to be problematic. Perhaps in future research projects, the fathers of high-achieving Hispanic adolescent females could be interviewed at their place of employment. The fathers may feel more at ease participating in this type of activity at work where they feel comfortable, and perhaps more in control. The workplace may be preferable to the father over the home, where the father might feel obligated to provide the “teleprompter-

type” responses alluded to earlier, especially in the presence of his spouse and daughter (s). A second area of possible research could be to track these high-achieving Hispanic females to determine how many begin college and how many are able to complete college. A third area of research could be to determine if there is a positive correlation between socioeconomic standing and participation of adolescent Hispanic females with advanced academic potential in advanced academic coursework. A final area of research could be to explore certain aspects of the career-coach role/relationship that – to see whether the phenomena can be duplicated with any other minority, non-minority, and/or at-risk students.

Implications of this research include the possibility that multiculturalism may be reaching a stage of maturity in its application in the classrooms, as evidenced by the manner in which primarily European-American teachers are able to bond with Hispanic students. Another implication of this research is that teachers are not as skilled in discerning gifted characteristics in their students as they should be. It should not come as a surprise that teachers new to the profession or the typical general education classroom teacher should have difficulty identifying the gifted or the marginally gifted, but advanced placement (AP) teachers and teachers with GT certification or experience should be able to evaluate academic potential with a far greater degree of accuracy. Since simple training has not successfully addressed this problem in the past, perhaps an approach based on action research might prove more successful. This research also seems to imply and possibly confirm that mothers, more so than the fathers, are the ones keenly aware of the developmental differences between their children and other children in their peer group.

In conclusion, probable catalysts for strong representation of Hispanic females in advanced academic programs seem to be as follows:

1. A progressive approach to identification of achievement potential that is not solely or predominately based on language use and language development is beneficial to Hispanic female participation in advanced academic programs and courses.
2. The mother's evolving role/relationship as her daughter's career coach might be developed into an intervention that might prove successful in other applications, possibly for any at-risk population.
3. When the father's physical presence is not possible or consistent, the high-achieving Hispanic females can still benefit academically if the father can provide for their daughters "emotional availability" or if there exist routine opportunities for the "interchange of perspectives about their everyday lives" between the father and the daughter.
4. Males do seem to receive different or preferential treatment, but the overall effect does not seem debilitating to high-achieving Hispanic females with advanced academic potential.
5. High-achieving Hispanic females seem to benefit from a mentor-type relationship with teachers, regardless of the teacher's gender or ethnicity, but not exactly in the traditional sense of mentorship (focus on training). The relationship must be based more on trust (*confianza*) with the student enjoying a opportunity to grow and develop in an atmosphere that offers protection from adverse consequences for expression or failure.
6. High-achieving Hispanic females do occasionally hide or conceal their abilities and intelligence from teachers and parents, but not so much as from their peers.
7. High-achieving Hispanic females seem benefit from a higher degree of immunity from peer pressure to conform to social expectations than their middle class, European American female counterparts, thus allowing them more freedom to differentiate themselves without concern for negative social repercussions.

This study seems to indicate that a new type of Hispanic female student is emerging. This new type of student is more assertive academically, more visible on campus and in the classroom, and not as marriage-and-family oriented as might be believed by teachers, society, peers, and perhaps even their parents.

APPENDIX
QUESTIONNAIRES

Please answer the Following Questions

- How old are you? _____
- What is your classification? Fr. _____ Soph. _____ Jr. _____ Sr. _____
- How many years have you been in this school district? (If this is your first year in the district, circle 1 below.)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

- Have you been identified as being gifted and talented by this school district?

Yes _____ No _____

- Do you take one or more Advanced Placement (AP) class? Yes _____ No _____
- When you take home your grade report, who usually wants to see it first?

- What are your favorite classes/subjects (Favorite to Least Favorite)

- Please complete the following statements:

“In five years, I will be _____

_____.”

“In ten years, I will be _____

_____.”

- How did you come to be placed in a GT program or start taking AP classes? Was it your idea, a teacher’s, a counselor’s, or that of someone else?

Person _____

How you came to be placed in an advanced academic program, GT or AP (Explain)

- Do you ever regret your decision to participate in an advanced academic program, GT or AP?

Yes _____ No _____ Sometimes _____

If yes, why? _____

If no, why? _____

Sometimes _____

- Do you ever attempt to hide your intelligence or present yourself as less intelligent than you truly are? If yes, from whom, and why?

Yes _____ No _____ From Whom _____

Why? _____

- Do you believe that choosing to take advanced academic course offerings, GT or AP, has in any way affected your popularity with other girls?

If yes, explain why you think it to be so; if no, then explain why you think it has not.

- Do you ever feel pressured to marry and begin a family instead of going to college or beginning a career of some kind? If yes, from whom does the pressure originate?

From Whom? _____

Explanation/Elaboration _____

- Do you ever feel invisible or overlooked at school? If yes, explain.

- How would your father and mother complete the following statement made by another individual about you?

Father Completing Statement: "You must be so proud of your daughter, she _____

”

Mother Completing Statement: "You must be so proud of your daughter, she _____

”

1. Do you have a favorite teacher? YES NO If you answered "YES," please describe what it is about this person that makes him or her your favorite. (Specify whether it is a man or woman)

2. What are the ages of your Father and Mother? (Circle the age group that is most accurate.)

Father	Less than 30	30-35	36-40	41-45	46-50	Over 50
Mother	Less than 30	30-35	36-40	41-45	46-50	Over 50

3. How many children are in your family? _____ How many are girls? _____

4. Describe your father's and mother's involvement in your education.

Father _____

Mother _____

5. Answer the following statements as they would apply to your father.

- Works many hours and is not at home much Yes No
- It tired when he gets home because he works so hard Yes No
- The work sent home from school is too difficult for him to be of much assistance Yes No
- He does not consider helping you with school work to be his role or responsibility Yes No

6. Please describe or list any other reasons that you can think of that might prevent your father from being more involved in your education.

7. Do you know any girls who are very smart, but choose not to take advanced academic courses, such as Pre-AP, AP or GT? If yes, explain why you think they have made this choice.

8. Do you think that Hispanic boys who are very smart are treated differently by their parents or grandparents than Hispanic girls who are very smart?

9. List the schools you have attended in the past five years. Work backwards from the district you are in now.

10. What are the educational attainment levels of your Father, Mother, a Grandfather, and a Grandmother? (highest grade completed, high school graduate, vocational school, some college, college graduate, etc. for example.) Be as specific as possible.

Father _____

Mother _____

Grandfather _____

Grandmother _____

“The Representation of Hispanic Females in Gifted and Talented and Advanced Placement Programs in a Selected North-Central Texas Public High School”

Please respond as accurately as possible to the following questions.

Personal

1.How many years have you been a professional educator? _____

2.How many years have you been employed by the _____ ISD? _____

3.Indicate your highest level of educational attainment. _____

Philosophical

4.In your opinion, what is it that differentiates a child with high academic potential, GT or AP, from other students?

Specialized

5.In your interactions with parents of Hispanic female students who are in GT or AP, with whom is contact generally made? Father, Mother, other, (specify).

6.Have you ever received any specialized training in the area of giftedness in ethnic minority youth? If so, describe the training.

7.If you suspected that a female Hispanic student in your school were gifted, but had not been identified what would you do?

8.Based on your experience, in what ways (if any) do Hispanic females with high ability or potential perform in class that differs from the ways other students perform?

9.Have you ever noticed that a Hispanic female with high ability or potential is purposefully performing academically at a level that is significantly below her potential? If so, please speculate as to the reason.

10.If a Female Hispanic student were gifted and/or talented, but had limited English proficiency, how would you know?

11.Do you know of any Hispanic female students with high ability or potential who chose not to participate in GT or AP programs? If so, what were her reasons? Speculate if necessary.

Questionnaire (Practicing Hispanic Professional)

Please respond to the following. Attach additional sheets for comments if desired.

1. When you were in high school, when you took your grade report home, who usually wanted to see it first? _____

2. When you were in high school, how would your father have completed the following statement made by another individual about you?

“You must be so proud of your daughter, she _____”

3. When you were in high school, how would your mother have completed the following statement made by another individual about you?

“You must be so proud of your daughter, she _____”

4. When you were in high school, what were your favorite and least favorite classes?

Favorite _____

Least Favorite _____

5. When you were in high school, if you were placed in a GT program or took AP coursework, was the idea yours, a teacher’s, a counselor’s, or that of someone else?

6. If you did participate in a GT program or take AP coursework while in high school, do you ever regret your decision? If so, why?

7. When you were in high school, did you ever attempt to hide your intelligence or present yourself as less intelligent than you truly were? If so, why?

8. Do you believe that choosing to take advanced academic offerings, GT and AP, while you were in high school in any way affected your popularity with boys? If so, please elaborate.

9. Do you believe that choosing to advanced academic offerings, GT or AP, while in high school in any way affected your popularity with other girls? If so, please elaborate.

10. Did you ever feel invisible or overlooked while in high school? If yes, explain.

11. Did you ever feel pressure to marry and begin a family instead of going to college or beginning a career of some kind? If so, from whom did the pressure originate?

12. What advice would you give to the parents of a Hispanic girl who is probably gifted and/or talented or who is capable of advanced academic achievement in some area?

Name _____

Profession _____

Practicing Hispanic Female Professional Follow-up

Please respond to the following questions.

1. List any barriers or obstacles that may have prevented your father from being more involved in your education than he was or wanted to be?

2. List any barriers or obstacles that may have prevented your mother from being more involved in your education than she was or wanted to be?

3. Do you think that Hispanic boys who are very smart are treated differently by their parents than Hispanic girls of similar intellectual ability? If yes, in what way or ways?

Please respond to the following questions.

1.What is the name of your daughter’s favorite teacher? _____

2.How many hours per week do you work on average? _____

3.What time do you usually get home from work? _____

4.What type of work do you do? _____

5.What was your father’s occupation? _____

6.Why did you move to this district? Was t mainly for? (choose one)

- Economic Reasons (better pay, better hours, more benefits, or other) Yes No
- Increased Educational Opportunities For Your Children Yes No

If neither economic or educational tells the whole story about why you moved, please explain _____

7.Do you believe that if your daughter gets too smart or too educated, she will...(Choose all that may be true.)

choose not to follow or continue some family traditions. Yes No

establish her home and raise her family far from where she now lives Yes No

be less willing to ask for and accept advice from you about marriage and family. Yes No

8.Estimate your level of comfort with your daughters’ growing independence.(Choose one)

very comfortable comfortable a little uncomfortable very uncomfortable

9.What is your highest level of educational attainment? _____

1.How do you find out about school activities?

2.How did you learn of find out about advanced academic programs, GT and/or AP, that are offered at your daughter's school?

3.Did you participate in your daughter's decision to take advanced academic courses, GT and/or AP? If yes, in what way (s)?

4.Do you help daughter with her homework? If yes, how often and in what way (s)?

5.Do you think that your daughter hides or conceals how smart she is from others? If yes, what do you think is/are the reasons?

6.What do you think life at college for a young Hispanic female?

7.Do you believe that very smart boys are, or should be treated differently than very smart girls by their parents? If yes, explain.

8.If you could ask a school employee one question what would it be? (Answer on back)

1. What is the name of your daughter's favorite teacher? _____

2. How many hours per week do you work on average? _____

3. What time do you usually get home from work? _____

4. What type of work do you do? _____

5. Why did you move to this district? Was it mainly for?

- Economic Reasons (better pay, better hours, more benefits, or other) Yes No
- Increased Educational Opportunities for your child/children Yes No

* If neither economic nor educational tells the whole story about why you moved explain.

6. Do you believe that if your daughter gets too smart or too educated, she will... (Choose all that may be true)

choose not to follow or continue some family traditions. Yes No

establish her home and raise her family far from where she lives now Yes No

be less willing to ask for and accept advice from you about marriage and family. Yes No

7. Estimate your level of comfort with your daughter's growing independence. (Choose one)

very comfortable comfortable a little uncomfortable very uncomfortable

8. What is your highest level of educational attainment? _____

1.How do you find out about school activities?

2.How did you learn or find out about advanced academic programs, GT and/or AP, that are offered at your daughter's school?

3.Did you participate in your daughter's decision to take advanced academic courses, GT and/or AP? If yes, in what way (s)?

4.Do you help your daughter with her homework? If yes, how often and in what way(s)?

5.Do you think that your daughter hides or conceals how smart she is from others? If yes, what do you think is/are the reasons?

6.What do you think life is like at college for a young Hispanic female

7.Do you believe that very smart boys are, or should be treated differently than very smart girls by their parents? If yes, explain.

8.If you could ask a school employee one question, What would it be? (Answer on back)

Hispanic Parent Focus Group Interview Invitation

To: the parents and/or guardians of the Hispanic females who participated in the focus group interviews that took place in October 2005 at _____ High School.

From: Monty Brown, a doctoral student at the University of North Texas.

Purpose: I am conducting research in the area of Hispanic females who display advanced academic potential as evidenced by their choice and ability to participate in Pre-Advanced Placement, Advanced Placement, or Gifted and Talented coursework. It is my belief that many Hispanic females with advanced academic potential pass through high school unnoticed or overlooked. The goal of my research is to help teachers, administrators, and counselors identify and place exceptional Hispanic females in appropriate programs and courses of study.

Method: parents and/or guardians will be asked to answer questions regarding their participation in their daughter's education.

Date: Thursday, May 4, 2006-10-01

Time: 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Place: Northwest High School Counseling Area Conference Rooms (Located near the High School Cafeteria)

This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of North Texas. If you have any questions regarding this research project, please contact the primary researcher or Assistant Director for Compliance at the University of North Texas in Denton, Texas.

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