



University of Tennessee, Knoxville  
**Trace: Tennessee Research and Creative  
Exchange**

---

Chancellor's Honors Program Projects

Supervised Undergraduate Student Research  
and Creative Work

---

5-2020

## **When Getting Good Grades Isn't Enough: The Overachiever's Transition to College**

Sarah Littleton  
*University of Tennessee*, [slittl17@vols.utk.edu](mailto:slittl17@vols.utk.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk\\_chanhonoproj](https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_chanhonoproj)



Part of the [Counseling Commons](#), [Educational Psychology Commons](#), and the [School Psychology Commons](#)

---

### **Recommended Citation**

Littleton, Sarah, "When Getting Good Grades Isn't Enough: The Overachiever's Transition to College" (2020). *Chancellor's Honors Program Projects*.  
[https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk\\_chanhonoproj/2369](https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_chanhonoproj/2369)

This Dissertation/Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Supervised Undergraduate Student Research and Creative Work at Trace: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in Chancellor's Honors Program Projects by an authorized administrator of Trace: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange. For more information, please contact [trace@utk.edu](mailto:trace@utk.edu).

When Getting Good Grades Isn't Enough: The Overachiever's Transition to College

Sarah Littleton

Advisor: Dr. Lisa King

Chancellor's Honors Thesis

## Table of Contents

Abstract | 3

Introduction | 4-6

College Freshman Profile | 7-14

High School Profile + Interviews | 14-25

Narrowing it Down [Girls Only] | 26-32

Action Steps | 33-37

Conclusion | 38

Works Cited | 39-40

## **Abstract**

The goals of the following paper center around awareness and action. The paper aims to make others aware of the challenges overachieving female high schoolers have in the transition period to college freshman. Rates of suicide, depression, anxiety, eating disorders, panic attacks, and other mental health issues have risen in the past years in *all* college students and late adolescents. However, my aim was to focus specifically on overachieving women due to my personal experience and the time I have spent mentoring high school and college aged females in my community. I wanted to know why so many high achieving females who excelled in seemingly everything in high school seem to fall through the cracks emotionally, academically or mentally once they enter college. I pursued the reasons these females were struggling and learned ways to prevent negative experiences in college or simply prepare them for the transition. Through literature reviews of studies, books, and articles written about the college and high school students to in-person interviews with current high school counselors, I collected information to argue that overachieving female students are struggling with the transition to college due to overparenting, social media, lack of coping skills, and poor preparation for college. Additionally, I list specific steps parents, students, and counselors can take to ease the transition from high school to college and equip students with specific skill sets to handle the challenges of independence.

## **Introduction**

Lily<sup>1</sup> exemplifies the standard high achieving high school student. Eight hours of her day are spent in school where she engages in as many Advanced Placement (AP) and honors courses as she can take. Designed to bring college-level work into high school classrooms, the AP classes help students have a “path to their future” by getting a “taste of college” in their high school classrooms (“What is AP?”) . The courses challenge her to think on higher level concepts and dedicate an obscene amount of time to them. One day a week Lily will volunteer to add to her “total package” application to college, even though she dreads it because she does not even enjoy the volunteer work she does, but she knows it will look good on her application. Twice a week she will stay after school for a quick meeting in school clubs she serves on leadership for just to present leadership experience to the colleges she applies to After school, Lily heads straight home to perhaps get in a quick workout or change of clothes, but then she spends the rest of her night dedicated to homework. Four hours would be a delightfully short load, but Lily can easily spend six or more hours dedicated to course load work. While other students her age may be out having fun or avoiding homework, Lily, like many teenagers in advanced classes, stays true and determined to her one goal: get the best grades, do well on the ACT or SAT, and have a stellar resume to present to colleges upon applying. Lily represents a classic case of the high achiever. While these high achievers do exceptionally well in high school, and even academically in college, many do poorly in an unseen, but vital aspect of the college transition: emotional wellbeing.

---

<sup>1</sup> Lily is a fictional character used to portray the typical high achiever.

Lily would be classified as an overachiever. According to US Department of Education, the overachiever represents “children and youth with outstanding talent who perform or show the potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age, experience, or environment. These children and youth exhibit high performance capability in intellectual, creative, and/or artistic areas, possess an unusual leadership capacity, or excel in specific academic fields”. The term *sounds* harmless and even praiseworthy. Hard work and excelling expectations are qualities valued in most societies, especially the United States. However, both words can take a turn for the worse when kept unchecked, as will be discussed throughout the rest of the paper. I began my research looking at the emotional state of college freshmen.

In the following paper, I argue that many high achieving high school females are emotionally unprepared for the transition to college. As will be discussed later, females are already at an increased vulnerability to mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and eating disorders. For these high achievers entering college and independence, the risk of having mental health disorders rises. This is important to understand because these girls oftentimes face adverse emotional problems without anyone noticing and because of their emotional problems additionally face social, academic, and relational struggles. In order to demonstrate the effects, I completed research on the high school high achieving and the college freshman’s typical struggles. I also conducted interviews, and offer solutions to implement in high schools, colleges, and homes based off my research. In the sections of this paper, I first compiled a “College Freshman Profile” digging into the emotional issues that many first-year college students face. Next, I completed a high school profile and interviews at local high schools in Knoxville with a total of five school counselors interviews These interviews are not gender specific, but help

make excellent points about all high achievers in both their high school experience and transition to college. Next, I refined my research to center around the female population. The results of my interviews led me to investigate topics I had not yet considered. Finally, I concluded my paper with specific action steps that can aid the adjustment to college for women specifically but college students in general.

## College Freshman Profile

Many students are struggling with their emotions upon starting college. Anthony Rostain, Professor of Psychiatry and Pediatrics at the University of Pennsylvania, and B. Janet Hibbs, family therapist and psychologist, published an article in August 2019 entitled “Is Your Child Emotionally Ready for College?” in the *Wall Street Journal*. Inspired to write about the challenges faced by college students with depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and self-harm, the two wanted to raise awareness of the coping problems college students have. According to Rostain and Hibbs, American parents emphasize and even over-prepare their child’s academic achievement, making it the center of their students’ self-esteem. This overprotection leaves many students at a loss when they transition to life on their own for the first time. Based off the college aged clients they had seen in their own practices, Rostain and Hibbs argued that the main three stressors for college freshman were fear of not belonging, fear of not making it academically, and the unrealistic expectations of performance and success. When 155,000 students were surveyed about their freshman experience, over 85% felt “overwhelmed”, 51% hopeless, and 1/3<sup>rd</sup> were attending counseling. Hibbs and Rostain comment that “far from home and familiar social supports, many incoming students struggle with feelings of loneliness...when social life fails, college often fails.” While these feelings are common to all college freshmen, those who were high achievers in high school can be especially vulnerable. When they have unachievable expectations, the students can be led into “destructive perfectionism” “self-blame” and even “profound disappointment” when the transition ends up more difficult than anticipated. Parents, on the other end, find it difficult to promote a child’s autonomy and students oftentimes do not

feel comfortable letting anyone, parents included, know that they are struggling. Additionally, if students do reach out to their university's counseling center for help, many parents get frustrated that the counseling clinics cannot legally contact parents about their child's mental health. Hibbs and Rostain push the "parents as partners" model and emphasize that "a setback doesn't mean they don't belong in college. It means they should seek support".<sup>2</sup> While students may be walking into college academically prepared, many are struggling emotionally to transition into the next phase of life.

Dr. Hibbs and Dr. Rostain are not the only ones who have noticed a mental health decline in first year students, nor are challenges contained to the United States. Many articles and journals highlight the oftentimes challenging transition from high school to college. An article published in *The Journal of Effective Disorders* entitled "Mental Health Problems in College Freshmen: Prevalence and Academic Functioning," researchers conducted a study as a part of the World Mental Health Surveys International College Student project. Four thousand, nine hundred and twenty-one college students were surveyed in Belgium at KU Leuven University. Researchers found significantly lower functioning in students with mental health concerns. Out of those surveyed, one in three struggled with mental health issues. Specifically for those entering college with high academic records, the cycle of performing poorly for the first time can easily spur students into a state of anxiety or depression, which then, could cause them to perform even more poorly in their classes. The cycle, as the article Hibbs and Rostain pointed out, can lead students to feel alone and desperate. Another popular study highlights the disconnect between high school and college. JED, an organization started by Donna and Phil Satow who lost their son Jed to suicide, published results from a 1,502-student survey about

---

<sup>2</sup> Rostain, Anthony and Hibbs, Janet B

emotional preparedness in college. Conducted in 2015, all students were between 17-20 years old and in their second term of freshman year. 51% reported difficulty finding emotional support, and 65% said they keep feelings of difficulty to themselves. 87% claimed their high schools had more emphasis on academic readiness than emotional readiness, 57% felt pressure to attend a well-known college, and 52% choose prestige over the fit of the college. John MacPhee, executive director of JED, stated “survey data indicated that college readiness requires far more than a solid academic foundation—a finding that seems counter to the conventional high education preparation” (“Students Who Feel Emotionally Unprepared for College More Likely to Report Poor Academic Performance and Negative College Experience.”) The numbers clarify the need to both acknowledge the trouble many college students are facing and find solutions to prevent such negative first year experiences.

The trouble adjusting into college may start in the student’s home. The *Journal of Child and Family Studies* identifies the phenomenon in an article titled “Helicopter Parenting, Autonomy Support, and College Students’ Mental Health and Well-Being: The Moderating Role of Sex and Ethnicity.” The study sampled 118 college students about the differences in sex in responding to stress based off the students relationship with the parents. Focusing on females for the purpose of this paper, helicopter parenting was associated with low levels of well-being and predictive of internalizing problems, instead of effectively communicating them, for emerging female students (944). Young women in a completely new space, on their own for the first time, have increased anxiety when their mothers try to hover over them with questions, demands, and suggestions for the first year. While the mother most likely means well, the reports point to how detrimental helicopter parenting can be. Other studies have shown that increased maternal control was related to “avoidant coping strategies” (945). Girls, the study highlights, tend to be

better at interpreting nonverbal cues, and the girls may perceive helicopter parenting as a message of their parents' belief that their daughter is not competent/skilled enough to handle things on her own (945). Daughters could easily take on their parent's perceived beliefs of them to heart, causing them to be less likely to reach out for help or be honest about their freshman year struggles. High achievers can often be people pleasers and pleasing their parents often can trump the daughter's own concerns and wishes.

In addition to encouraging internalization of problems, the *Emerging Adult* journal brings additional evidence to the dangers of helicopter parenting in "Parent Psychological Control and Responses to Interpersonal Stress in Emerging Adulthood: Moderating Effects of Behavioral Inhibition and Behavioral Activation" by Jamie L Abaied and Chelsea Emond. The two researchers found that "...parental psychological control may implicitly or explicitly communicate that parents do not believe that their emerging adults are capable of functioning independently, which could undermine emerging adults' self-efficacy for coping with stress in their relationships" (265). As the previous study showed, Abaied and Emond point to the heavy influence parents have on their young adult's thoughts about themselves and their well-being. Young adults, learning to function independently for the first time in their lives in college, can perceive their parents' distrust of their college students' abilities. Parental maladaptive control was further seen with maladaptive stress response in students, who tended to avoid stress rather than work through it. Controlling parents, in summary, promote avoidance, not independence, in their child. Though they might be well intentioned, overbearing parents may be the very catalysts for their first-year student's struggles.

Solutions are beginning to emerge for the many challenges first year students face, but not as quickly as they could. Lisa Heffernan of NBC news points to issues and solutions in

“Survey: Most Freshmen Are Not Emotionally Prepared for College”. Heffernan interviewed Victor Schwartz M.D, psychiatry professor at NYU. Dr. Schwartz notes that “We put so much intensity, energy, and focus into “prepping” for college by preparing for SATs, taking AP classes and visiting schools, but many of us miss a central part of the preparation project...” by ignoring the emotional preparedness needed to enter college. With the addition of media glamorizing college, many students go in with high expectations and are wholly disappointed. Parents, Heffernan argues, should start letting students take on more responsibility in eleventh and twelfth grade. Encouraging students to accomplish basic adult tasks before leaving the nest can help prepare them physically, which can in turn help them mentally, be ready for college. For example, parents could have students do their own laundry on a regular basis and begin cooking for the family. Though most freshmen have a meal plan, having students learn what a well-balanced diet looks like can help them avoid issues with food freshman year. Having students be well-connected relationally with students their age and to begin the process of independence in the home before leaving can encourage students to transition more smoothly. The pre-college preparation can set students up for success.

Once in college, schools can aid the transition of first-year students in a healthy way. *The Journal of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners* highlights one school that attempts to curb first year issues with a program called “Freshman Five to Thrive.” The program compared two groups of students; those that took a three credit hour course designed to address a)building cognitive behavior skills, b)coping and stress reduction, c) personal development, d)nutrition, and e) physical activity, to those that did not take the course (317). Students that started the course with elevated anxiety and/or depression reported significant drops by the end of the semester. In addition, those that took the course had a significantly higher retention rate

freshman to sophomore year (320). The “Freshmen Five to Thrive” course students lived a healthier lifestyle, were more physically active, and saw an overall significant decrease in depression and anxiety compared to those that did not take the course (320). Implementing similar programs in colleges can help curb many of the negative experiences students have their first year. These programs should encourage healthy habits, point to resources for students including the counseling center, and give them a space to communicate grievances and find solutions among like-minded peers.

Preparedness for college seems to focus solely on academics. High schoolers are typically not stressing about their emotional readiness or ability to find community outside the home. They are not typically worried about finding a balanced eating schedule, maintaining communication with family, or creating their own schedule to give each day structure. Instead, high achieving students are stressed with ACT/SAT scores, their GPA’s, finding great recommendations, being involved enough with multiple after-school clubs, volunteering, holding membership in an honors society, and searching for ways to stand out. They stress over the perfect personal statement. Many also face pressure from parents to get into the “best” school possible, and be prepared for the most difficult major.

An interesting parallel I thought of for entering college was a student entering Kindergarten. In one of my college English courses, we had to find an analogy for a problem we saw to offer a solution. Here, I thought of the comparison between being ready for college as being ready for Kindergarten. Families with high expectations for their children, who will most likely grow up to be the “high achieving students” this paper is focused on, spend many hours deliberating over where their child will go to Kindergarten and if they are prepared. There are many parallels between Kindergarten and college. Both times the student leaves their parents for

the first time, one in a daily sense and one in a semesterly sense. The student surrounds herself with new people, teachers, and routines, as college surrounds students with new peers, professors, routines, and opportunities. Both situations offer more freedom than ever before, with parents not directing and monitoring the child's every move and schedule. A big, and detrimental, difference lies in the readiness skill set for each group. Kindergarteners must show a large variety of social, emotional, and self-care skills before they enter their classroom. The Knox County School Readiness checklist gives equal weight to math skills as they do social skills, insisting that the child must be able to "settle into new groups or situations" and "shows kindness and concern for others"( "Elementary (K-5) / Kindergarten"). A quick website search finds that common readiness skills include the child having the ability to dress themselves, feed themselves, go to the bathroom without assistance and communicate their needs. Kids need to be able to play well with others and listen and talk when appropriate. A parent sending their child to kindergarten knows the importance of the 'soft' skills and the vitalness that nonacademic skills have in the classroom.

However, when an oftentimes well-meaning parent sends their child off to college, the focus tends to be on academics only. High schools push the importance of high GPA's, test scores, and well-written admissions essays. Rarely, if ever, are there conversations about finding community in college and creating a strong group of healthy friendships. There are not classes warning students about the freedom of schedule they will have, and about how easy it is to waste time or become overwhelmed. Students are oftentimes not warned of the intensity of mental health problems that creep in slowly but surely. They can range from depression, to loneliness, to anxiety, to a host of other issues. Isolated from their main support system and without strong

connections, freshman year represents the perfect storm of exigency and opportunity for emotional problems.

I saw from the evidence gathered about college freshmen that there are clear emotional difficulties in first year students. Though I had confidence in my theory that students were struggling due to a lack of preparedness and overparenting, I interviewed high school counselors next to get a glimpse into the “other side”.

## **Interviews**

I conducted interviews at three local high achieving high schools. For the privacy and *protection of the students, school and the counselors I interviewed, the schools are named* “School A”, “School B”, and “School C”. I conducted two separate interviews at School A and gave the surnames “Ms. Johnson” to my first interviewee and “Ms. Amy” to my second interviewee. At School B, I conducted a joint interview with the college and career counselor and the senior class counselor. The College and Career Counselor will be noted as “Ms. Green” and the senior year counselor as “Ms. Lane”. Finally, at School C, I conducted one interview with a counselor I named “Ms. Andy”. All of the interviews were *not* gender specific due to the large class sizes most of the counselors had and I desired to get a general view from the counselors about problems they found in their students in high school and the transition to college. I specifically wanted to find out what most students were struggling with while in high school, why they seemed to be struggling, if parents made the pressure to perform worse or better, what students struggled with in the transition to college, and overall what the counselors wish parents, students, and other counselors could do to help incoming college freshmen be emotionally prepared. Unexpectedly, social media and phone use came up in most of the interviews as playing a negative role in the students’ lives. Additionally, the lack of coping skills most students had was a frequent topic of discussion.

### **School A**

Ms. Johnson\* looks up from her laptop and greets me with a smile. “How can I help you?” she asks, as I take a seat at a long, conference table. I tell her about my topic, and she nods

in agreement, saying “It’s a good time to be discussing this.” While she completes a quick email, I look around the walls of the unique, triangular shaped room named “college and career advising.” The elite high school always ranks highest among public schools in Tennessee. Ms. Johnson came to High School A last fall but has had a long and worldwide career in college counseling. After graduating from UTK’s school counseling program, she spent two years at Catholic High School, a prestigious local private school in Knoxville, and then decided to move to Beijing, China, to work in a public school with an international department. After completing her work in China, she worked in Kiev, Ukraine at an international school. After returning to the states in 2017, Ms. Johnson now works as the College and Career counselor at high school A. Ms. Johnson had several great insights about the college process, and included tips for parents to better aid their students in the transition from high school to college.

Ms. Johnson noted several things that her students struggle with. “What if I don’t get into the right school? What if I don’t perform well?” Common anxieties, Ms. Johnson notes, stem from the pervasive and often destructive high standards her top performing students feel obligated to meet. Many of the students, she notes, have parents who were born overseas and have specific cultural expectations that they lay onto their children. The students, though from mainly affluent and good homes, have an ingrained sense of success that they must reach. “There is community pressure, too” she notes, saying that the name driven college search leads many students to apply to only the “best” schools and try to find their worth in getting in. They typically apply to too many schools. She’s had to tell her students to stop applying to 20 schools, and only apply to 10. The number still seems large, but Ms. Johnson knows the importance of time, money, and mental energy put into college admissions. Students aiming for the top can

find the application process overwhelming and worrisome; unfortunately, parents are not always first in line to help.

Students struggling in high school with high exceptions oftentimes are overparented at home. Some of Ms. Johnson's students have what she deemed "snowplow" parents. I chuckled at that term, sharing I had only heard of lawnmower parents. Ms. Johnson says snowplow parents are not helping their children for the road ahead but preparing the road ahead for their children. I was surprised to hear that it was not necessarily that parents were over-involved with the admissions process; rather, the parents Ms. Johnson sees are not preparing their students to be independent. "What would you tell parents to do, to better prepare their children?" I asked. Teach them to do their laundry, she replied, teach them how to have a business call, let them fill out their own applications, have them get up on their own in the mornings. High schools, she insists, need to stop inflating grades and have their students write more. There needs to be an environment of not encouraging only the elite colleges, but having students find what fits for them. I then asked about the social and emotional struggles for students entering schools, and she paused; "I think you should talk to one of our counselors about that" she said. She walked me into the main counseling office and grabbed the first available counselor she saw, Ms. Amy.

Ms. Amy has been at High School A for six years. Her chalkboard walls are covered in encouraging, uplifting messages like "you are worth it" and "you have value". Notes from past students litter the room and a jar of candy sits atop her desk. An undergraduate in Human Resources and Business, Ms. Amy had a career change to counseling and has enjoyed it ever since. She only has a few minutes before she meets with a student, so I jump right in, and ask her what her students struggle with most. "There's so much pressure put on them", so many expectations, she shares. Students never feel like they are enough and are always striving. I asked

her where she thought the pressure came from, and with a sad look in her eyes, she responded, “I have no idea. That’s what I’ve been trying to figure out for the last 6 years”. She mentions the message of “never enough” does not come from herself, or any of the administrators she has been with during her tenure at High school A. “It’s almost like it’s more ingrained...it’s built in” speaking towards the stress they feel. Ms. Amy works with tenth graders right now and will follow them through graduation. Parents are highly involved, which Ms. Amy mentions is not a bad thing always. However, sometimes the pressure does come from the parents. She questions why parents insist that their students must be in all honors and AP classes, stemming from the belief that the way their child will get into a good college is from being in those classes. The college partly shares blame, because it demands the students to perform to that level of stress, which leads me to my next question after discussing the high school experience.

Ms. Amy, when asked about her first graduating class (she came on staff their junior year, and they graduated in 2018), only points behind me to the wall that is covered with every single one of her students who graduated. In each individual picture, the student holds up a black felt board with what they want to be spelled out with plastic white letters. The group of carefree, grinning students have dreams of becoming lawyers, psychologists, physical assistants, teachers, and more. “I keep in touch with quite a few of them,” Ms. Amy mentions. Anxiety and depression are increasing, from even when she started six years ago to now. (High school A has had 6 suicides in the past 4 years.) She replies that she honestly doesn’t know where the problems stem from. Most students she sees have two parents, live in privileged homes, and are well-taken care of. “It’s almost like a worth-thing”, she mentions. “It’s a comparison game, I feel this, but I shouldn’t feel this because of these reasons” (referencing the fact that the students are well taken care of). The students feel as if they have no reason to struggle, and therefore cannot

reach out for help if they do. “How can schools and parents better prepare students for the transition?”, I ask. Ms. Amy shares that she goes through the kids first, rather than parents, on decisions for classes and college to help them learn to make decisions on their own. As intelligent and driven as they are, she shares many are “not very good at making decisions” on their own. In addition to promoting independence, she likes High school A’s model of pairing counselors with kids all four years. She admits freshman year last year “was a mess, because, well, freshman” (which we both shared laughs over) but she enjoys seeing the growth from even last year to this year. The last few years, she has done more social, emotional, and cultural work that she enjoys; instead of just “academics and college”. Ms. Amy heads up “Project U” throughout the community in all middle schools and high schools designed to function as a “student led group focused on building unity and promoting kindness (“Project U”). They completed several acts of kindness in December, including a cookie decorating fundraising event, and a day where they passed out hot chocolate “to make school a happier place”. In September, High school A sponsored a suicide prevention month that included activities for education and writing positive messages on the sidewalk. My last question, “Is there anything else?” spurred an interesting and completely relevant answer. She pointed to my iPhone(which was recording our conversation) and says “they are growing up in a completely different world than I did” with phones. “That is a giant, giant challenge”, she noted, and “my daughter is only seven and she wants a phone”. While Ms. Amy was the first counselor to bring up the challenges of phones with teenagers, she was not the last.

### **School B**

At high school B, another highly ranked high school in Knoxville, counselors Ms. Green and Ms. Lane sat side by side nodding at each other’s statements about the trouble phones bring

into a high schooler's world. "When we were teenagers, we left school every day and that was that; we didn't know who was doing what or have a way to communicate with someone outside of the classroom easily. Today, students never get away from everything," Ms. Lane noted. She also mentioned the negative effect social media has on many of her students' emotional health. The constant comparison and curated images can elicit feelings of unworthiness and sadness in her students. Ms. Green agreed, mentioning studies she has seen about the evidence for the negative impact the digital age has had on students. The emotional and social burden students face in high school was not always present. Ms. Lane claims that there was a "noticeable shift" when she took a year away from school in 2015-2016 to work for the county educational board. She mentioned talking to middle and high school counselors the year she was on the board instead of working at a school and being surprised at the amount of mental health issues counselors were relaying to her. When she came back to a school setting in the 2016-2017 year, she noticed the stark contrast. "It's draining," she admits. The social/emotional aspect of the job is only one component, but often takes up most of her time. Ms. Green nods: "you can't schedule a crisis, and you cannot predict how long it will take to work through whatever they are walking through". I asked if they had any idea why things were more difficult socially and emotionally, and, just as they agreed on the problems phones bring in, they agreed on what started many of the problems.

The mental hardships many of the high achieving high schoolers face can be traced back to two main issues, Ms. Lane notes. First, she mentions they have no coping skills "whatsoever". "We used to have maybe two to three suicide hotline calls to make a semester; now it is many times a week, sometimes one every day." She mentioned that one of the school counselors had to make four in one day recently. Ms. Johnson pipes in; "they make big jumps--from failing a test to killing themselves, from getting broken up with to killing themselves". And, she notes, they

are completely serious about wanting to kill themselves after a seemingly small obstacle in the grand scheme of life. There will be other boyfriends, other tests to boost your grade, but these young people feel like it truly might be the end of the world. Ms. Lane circles back to the lack of coping. Her high achieving students often refuse to reach out for help until they are actively failing the course, instead of getting help early on. If there are emotional issues, they keep them bottled up until they literally break down.

In addition to the lack of coping skills, both counselors acknowledge that parents can be too harsh and demanding. Ms. Lane had a student come in last week who dreamed of playing for the local university band. She's very talented, but her dad laughed in front of her, saying she could do so much better than that college (that he himself had gone to). Ms. Lane saw the defeat in the student's face. Ms. Green mentions how oftentimes parents set expectations for their students that are too high in regard to which colleges they can get into. "It has NEVER been harder for students to get into college, not ever," she points out, saying that even the brightest students may not have a shot of getting into the big-name schools. Ms. Lane claims that she enjoys working with parents, but they often come into her office saying that their child needs to back off all the AP classes because of the pressure, yet turn around senior year and expect that same child to get into Vanderbilt. "It's unrealistic," Lane notes. "That's not even mentioning the helicopter, snow-plow parents," Green comments. "Oh yes," Lane agrees. "They take every single obstacle out of the way and then their children have no idea how to handle challenging times in college and are shocked that life is hard" Green claims. The lack of coping skills and over-parenting often lead first year college students into another crisis; an identity crisis.

Lane notes that students enter the first year of college feeling invincible and ready to be on their own. However, when classes are difficult or they are not thriving as they expected, they

become despondent and upset. She explains that they feel as if they must achieve it all on their own or they are a failure--their grades become integral to their identity. Instead of recognizing their need for community and their need to share their struggles with others, many students decide to keep trying to do things on their own. In addition to high self-standards, students without communities are, according to Green, the most likely students to transfer. They often feel guilty transferring, both counselors acknowledge, due to the excitement and attention family and friends put on the specific college they entered. They might feel embarrassed or ashamed that they are so miserable at the school they fought so hard to get into. Both Green and Lane stressed that students transferring should feel okay with their decision and recognize the normalcy of switching schools. College might not be the idealized dream they had going in, and without a core community, they can feel lost. "Get involved somewhere," both claimed, whether with a Greek life organization, study group, intramurals, or church group. Social involvement is essential to a student's healthy transition to college. When students are left alone and isolated, depression and anxiety are more likely to become normal. Life on their own never looks like they predicted, and students must learn to reach out and ask for help.

After discussing more heavy topics, I had to know; what did these two accomplished counselors love most about their jobs? Both teared up when they answered, Green starting; "I love it when students I've had before come back and see me; I feel like I got to be a small part of their story, and it means the world." Green mentioned a first-generation student who worked in a grocery store and then attended Cornell. No one could afford the trip to move him in, so he packed two suitcases and went off on his own to school. Now, Green happily shared, he works for Google and travels around speaking. She beams, recalling the growth and strength he embodies. Lane enjoys working with families the most, especially when students in those

families are struggling. One student was a first-generation student with home troubles. He dreamed of going to a local private university and managed to reduce his tuition to \$4,000 a year. He worked 35-40 hours a week before college to save and impressed his professors so much that one of them stepped up to cover his tuition. At his college graduation, the ceremony was so small he could only ask three people to attend; out of all his family and friends, “I was one of the three he picked,” Lane shared, with tears in her eyes. “I tried to say no, I didn’t want to start any family fights! But he insisted.” The two counselors cherish the personal stories of students they see succeed in college and beyond, but struggle most when students dreams are not fulfilled. Green’s least favorite part of being a college and career counselor happens when a student is accepted into the school they wanted but cannot afford it. “We turn over every stone, we try so hard to make it happen. I’ll do whatever I can to get them there,” Green notes. She even wishes she could “pull out a million dollars” and just tell them to go. Lane’s least favorite part happens when she cannot meet the social and emotional needs of her students. “I had a girl in here the other day that bawled for three hours straight...she wouldn’t say, but I think her dad was abusive and her mom covered for him. All we could do was give her a space to cry” until the girl’s aunt came to move her to another state. Lane hates feeling like she cannot do anything when students come in with complex issues that she does not have the training for. “It’s draining,” she mentions, day after day. Overall, the two gave a broad picture of the highlights and hardships of counseling, though being honest of the many difficulties of being a counselor at such a large school.

### **School C**

Ms. Andy does not have the same school size problem as counselors from the two previous schools. In fact, she and her coworker split the students by alphabet and have all four

grades, but only about 30 in her senior class. “I love being able to get to know all of them”, she mentions. School counseling is her second career after obtaining an MBA from Wake Forest. Andy’s office contains images of school wide schedules, her ASCI (Christian School Association certification), and pictures of her family. Her bookcase filled up the back wall, full from side to side with college preparation books, spiritual books, and binders. The well-respected private Christian school in Knoxville can certainly boast of their graduates’ success, but the warm feel in the hallways speaks more of community than pride. “I just love my job,” Andy says, as she shows me all the grade by grade milestones she wants her students to hit. They start preparing students for college in ninth grade by taking personality tests that give them a small circle or potential career fields for which they seem well-suited. Sophomore year, they limit the circle to three possible fields, and junior year focuses mainly on standardized test prep. “We have all of our students apply to all their colleges by November of their senior year,” Andy shares. The school almost solely focuses on college preparation, since all students enter college upon graduation (though they did have one enlist in the military a few years prior). With such a high college admission success rate, I wondered; why were students so motivated?

I asked Ms. Andy about where the students’ motivation and drive for success came from, and what high achieving students typically struggled with the most. She looked a little surprised and admitted “I don’t ever worry about my high achievers-they know that to do, when to apply, they’re on top of it. It’s my low achievers I have to worry about.” I asked what motivated the high achievers and she admitted that she was not quite sure; it seemed ingrained in them almost. I questioned if the desire was pushed by their parents, but again, she didn’t seem to think anyone but the students themselves had the drive to do well in college admissions.

I asked what the most difficult part of her job was, and Andy responded that unexpected walk-ins could be challenging depending on the issue, and getting to know each individual student. I was a bit surprised at her response based on the other schools I was familiar with and how much larger they were than school C. She wants to get to know all of her seniors personally, but finds it challenging to find time. She loves it when a teacher or other student tells her to check in on a certain student because they “don’t seem like themselves”. She claims that the smaller school size makes it easier for teachers to get to know their students one on one.

An impressive element of school C is that they prepare their students for the freshman year of college in aspects other than academics. They give seniors a checklist, showing them areas they need to be prepared for once they enter college, like planning their own schedule and looking for ways to get involved with groups on campus.

### **Interview Conclusion**

All five of the counselors I interviewed shed light on current issues that many high achieving high schoolers face today. The interviews allowed me to get a glimpse into what an actual counselor faces daily, and the demands put on them. Additionally, the interviews presented several topics I had not previously explored, like the use of phones, social media, and the lack of coping skills many students had. Though the interviews were not specific to females, they allowed me to see what a general student struggles with and from there, I was able to guide my subsequent research to look at the lack of coping skills, phone use, and social media on women in particular.

### **Narrowing it Down [Girls Only]**

After I conducted all five interviews, I had more questions than before. Were cell phones the problem? Was it parents? Maybe the students themselves are putting all the pressure on...or could it be colleges? I scrounged for more information, more data, to make sense of the new knowledge I gained from the interviews to continue my deep dive into the high achieving high schoolers. To accomplish that, I was surprised to find a great resource that I first read seven years ago-Alexandra Robbins's *the Overachievers*.

Though a little dated (*The Overachievers* was published in 2006), the information Robbins gathered while studying an elite high school in Bethesda, Maryland is still relevant. She followed a group of students for over a year in which she shared their trials, joys, and struggles of the high achieving life. Julie, for example, faced many situations that are reminiscent of School A's and C's students specifically. When Julie met with a private college counselor, she shared her 4.0 unweighted GPA, 1410/1600 SAT, fours and fives on AP tests, and her highly valued status as a member of the varsity track team. The private counselor told Julie and her parents that Julie was "mildly interesting" and then told Robbins privately that Julie was "not a great student. She's not going to get into a top college" (Robbins 3-5). So many high achieving students feel that same pressure Julie did, that no matter what they do or how hard they work, they will never be 'enough'. When Robbins visited another high school in New Mexico, a student told her that sleeping is something they "live for" because so many of them only get four hours or less. She admits that "it always feels like it's wrong if you're not doing something

somewhere right now” (52). Robbins shares that the pressure to perform remains independent to location, though the East Coast does hold stereotypes about being high achieving. Students, despite location, are feeling the complications of gaining the levels of perceived success they want.

As mentioned in my interview at school C, students in high school are displaying more external symptoms of stress and have higher levels of anxiety than ever before. Julie experienced external symptoms of hair thinning due to stress, and Douglas Gray, University of Utah Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Training Professor, shares that “the girls with anorexia are primarily straight A students” (Robbins 67). The correlation between stress and disorders among high performing students became a recurring theme. Alyssa, a student Robbins met in a Kentucky high school, suffered from panic attacks and bulimia. Alyssa admitted to feeling complete relief after purging and compared the feeling to “when you finish a big project and you’re so relieved. It was a way to get that relief even though I hadn’t finished the project yet” (Robbins 68). Bulimia came up again later when CJ, a junior at Walt Whitman, admitted to binge eating and then purging through running. She would hide boxes of cookies and food from her parents and then run it all off instead of vomiting. She would “feel gross, but do it again” and never told friends or family because CJ felt like “what did she have to stress about, compared to anyone else?” (306-307). CJ and Alyssa experienced things that are not uncommon to high achievers. Logically, eating and exercise may feel like all the girls have complete control over. They cannot control their assignments, or what schools accept or reject them, or anyone else’s perception of them, but they can certainly choose how they treat their bodies. Their stress, while some may turn to drugs or alcohol, comes out in a quieter, more sneaky way: the way they eat and exercise.

High schools can prepare their students for the future, yet oftentimes overlook the needs of the individual. The counselor to student ratio recommendation says around 250 students to one counselor, which already sounds difficult, but the reality today is upwards of 450 students to one counselor nationally (77). In addition to a lack of counselors, teachers are expected to teach towards a test and one parent even commented to the *Washington Post* that students are forced to be “either advanced or remedial. There’s no room for anyone in between” (85). Students feel pressured to perform well on college entrance exams, even though “SAT scores have even less of a correlation with their college grades, and almost no correlation with their success in the workplace as adults” (291). High school students are pushed to earn the highest standardized test scores possible, which have no correlation to long term college success. Neither do these test scores serve to help gain admission into elite colleges, which, in turn, have no long term educational or life benefit over an “average” college. High schoolers are stressing over things that have no long-term benefit, and their health is compromised.

Colleges play a huge role in the students' perception in their worth. A junior from Nebraska told Robbins that she feels “good enough” when admitted to a top school, like she “achieved something” (187). The concept of wanting an acclaimed school was an issue mentioned at all three interviews. Students seem to think that their education and worth directly correlates to the name of the school they attend. However, Robbins notes that many colleges now offer the same valuable education once only noted at Ivy leagues and that not even the top CEOs and businesses credit the name of one’s colleges for their companies’ success. In fact, in 2006, 90 percent of the top 500 S&P and CEOs did *not* graduate from Ivy league schools (187-188). The *U.S. News and World Report* ranks colleges every year and is treated as “gospel” by students and parents but remains unfounded factually. A former writer even admitted that the ratings “are

completely ridiculous. But they totally pay your salary” (189). Alumni giving was directly related to the school’s overall score; the more alumni gave, the better their school ranked. Furthermore, students at elite schools that are ranked in the top twenty-five tend to be less happy with teaching and report less educational development than with other schools. Additionally, colleges have tried to recruit more students to apply, students that have no way of getting in, just to have more applicants to deny and look that much more selective (190-191). No wonder students feel anxious about getting into college and are so completely consumed by their academic future that they neglect the emotional and social needs necessary to enter college. All they can focus on remains in simply being admitted into school.

Robbins ends her book by assuring readers she is not calling for laziness or just getting by in school, but to rethink how we are training up the next generation. She asks, “What good is a nation with the highest test scores in the world if many of its youngest citizens are so miserable, they kill themselves?” (388). She calls for later school start times to allow for more sleep, which aids in mental health; dropping class rank; deemphasizing testing; and creating awareness about the extremely stressful standards put on students. She tells colleges to boycott ratings and that parents need to “get a life” outside their children in addition to scheduling family time, limiting their child’s activities, and emphasizing character over performance (390-96). Robbins gives an amazing account of what many high achieving high schoolers face. However, I knew I needed more information on specifically how the stress Robbins noted affected high achieving females. I turned to *Under Pressure*, by Lisa Damour.

Working as a psychiatrist for over two decades and a mother of two girls, Damour has certainly had her fair share of experience working with adolescent females. In her prologue, she notes the rising rates of anxiety in females, which is 31% compared to 13% in men. As girls

enter puberty earlier and earlier, those rates are expected to stay on the rise (xvi-xix). However, Damour starts by saying anxiety and stress are actually *necessary* aspects of life. Healthy stress, like when being interviewed, giving a speech, or playing in a big game, is completely normal and simply means one is out of one's comfort zone (3-4). Unhealthy stress starts when it exceeds what the person can handle, or "when demands exceed our resources" (6). Our anxiety system is needed and works as an alarm, letting us know when something is off, but the system starts to malfunction when a disorder is at bay (7).

Sadly, girls are twice as likely to be diagnosed with an anxiety disorder as boys (27). Damour writes primarily for parents to help their teen daughter cope with anxiety and stress, which serves as pivotal resources to get girls college ready. She tells parents to help girls go toward their fear, not away (36) to make them stronger and realize it is not as bad as their minds tell them the threat is. Because of the lack of coping skills specifically mentioned by both counselors at school C, they would have loved Damour's advice to help girls "settle the glitter," meaning to give girls time to calmly respond to a situation instead of acting out of panic, like waiting for glitter to settle back down at the bottom of its jar after it's been shaken (39). Damour encourages parents simply to empathize with their daughters when they overreact about an academic or social situation, saying that reassuring or providing solutions does not work (47). Damour gives moms and dads practical tips to not only stop being helicopter parents but also to prepare their daughters to be emotionally independent.

Damour also speaks about the teens themselves in handling situations. She notes that girls are most healthy when they have one or two good friends instead of many surface level friends because with numbers come drama (72). She notes that girls are getting less sleep than the nine needed and until sleep deprivation is addressed, trying to alleviate anxiety will not happen. She

mentions that before getting enough sleep, talking about anxiety is like telling a girl wearing a Parka in July to “just drink a cool class off water”; the girl might actually have a fever and be hot, but you never know until you start with the basic fix (88). Looking at social media can additionally lead to low self-esteem and she cautions parents to limit their teens’ usage (90). In school, though, Damour notes that “there has never been a more academically impressive generation of girls than the young women we are raising today” (137). Girls are taking more AP classes, are more likely to be Valedictorian, and are more likely to attend and graduate college than in previous years. And though school inherently is supposed to be stressful (138), there are ways to manage the workload. Damour insists that focusing on the subjects in which girls naturally like and excel are smart moves. Since girls worry about school more than boys (142) and about pleasing teachers and not disappointing parents (143), parents and teachers need to be aware of overstressed girls for unfounded reasons. Some overachievers make sixty flashcards when thirty would have been great, or study for four hours when an hour would have been acceptable. It is a vicious cycle, Damour notes, because when the girl studies excessively, she does extremely well, she receives praise from parents and teachers, and takes her confidence from that (145). Teaching the girls to be efficient, not perfectionistic, in school can lead to much less anxiety and stress in the home (153). The risk is that “girls may attribute their achievements to the only thing they’ve ever known, their incredible self-discipline and willingness to overprepare” (155). If girls rely on grades and specific study methods to determine their overall worth, the cycle of overpreparing and spending more time than necessary on school will not cease.

After consulting articles, books, and interviews, I decided that my original theory of female students struggling due to under preparation and overparenting was much too simplified.

I realized the large role social media and technology plays into a girl's wellbeing. The research on college admissions caused me to realize how skewed the system was to make students *think* that high scores on AP tests achievement tests, like the ACT/SAT were an indication of their future performance and life success, which no empirical study has shown. Specifically, female students are lacking in coping skills to life's everyday demands and are internalizing conflict and distress. As many problems as there were, I saw room for improvement and specific action steps to help female students along the way.

## Action Steps

What is there to do then, about high achieving girls entering college? Based off the interviews, literature, and studies shown above, here are some ways to prepare students in general (a) for the transition to college with specific ways to aid young women (b)

### 1. Limit Social Media and Phone Use

- a. While there are many helpful components with social media and phones, the studies show that mental health is more often than not *negatively* impacted by the use of media. One idea is to have a “phone off” time for everyone in the family at night and charge all phones together in a non-bedroom area, encouraging a healthy distance and relationship with phones.
- b. Encourage girls to maintain lots of in-person social connection with good, genuine friends. Preparing young women now to have healthy relationships with their phones and devices can make a world of difference in their college career and their lifelong journey with technology. Girls are especially vulnerable to developing eating disorders, depression, and anxiety disorders which have been correlated to phone use.

### 2. Focus on Character, not Performance

- a. Working towards good grades is a wonderful goal, but not at the expense of one’s mental health. Make sure students know that they are valued and loved because of who they *are*, not on what they *do*.

- b. Encourage young women in the positive decisions and attitudes they have and focus on their character over any grade, goal, or award given. If girls link their identity too much to their performance, they can assume that their worth and value comes from a number on a piece of paper instead of their unique identity.
- 3. Foster a good relationship with food and exercise
  - a. Even though eating disorders are much more common in women, both genders need to leave home for college having a good relationship with food and exercise. A diet rich in a variety of foods should be encouraged as well as learning to listen to hungry/fullness cues. Remind students that it is extremely normal to gain a few pounds the first year, and tell them that there is nothing wrong with that; just listen to your body and treat it kindly.
  - b. The number of eating disorders in women spike in college, especially during the freshman year. Watch for signs early on that girls may be struggling with how, when, and what to eat and if any guilt plays into their decision. Teach them that there is no “good” or “bad” food and to listen to their body’s cues for when they need nourishment. Remind girls that exercise is vital in taking care of their bodies but must never be worshipped or prioritized over their body’s needs for rest and rejuvenation. Teach girls that exercising can be a wonderful stress reliever but must be kept in its place, like anything. Teach girls about signs to look out for in themselves or friends that could signal any sort of disordered eating pattern and that there is ample, available help for those in need.
- 4. Teach Coping skills

- a. One thing I heard from all counselors centered on the lack of coping skills found in many of today's youth. Students need to be reminded of helpful ways to cope with emotion and also how to handle difficult conversations and conflicts on their own. Many parents jump in to help too fast, which leaves their children ill-equipped to resolve difficult situations.
  - b. Teach young women how to acknowledge their emotions and handle them gently. Emotions are important, but truth needs to meet their inner feelings to combat lies girls may tell themselves. Show young women the need to be open and transparent with someone older and wiser, along with a couple of good friends. Encourage them to take a deep breath, journal, go for a walk, or scream into a pillow; whatever they need to do to recognize their feelings and then move on.
5. It's okay to fail-and you will
- a. Overachievers will cringe at the word fail, and to no surprise-it's the very thing most of them have been running from as long as they can remember. However, failure is not an option, it is inevitable at some point. Remind the overachievers that they are entering a college full of other bright, talented students like themselves but that every single student is unique in their own light.
  - b. She must realize that not every class, test, or experience will go as planned; and that is okay. She will learn from her failures and mess-ups and use those times to teach girls coming up behind and to recall in times of need.
6. Find Community ASAP
- a. Finding a group of friends is not a suggestion, it is imperative to one's well being and success in college. You can be, as we have learned, an amazing student who

sinks into complete despair and depression because you are *alone*. Making straight A's does not help at all with feelings of loneliness or helplessness. Join a campus ministry and go over there daily; get involved with a sorority and hang out with at least one sister daily; join a sports club or academic club and study with someone daily; every single day, make it a point to socially engage with other students. You must find your people.

7. Prepare for the lack of schedule

- a. In college, the average (and yes, even Honor's) students have the majority of their time unaccounted for. Some students spend all of their free time in an "unproductive way" playing video games, watching Netflix, etc, but some students spend *way* too much time on "good" things, like homework and exercise. Anything can become a problem (homework/exercise) when the balance of social interaction and rest gets out of balance.
- b. Teach girls how to make out a schedule with a healthy balance of schoolwork, social time, exercise and eating. Remind them to get involved with giving back to their local communities in college and set up a manageable routine that allows for flexibility and spontaneity.

8. Colleges: require freshman success seminars

- a. Like the Freshman 5 to Thrive at Ohio University, colleges would do well to implement freshman entry courses to help ease into a successful transition to college. Evidence clearly shows the benefits of students taking such courses.

- b. Females are at an increased risk for all mental health disorders and numbers spike their first year. Freshman success seminars would be a great step to foster a woman's mental health.
9. Have fun!
- a. College is a challenging. However, remind girls that there is still so much fun to be had if *they* prioritize it. Remind them to jump on those late-night milkshake runs and go hiking on the weekends; remind them to stay up too late watching movies with friends sometimes and to not be afraid to experiment with new activities. Tell them that it's not the end of the world if they oversleep and miss a class, tell them that staying up late to finish a paper they should've begun last week is totally normal. With high achievers, you're not encouraging them to make poor decisions; rather, you're giving them permission to be normal college kids that learn, grow, and have a good time.
10. Be a Support
- a. As a parent, teacher, or counselor, your role is to support.
  - b. You can give your girls all the best advice and wisdom you have, but at the end of the day, it is her own journey to walk through. It may not look like what you had hoped, but she must find her own way. She'll need your encouragement and love, she'll call sometimes what seems like twice a day every day and then nothing for weeks; she'll figure out her rhythm, and you, who has done the work to get her ready to fly, has the honor of being the one to cheer her on to new adventures.

## **Conclusion**

College provides the perfect storm for mental health issues to breed in all students. Specifically, many high achieving girls struggle with the transition. They might struggle with a loss of identity since they are no longer the smartest student in the room, they might have lost their peer group in college, they may have never had to face eating and exercise choices completely independently. Young women like Lily, who we started with in the beginning of this paper, are not unusual but quite typical. If Lily had been better prepared, she might have had a much different experience in high school. She could have chosen a few AP and Honors classes in courses she was actually interested in, rather than taking every single course available just to “look good” on her application. Instead of volunteering once a week, she could have volunteered one or two Saturdays a month in a place she actually enjoyed. Lily might have recognized that while leadership is great, she could find a way to lead in a club she actually enjoyed or at her local church or youth center to gain experience. With less AP and Honors courses, Lily could have had only three hours of homework a night and spent more time with friends. Having time with friends could have fostered social skills that are essential to the college transition, and having less school stress would foster better mental health. Lily’s parents could have begun to let her handle small conflicts with teachers or friends on her own and taught her healthy coping skills when challenges arose. Her high school could have offered college emotional and social readiness skill lists, like schools do for kindergartners, to make sure students are ready for the

non-academic side of college. Aiding young women with proper preparation in high schools, in homes, and in freshman year courses can make a world of difference for already vulnerable young women entering a new stage of life.

#### Works Cited

- Abaied, Jamie L, and Chelsea Emond. "Parent Psychological Control and Responses to Interpersonal Stress in Emerging Adulthood: Moderating Effects of Behavioral Inhibition and Behavioral Activation." *Emerging Adulthood*, vol. 1, no. 4, 2013, pp. 258–270
- Amy. "School A, Part Two". 10 February 2020.
- Andy. "School C". 17 February 2020.
- Bruffaerts, R, et al. "Mental Health Problems in College Freshmen: Prevalence and Academic Functioning." *Journal of Affective Disorders*, vol. 225, 2018, pp. 97–103.
- National Excellence: A Case for Developing America's Talent-*, U.S. Department of Education, 1993).
- Damour, Lisa. *Under Pressure* . Ballantine, 2019.
- Heffernan, Lisa. "Survey: Most Freshmen Are Not Emotionally Prepared for College." *NBCNews.com*, NBCUniversal News Group, 13 Oct. 2015, [www.nbcnews.com/feature/freshman-year/survey-most-freshmen-are-not-emotionally-prepared-college-n443576](http://www.nbcnews.com/feature/freshman-year/survey-most-freshmen-are-not-emotionally-prepared-college-n443576).
- "High Achiever" *Merriem-Webster.com*. Merriam-Webster, 2020. Web. 3 April 2020.
- Hwnag, Ha Sung. "Why Social Comparison on Instagram Matters: Its Impact on Depression.(Report)." *KSII Transactions on Internet and Information Systems*, vol. 13,

- no. 3, KSII, the Korean Society for Internet Information, Mar. 2019, pp. 1626–38,  
doi:10.3837/tils.2019.03.029. (2)
- Green. “School B”. 12 February 2020.
- Johnson. “School A .” 10 Feb. 2020.
- Kouros, Chrystyna, et al. “Helicopter Parenting, Autonomy Support, and College Students’  
Mental Health and Well-Being: The Moderating Role of Sex and Ethnicity.” *Journal of  
Child and Family Studies*, vol. 26, no. 3, 2017, pp. 939–949.
- “Elementary (K-5) / Kindergarten.” *Elementary (K-5) / Kindergarten*,  
[www.knoxschools.org/Page/6054](http://www.knoxschools.org/Page/6054).
- Lane. “School B Part Two”. 12 February 2020.
- Li, Pengxiang, et al. “‘Likes’ as KPI: An Examination of Teenage Girls’ Perspective on Peer  
Feedback on Instagram and Its Influence on Coping Response.” *Telematics and  
Informatics*, vol. 35, no. 7, Elsevier Science Ltd., Oct. 2018, pp. 1994–2005,  
doi:10.1016/j.tele.2018.07.003. (1)
- Melnyk, Bernadette, et al. “Improving Physical Activity, Mental Health Outcomes, and  
Academic Retention in College Students with Freshman 5 to Thrive: COPE/Healthy  
Lifestyles.” *Journal of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners*, vol. 26, no. 6,  
“Overachiever”. *Merriem-Webster.com*. Merriam-Webster, 2020. Web. 3 April 2020.
- “Project U / ProjectU.” / *ProjectU*, [www.knoxschools.org/domain/3395](http://www.knoxschools.org/domain/3395).
- Robbins, Alexandra. *The Overachievers: The Secret Lives of Driven Kids*. Hyperion, 2006.
- Rostain, Anthony and Hibbs, Janet B. “Is Your Child Emotionally Ready for College?” *The Wall  
Street Journal*, Dow Jones & Company, 22 Aug. 2019, [www.wsj.com/articles/is-your-  
child-emotionally-ready-for-college-11566490377](http://www.wsj.com/articles/is-your-child-emotionally-ready-for-college-11566490377).

“Students Who Feel Emotionally Unprepared for College More Likely to Report Poor Academic Performance and Negative College Experience.” *JED*, 18 Apr. 2017,

[www.jedfoundation.org/first-year-college-experience-release/](http://www.jedfoundation.org/first-year-college-experience-release/).

“What Is AP?” *Home - AP Students | College Board*, [apstudents.collegeboard.org/](http://apstudents.collegeboard.org/).