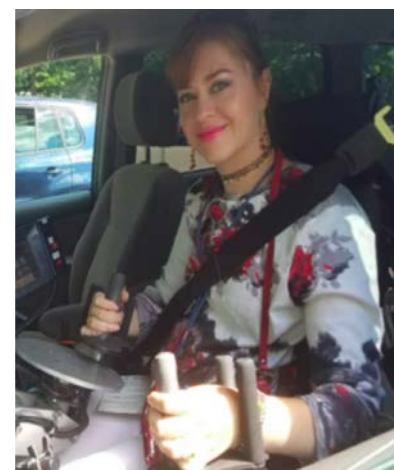


## Purpose and Introduction

- To understand the lived experiences of spinal cord injury (SCI) as described by two people with SCI through life story interviewing.
- Narrative inquiry is a useful method to study the experience of living with a disability because story-telling allows individuals to explain how their conditions have influenced their everyday lives.<sup>1,3,7,12,13,14</sup>
- Existing narrative studies have explored lived experiences of SCI and the distinct perspectives of men and women, athletes with SCI, and caregivers of persons with SCI.<sup>3,9,12,13,15</sup>
- This study may be among the first accounts of life stories of adults with pediatric onset SCI. \*The two participant's names have been changed to protect their identities.



Erica\* (left)



Malcolm\* (right)

## Methods

### Approach

Qualitative method using narrative inquiry

### Life Story Interviews

- Conducted by two trained OT doctoral students (first and second authors)
- Questions adapted from Atkinson's The Life Story Interview<sup>2</sup>
- Interviews (n=15) over 16 weeks, two hours each, audio-recorded (Fig. 1)
- Transcribed verbatim

### Analysis

#### Narrative analysis of eventful data

Constant recursive movement between emerging plot made up of details most relevant to the study's purpose and the data as a whole<sup>12</sup> (Fig. 2)

#### Narrative Smoothing

Some details from the interviews were omitted while specific details that aligned with the purpose of the study were integrated in order to tell a coherent story<sup>1,12</sup>

### Acknowledgement

This study was conducted in partial fulfillment of the doctoral degree in occupational therapy at Thomas Jefferson University (TJU), Philadelphia PA and was approved by TJU Institutional Review Board, IRB # 18D.513

## Results

- Two distinct life stories (Fig. 3)
- Four themes emerged (Table 1)

### Figure 3: Narrative Life Stories

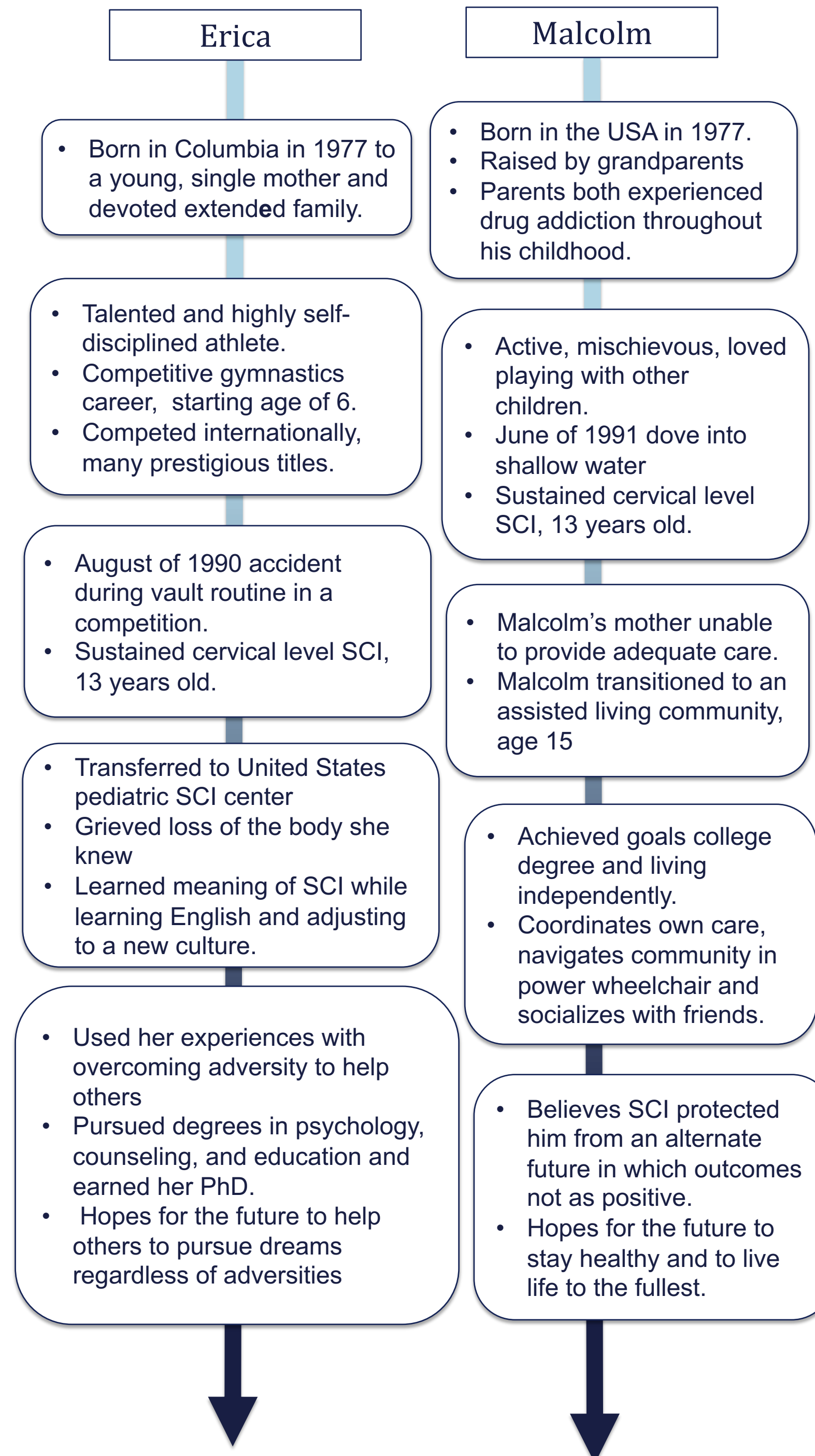


Table 1

Themes	Context	Erica's Quotes	Malcolm's Quotes
Adjustment to Life with SCI	Peer mentorship has a positive impact on self-efficacy, health outcomes and quality of life in individuals with SCI. <sup>4,11</sup>	"When I started seeing other patients laughing, making jokes and riding their chairs, that started giving me a different outlook on life."	"My buddy had less movement than I have and I'd watch him get on the bus. I just watched him do it and I'm like 'Wow. I can't believe this.' So I said, 'I'm gonna try to get on the bus.'"
Hardiness	Hardiness defined as taking responsibility for one's decisions (control), committing to the choices one has made (commitment) and reframing obstacles as stepping stones in order to generate alternative solutions to problems (challenge). <sup>10</sup>	"My health had to come first...but something within me said 'Okay, I've gone through way too much; through all these loans, my mom's sacrifice my sacrifice, my time, everything. I just can't give up right now.'"	"Out of all my friends and my brother's friends, I was the only one that graduated from college."
Interdependence	Receiving practical support from social networks has had a motivational influence on engagement in valued occupations after SCI. <sup>6</sup>	"I'm not afraid of asking for help...people normally want to want to do everything by themselves, but the reality is sometimes you do need help and you do need to ask for it"	"I was a little nervous at first cause I didn't know like what to expect. But they helped me with open arms. they understood my situation...they looked at me and saw Malcolm."
Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG)	PTG is defined as the capacity to perceive benefits from and making positive changes in response to tragic experiences. <sup>7,8,9</sup>	"Everything in my life since my injury has revolved around my health. That's why when I finally graduated it was like the biggest accomplishment ever because it almost felt like I was swimming against the current."	"I think God put me in this wheelchair for a reason 'cause the things that I was doing before my accident and the culture and environment that I was around...nobody can predict the future but I don't know where I would be right now if I was on my feet."

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