FAMILIAL ROLES & THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE DIPLOMA CANDIDATES.

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FAMILIAL ROLES & THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE DIPLOMA CANDIDATES.

A Thesis

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Abstract

of

FAMILIAL ROLES & THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE DIPLOMA CANDIDATES.

by

Mayra Tellez

Statement of the Problem

At Lucky Banks High School (LBHS), there is a high attrition rate of diploma candidates; most often in females, and their grounds for changing academic course plans is family. This investigation aims to find out: How do the familial expectations of female students participating in the International Baccalaureate Program Diploma Program at Luther Burbank High School, shape their academic experience during the final high school years? And how might family shape their post high school goals and aspirations?

Sources of Data

The methodology used in this study is a qualitative data collected from two focus group interviews. The six female participants in the study are recent graduates of LBHS and participated in the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program during the junior and senior year.
Conclusions Reached

Familial expectations of female diploma candidates greatly influence their academic experience. Family is a motivation factor for academic achievement. The LBHS IB program must create a support system for diploma candidates in order to increase the program’s retention rates.

________________________________, Committee Chair
Lisa William-White, Ph.D.

______________________________
Date
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge my family: Mom, Dad and Mito thank you for the unconditional support, motivation and love. You are one of the reasons that I continue to push myself each day. Raul, a big thank you for being there (literally) with me through out this entire process. BMED Family, thank you for all the dialogues, knowledge and friendship we have developed through out our program.

To the six remarkable women of the study, you are my inspiration without your stories this thesis would not be a reality. Keep up the good work and I look forward to seeing how far you will go. A piece of advice for all students:

In an education system, where we must always prove ourselves and compete for our place, do not relinquish your spot you deserve to be there, make it your agency. Finally, the choices you make will have profound effects on your family; you have the power to change the course of your family. The single act of you pursuing higher education, allows your younger siblings, cousins and nieces and nephews to never not know what college is like or the opportunities it may bring to your family.
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“Although education is not the only road to social mobility, it has become increasingly important as the primary avenue into middle class for underrepresented groups” (Gándara, 1992, p. 3). According to the 2010 US Census, the subgroup “White only” has the smallest population living below poverty level (10.1%) yet the group has the highest percentage of pupils in higher education, 66.4% (US Department of Education, 2011). Historically, the subgroup makes up the largest portion of middle and upper classes in the United States. Minority groups have historically been underrepresented in higher education and in middle and upper class but have been overwhelmingly represented in poverty. Minority groups do not want to enter the realms of middle class to be “more white,” rather they are looking for a better life, where financial burdens are more subsided and their families get the best quality education and opportunities.

Social mobility is not only for one person; rather the transition represents mobility for a family and the surrounding community. There is a small body of literature of educational attainment of minority groups and their successes. Most of research reminds us of the disparities in educational attainment between White and non-White groups, such as a widening achievement gap, disproportionate number of colored students in special education and dropout rates. This work, aims at showing the ways in which female
students of racially, ethnically, financially and linguistically diverse backgrounds fare in a highly rigorous academically rigorous program at the secondary level.

Statement of the Problem

Lucky Banks High School (LBHS) is not the same high school it was in the nineties. In the late nineties, LHBS was infamous for its gang violence, escalating ethnic and racial tensions, high rates of teenage pregnancy, alarming high school drop out rates, lack of academic support and less than adequate administration and staff. Headlines in the local newspaper, would read “Teens Petition Board to Remove [Banks] High Principal,” (Massara, 1997); “[Banks] Team Take on Gangs” (Massara, 1998); “Teacher Convicted of Lewd Act With Student, Not Molestation” (Cornado, 1998). While some of these problems still exist today, the culture of the school has drastically changed. As a current science teacher at LBHS, I can attest that the climate of school no longer resembles the headlines in the nineties.

Today LBHS is organized in small learning communities (SLCs). Across the United States many comprehensive high schools have turned to small learning communities as a vehicle for school reform (Armstead, Bessell, Sembiante, & Plaza, 2010). At LBHS, a few hundred students, a core group of thirteen to seventeen teachers and one counselor are grouped by themes. One of the aims of the SLCs is to provide a more flexible and personalized learning environment to meet the needs of students and teachers. In ninth grade, LBHS students self-select into the SLC that best aligns with their career objective and/or the SLC that houses a specialty program that enables academic success. “Membership in SLCs is based on students’ and teachers’ interest to ensure
access and equity” (Armstead et al., 2010, p. 366). According to a study in Florida, most students’ attitudes about SCLs further validate the current literature. Students described: building positive relationships with teachers and other students; within their “community” they felt free, more motivated and able to reach specific, concrete and high aspirations (Armstead, et al., 2010). In summary, “in the SLC model, large public high schools are redesigned to replace large impersonal schooling with smaller, more career-oriented educational environments” (Supovitz & Christman, 2005).

LBHS’s organization has facilitated much of the climate change as well as promoting a college going culture amongst all students. In a time when post-secondary education is impacted and colleges/universities have power to admit or deny students, high schools must ensure that their students are well prepared and competitive for admission. Presently, California students apply to college during the fall semester of their senior year. In order for students be UC eligible they must: fulfill the A-G requirements and earn no less than a C in the courses, maintain a 3.0 GPA or higher, take the SATs and/or ACTs and if necessary take SAT II. According to the 2011 University of California statewide system class profile the average high school GPA for admitted students is 3.91. A way to boost GPA is by taking UC approved honors courses, 90.1% of freshmen applicants for the UC statewide system took one or more UC approved honors course in high school; the highest frequency of honors classes being 7-8 courses. During the 2008-2009 academic school year LHBS only offered two courses that were UC approved honors courses. According to LBHS School Accountability Report Card, 2009-2010 51% of students have completed the A-G course requirements and only 41% of
seniors take college entrance exams. The average verbal, math and writing score of LBHS students are: 389, 423 and 397, respectively (California Department of Education, 2010). When compared to the UC statewide system, verbal: 614; math: 650; and writing: 628 (UC student profile, 2010) LBHS students are below approximately by 225 points. Additionally, the percent of students enrolling in a four-year college and/or university is only 22%. The gaps are the result of language barriers and/or the socioeconomically disadvantaged student population of LBHS students. This data shows that schools must reinforce their academic program with courses, programs and staff that meet the aforementioned demands. This is especially crucial for students of culturally, linguistically, racially and economically diverse backgrounds.

LBHS is characterized as a large urban high school, 2,012 students, with high concentrations of English Learners 32% of student population, 84% of student population low income indicator, and a diverse student body. Only 6% of the student population is white the remaining 94% is non-white, the majority being: African American, Latino and South East Asian (California Department of Education, 2010). Like most urban schools, LBHS is plagued by below state average graduation rates, not meeting federal Academic Yearly Progress (AYP) goals and meager facility and school resources. The reality that “AP and IB programs have become the primary, and in many cases, the only service option for advanced students in high school” (Kyburg, Hertberg-Davis, & Callahan, 2007, p. 174) that will enable students to be more competitive for college admission.

In 2005, LBHS chose International Baccalaureate Programme (IB Programme) as the reinforcement students need. “This more holistic approach to secondary studies
includes an emphasis on more metacognitive aspects of learning such as ‘learning how to learn, how to analyze, and how to reach considered conclusions about people, their languages and literature, their ways in society, and the scientific forces of the environment’” (International Baccalaureate, 2005).

The IB Programme is an academically rigorous program recognized worldwide at colleges and universities. The program offers students two options. Students can do the full IB diploma program or earn certificates in chosen subjects. The full IB diploma program is completed in the junior and senior year. Students take six IB courses; write a 4,000 word Extended Essay on a topic of his/her choice; complete a Theory of Knowledge course and engage in 150 hours of Creativity; Action and Service (CAS). The program is intended for students that are serious about their academics. By nature it is a very intensive and rigorous program, therefore the majority of the IB students opt for certificates in specific subjects.

Some of the advantages for pursuing an IB diploma include: the opportunity to complete the bachelor’s degree in shorter time, thus saving money on tuition (Kyburg et al., 2007); the development of study skills necessary to successfully complete college, especially for students who might become the first family member to attend college or among peer groups who do not consider education a promising option for the future (Paige & Marcus, 2004); and advantages in college admissions (Kyburg et al., 2007).

In 2010, the LBHS IB program submitted its five-year self-study to the governing body of IB. Program coordinators and a team of IB teachers self-evaluated the strengths and areas of improvements of the program. As an IB teacher that teaches IB
Environmental Systems and Societies (IBESS), I formed part of the team. My participation in the self-study raised many personal as well as professional inquiries. Such as: what are the structures in place that recruit, retain and support students? My inquiries naturally emerged into the current study. According to an investigation by Kyburg, Hertberg-Davis and Callahan (2007) the optimal learning environments for talented minorities are environments where “teachers recognized the diversity and complexity of students’ backgrounds and were cognizant of potential limitations” (p. 174).

The self-study team identified retention of full IB diploma candidates as a limitation of the program. The self-study showed that each year the number of full diploma candidates drops from the junior to senior year. The decrease is mostly found amongst female students. As a result, Fijian and South East Asian female IB diploma candidates will be the focus of this investigation. While there are some generalizations about the experiences of males and females in the IB program, it is important for me to address the unique experiences of females because they have to choose between familial obligations and academics. According to Fuligni and Pederson (2002), familial obligation is at the highest during high school and females more so than males receive mixed messages about familial and academic obligations (Cammarota, 2004). Females in particular struggle with being “mujeres del hogar” (women of the home) and being self-reliant, because the culture of home and school are opposites. At home young females position themselves in a collectivist-oriented family culture but at school they are expected to survive in an individualistic-oriented school culture (Espinoza, 2001). Most
young ladies feel like they are the only ones in this situation, when in fact most all experience the culture clash to some degree. Shedding light on the unique experiences of women will help young women cope with mediating between two cultures. “Family obligations, either as perceived obligations or behavioral demands maybe particularly important for women from minority backgrounds” (Sy & Brittain, 2008, p.729).

A variety of factors may influence a student’s change from diploma to certificate or choose to no longer take any IB courses; however, the most frequently used justification is family. The demands of the program often times interfere with familial obligations. Therefore, IB students incorrectly assume that they are forced to choose between academics or family. According to students participating in the self-study they feel that there is a disconnect between the family and academics; more often than not, it is a result of cultural incongruities between academics and family. Cultural incongruities include but are not limited to: lack of familiarity with education system and process, language barriers and deep rooted, instilled gender roles in the family and values. Fuligni & Penderson (2002) compare and contrast American familial obligations with non-American family obligations in relation to academics. They found that American families’ children had fewer family obligations, most of their time was spent in school and leisure activities and work for children was for personal expenses. In contrast, non-American families’ children had more and stronger obligations and their role was to support, financially if necessary, and respect the family. The nature of the IB program is very rigorous and thus it appears as if the American family system would be more supportive for students then the non-American system.
Research Questions

An understanding of the circumstances and environment female IB students at LBHS live on a day-to-day basis is necessary to address the retention rates. This study will address the following questions:

1. How do the familial expectations of female students participating in the International Baccalaureate Program Diploma Program at Lucky Banks High School, in Northern California shape their academic experience during the final high school years?

2. And how might family shape their post high school goals and aspirations?

Theoretical Framework for Study

The theoretical framework for the investigation at hand is situated mediated identity theory compliments of Peter C. Murrell. This theoretical framework “proposes successful identification as a progression of three phases, as one moves from (a) situated identity awareness (b) awareness of one’s position and positionality, to (c) agency” (Murrell, 2009, p.28). Situated mediated identity theory comes from the field of social psychology but it is most often applied in education. The advantages of using situated mediated identity theory are: that it can be applied to any context, in addition to education it helps with some of the most important developmental achievements—self efficacy, intellectual agency and emotional resiliency; it provides educators and others who work with youth a framework for creating identity enabling environments that promote identities of achievement; it offers a mediated and situated identity interpretations of both racial-ethnic and cultural identities as they are situated in acts of teaching and learning,
and related to achievement and school success; finally it is a better alternative for students of marginalized and historically underserved populations than the traditional theory of identity (Murrell, 2009).

This investigation will use situated mediated theory to examine that situated identity awareness, of six former female IB diploma candidates. The two situated identities that will be examined are the academic identities and familial identities of the ladies. Next, the literature will look at the positionality of the ladies and the way in which they deal with the tensions of individual representations of self and the ascriptions made by the individual by their families. The last part of the literature review, will examine how the individuals participating in the study have the capacity of resisting undesired repositioning attempts of others as well as the capacity to situate one’s own desired identity (Murrell, 2009).

Definitions of Terms

The following terms will be used throughout this study. The terms and their definitions are provided to ensure a thorough understanding and assist throughout this study.

*Academic Identity*

A dimension of a larger, global self-concept and is central to academic performance and achievement motivation.

*Academically Rigorous Classes*

Advanced academic courses in various disciplines offered at secondary schools. Students can earn credit or advanced standing at colleges and universities by taking and passing the written and/or oral examinations.
Agency

A critical conscious understanding of both one’s situation and positionality in any given setting or context.

IB Diploma Programme

The IB Diploma Programme is designed as an academically challenging and balanced Programme of education with final examinations that prepares students, normally aged 16 to 19, for success at university and life beyond. The programme is normally taught over two years, junior and senior year.

Familismo or Familism

Strong identification and attachment to both nuclear and extended family and requires members to prioritize family over individual interest.

Familial Obligations

Refers to the extent to which family members feel a sense of duty to assist one another. Usually in the forms of: language/cultural brokering, taking care of siblings and elders, financial contributions and remaining close to home.

First Generation

Refers to the first student in a family to ever participate in the IB Diploma Programme.

Full Diploma Candidate or Diploma Candidate

Junior or senior student participating in the IB Diploma Programme that is taking six IB courses, write a 4,000 word Extended Essay on a topic of his/her choice,
Theory of Knowledge and engage in 150 hours of Creativity, Action and Service.

*International Baccalaureate*

The International Baccalaureate® (IB) is a non-profit educational foundation, motivated by its mission, focused on the student.

*Positionality*

Social identification concerning the tension between individual representations of self and the ascriptions made by the individual by wider society.

*Self Efficacy*

The reciprocal relationship between students’ beliefs about their capacity and the effort they put forth leading to achievement success.

*Situated Identity*

Identity is best understood as situated and fluid, not static and fixed, and seen in the representations of the self individual put forth to the wider social world.

*Small Learning Community (SLC)*

Houses, or small schools within a school, where a few hundred students are grouped by grade level, career academies, themes, or magnet programs in order to create tight-nit communities of autonomous students and teachers. The SLCs are to provide a more flexible and personalized learning environment to meet the needs of the students.

Limitations of the Study

The focus of the study is on Fijian and South East Asian females in the IB diploma program at LBHS, this narrow focus contains limitations. First, the findings of
the study are not applicable to other female IB diploma candidates in other schools and/or geographic areas. Additionally, the study does not address the experiences of male counterparts. Furthermore, the study does not include the experience of certificate IB female students or college prep female students. However the most pervasive limitation is that the findings do not support the experiences of non-Asian or non-Latino IB diploma candidates due to the lack of ethnic representation in the IB diploma program.

Significance of the Thesis

Participatory action research (PAR) is the research mode that will enable female students to share their experiences in an academically rigorous program with the rest of the world. Historically, there have always been more males than females in the honors or academically rigorous programs. At the university level and even in the work force, there are more males than females. In recent years, the number of women has increased in academia, but the numbers are still not comparable. This thesis will add to the meager literature surrounding familial obligations and academic success, specifically from students of culturally, linguistically, racially and economically diverse backgrounds.

According to Critical feminist educational theory there are two assumptions between schooling and gender. “The first assumption is that schooling is deeply connected to the class structure and economic system of capitalism… the second assumption, again derived from more general socialist feminist theory, is that capitalism and patriarchy are related and mutually reinforcing of one another” (Weiler, 1988, p. 219). These assumptions partially explain the gender gap. Additionally they confirm that males are dominant in society and that schools as well as family structures exacerbate
their dominance. Gender dominance allows for oppressive situations and norms in larger society. This study is significant because it gives a voice to females, the oppressed and their position in society. The females in this study are young and are only beginning their trek in the “real world.”

Organization of Remainder of the Study

This investigation is organized according to five chapters: (1) introduction; (2) literature review; (3) methodology; (4) analysis of research and (5) conclusions and recommendations. The focus of chapter one is the introduction and background information of the current information on females in academically rigorous programs, specifically the International Baccalaureate Program, and familial obligations. Included in this chapter is the statement of the problem, a brief overview of the theoretical framework for study, definition of terms, limitations of study and the significance of the study. Chapter two goes in depth into the literature surrounding academic achievement and familial obligations of female students from culturally, linguistically, racially, and economically diverse backgrounds. Also found in chapter two is an in-depth explanation of situated-mediated identity theory and its application to the current study. Chapter three describes the methodology and data collection process for the study. Primary data collected is audio recordings of two separate focus groups of three women. The first focus group are females that have had an older family member participate in the diploma program before and the second focus group consists of women who are the first in their family to participate in the IB program. Chapter 4 contains the analysis of the research. Chapter 5 contains the conclusions and recommendations of the project.
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this investigation is to further explore the tensions between academically motivated young female students and familial expectations. Specifically, this study will address the following questions:

1. How do the familial expectations of female students participating in the International Baccalaureate Program Diploma Program at Lucky Banks High School, in South Sacramento shape their academic experience during the final high school years?

2. And how might family shape their post high school goals and aspirations?

Situated-mediated identity theory is the theoretical framework that examines the way in which an individual mediates/manages two or more identities, becomes aware of one’s position or positionality, and demonstrates agency (Murrell, 2006; 2009). Individuals have different identities based on the social setting that they are in. Most individuals adjust their identities to the norms of a given situation (Alexander & Lauderdale, 1977). When the individual experiences conflicting identities, tension in the individual increases. Individuals afflicted “must comprehensively integrate social identification in the three areas: (1) the individual, (2) the individual’s local cultural context of social networks, and (3) the broader societal, political, and cultural context” (Murrell, 2009, p. 28). The navigation, compromises and resolutions between all identities are best predicted by situated-mediated identity theory.
The review of the literature will be organized in the following manner: background and application of situated-mediated identity theory; academic achievement of minority students; familial obligations; parent-school relationship; and summary.

Background

As one navigates through the work Peter C. Murrell, the proponent behind situated mediated identity theory, one must keep in mind that “it is a framework that orients both research and practice to the processes of identity that mediate sustained academic engagement, effort, and success optimism” (Murrell, 2009, p.26). The framework examines ways to create achievement identities and communities for students of racially, ethnically, linguistically and economically diverse backgrounds. This framework is most often used in the education field, but situated mediated identity theory comes from the field of social psychology and is a derivative of social identity theory.

Turner developed social identity theory in 1979. Social identity theory was initially used to understand the psychological basis of intergroup discrimination. Social identity theory’s core assumption is that a person does not have one identity rather a person has many identities each one corresponding with various group memberships (Turner, 1987). Furthermore, group membership creates in-group categorization and naturally people favor in-group situations rather than out-group. The assumption that individuals have multiple identities further developed into Situated Identity Theory.

Situation identity theory explains how identity changes based on the situation and the way one can predict its change based on what is most socially accepted. Alexander and Wiley (1981) offer a similar interpretation of situated identity; they state: “Situated
identities are not properties possessed by or imposed upon persons, nor are they located in some externalized environmental structure. Instead, they define the relationships between the actor and the environment any given point” (p. 276). In simple terms, this means that our sense of self, or identity, is not a static, unitary entity but is better thought of as being fluid and situationally expressed (Murrell, 2009). The second component of situated identity theory is that one can anticipate the course of the interaction, most often favoring the in-group categorization. The benefits of situated identity theory are that it can be applied to any social setting and it is relatively precise in its predictions.

Peter C. Murrell is best known for his contributions to the literature and application of situated mediated identity theory. His research focuses on the development of academic identity and racial identity of African American males. Murrell’s book Race, Culture, and Schooling: Identities of Achievement in Multicultural Urban Schools (2009) uses the six guiding principles of situated-mediated identity theory to explore identity development. The theory was developed of years of practice dedicated to promoting academic proficiency, identity and agency among “students of color”. Table 2.1 summarizes situated mediated identity theory’s six guiding principles (Murrell, 2009):

Table 2.1: Situated Mediated Identity Theory Guiding Principles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guiding Principle</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Identities are socially constructed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Identities are dynamic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Individuals assume roles within a community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Roles taken in academic contexts influence school success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. When situated identities are shared, a local culture is established that influences identities and performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. School success can be achieved if/when the local culture seeks to build positive academic identities.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
This investigation will apply situated mediated identity theory in exploring the achievement identities, positionality and agency of six IB Diploma Candidates. The following review of the literature aims to give us an insight as to what it means to be both an IB Diploma candidate and a member of a family?

Overview of Situated-Mediated Identity Theory

Murrell (2009) developed the theory out of years of practice dedicated to promoting academic proficiency, identity, and agency out of children and youth in culturally, linguistically and racially diverse school settings. This theory explains “how young people develop agency to psychologically inoculate themselves against the ubiquitous assaults on their identity in everyday social practices in schools shaped by ideologies of racial inferiority and White privilege” (Murrell, 2009, p.26).

Situated-mediated identity theory moves from traditional identity theory because traditional theory has limited generalizability when applied to promoting the academic achievement of students of color in urban schools and environments. Traditional identity theory is grounded in the cultural norms of White, middle-class families. The norms of White middle class families are not the same as minority families; and therefore, an alternate framework is necessary. Situated mediated identity theory accounts for the diversity of urban settings and the currency of youth culture. Additionally, traditional theory assumes that identity is static, stable and an unchanging entity successfully achieved by adolescence.

The framework proposes successful social identification in school as a developmental progression. The developmental progression includes the following steps
(first column of table 2.2): situated identity awareness of one’s position or positionality, to agency. Second, the theory examines three settings or contexts of development (middle column in table 2.2): socio-cultural community, social-symbolic community, and community of practice. The final piece of the framework examines three sense-making processes in the formation of empowered and vigorous adult identity (last column in table 2.2): primary socialization, secondary socialization and improvised self-determination.

Table 2.2: Framework for Situated-Mediated Identity Theory summarizes the major concepts of the framework.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Identity Growth</th>
<th>Type of Social Context</th>
<th>Type of Cultural Practices</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Situated Identity</td>
<td>Social-Cultural Community</td>
<td>Primary Socialization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positionality</td>
<td>Social-Symbolic Community</td>
<td>Secondary Socialization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency</td>
<td>Community of Practice Activity</td>
<td>Improvisational Self-Determination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Setting</td>
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(Murrell, 2009)

Murrell (2009) states “the 3 X 3 framework constitutes my theoretical apparatus for addressing the cultural dimensions of identity development in the context of discursive and cultural practices of schooling” (p. 34). The following sections: developmental progression, communities of achievement, and cultural practice in the literature review will go over the elements of the 3 X 3 framework.

Developmental Progression of Identity Formation

The first column of the framework focuses on the developmental progression of identity formation. In progression of identity realization, young people struggle to make sense of themselves as academic achievers, cultural beings and worthy human beings.
Each phase will define, background of its origin and an explanation of the way Murrell adapted the idea to fit the framework will be explained.

Situated Identity

“The first phase of developing an awareness of oneself as situated is the realization that one is a different person in different contexts” (Murrell, 2009, p.81). For the purposes of this investigation: identity is best understood as situated and fluid, not static and fixed, and seen in the representations of the self individual put forth to the wider social world.

Situated identify emerged from role-identity theory. In role-identity theory individual identity is not viewed as a single identity, but as being composed of a number of role identities (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995). Role identities may be interrelated or inconsistent and they change over time. “Role identity theory attempts to explain the complexity of identity as it changes according to different social contexts, and to offer rules that determine which role identities come to the fore in any given situation” (Murrell, 2009, p.83).

Role-identity theory provided a foundation for situated identity; Murrell tailored the theory to ensure that it captured the rich experiences and interactions of social life in school. Proponents of role-identity theory attempted to account for school achievement in terms of the pattern of more dominant and less dominant role identities. Identities change therefore role-identity theory is not appropriate. It also assumes that identities are predetermined and disregards the “situated-ness” or variability of identities based on the context and/or environment. Therefore, students with dominant academic identities
would exhibit more academic achievement than those with less academic identities. Murrell drew from some of the ideas of role-identity theory and further extended it so that it helps educators respond to the admonition of “know your students and where they’re coming from” to promote effective and worthwhile teaching for all students.

Murrell (2009) has five propositions that summarize situated identity: (1) situated identity combines personal and social identity, (2) situated identity is dynamic and not fixed, (3) it is not merely the product of an individual’s psychological developmental history, but it is also a function of the legacy of social and cultural practices in which the individual engages with others, (4) situated identity is improvisational and (5) the final proposition is twofold: (a) its is constituted with both the individual’s system of meaning and the meaning systems of the larger cultural group; and (b) situated identity is also one’s connection to the meaning system of the wider social and cultural world of the individual.

Positionality

In short, positionality is developing awareness and realizing how one actively positions oneself in his or her interactions with others to present the desired persona to others. The concept of positionality comes from Goffman (1968, 1974, 1981). Also credited are Harre and Gillet (1994), and Harre and van Langenhove (1999). These theorists agree that positioning is distinct from social identity because it requires action and interaction; it has meaning in relation to a particular context or frame. The action part of positionality requires an individual to take a stance or role on a given situation. The stance or role is dependent on an individual’s awareness of their operational self; the role
of identities the individual assumes; the role of ascribed to the individual and the
significations of self that the individual draws on and projects in social situations
(Murrell, 2009). As a result, personality expression is less internally generated than it is
situationally improvised. People are different people in different situations not because
of different internal factors but because people improvise their being.

Murrell included positionality in his theory for several reasons. First, people who
work with youth can have a sense of who they are beyond the basis of types (e.g. good
student or bad student). Murrell argues that young people cannot be limited to typologies
and while it’s hard for adults to overcome it is a must if they are going to serve diverse
students effectively. Second, positionality offers a way of explaining exactly how identity
is constructed. Finally, it allows for the multiple interpretation of young people’s
behavior in instructional episodes in which proficiency figures into positionality; thus
increasing the likelihood for a greater depth in understanding the child’s experiential and
symbolic worlds.

Agency

The final and most challenging phase in identity formation is agency. Agency or
critical consciousness is the understanding of both one’s situation and positionality in any
given setting or context. In thinking of agency, Murrell references the work of Paulo
Freire (1970), where agency is a means for contesting all forms of subjugation and
domination. In education, students of diverse backgrounds are constantly assaulted by
ideologies of racial inferiority and White superiority; therefore it is imperative that
educators participate in dialogue with youth to help with the development of agency among youth.

Role status and positionality concepts are implicated in agency. “Agency is therefore a capacity of resisting the undesired positioning attempts of others as well as the capacity to situate one’s own desired identity” (Murrell, 2009, p. 101). In order for agency to develop, students must find ways to represent and express themselves. An educator must create spaces for students to do so as well as rebalance discursive power arrangements. In short, educators must allow students to have a voice all while recognizing, validating, and respecting student’s individualities and experiences.

Communities of Achievement

The second column of the framework communities of achievement will now be examined. This part of the framework explains the process of this mediated identity as young people operate in each of the three types of social contexts: socio-cultural community, socio-symbolic community (figured world) and community of practice. This portion of the framework addresses the key question: how do we create socially and culturally sound collective identities of the group such that it nurtures individual identities for all of its members? The situated mediated identity framework lays the theoretical groundwork for articulating how the co-development of identities of achievement for teachers and learners mediates scholastic achievement and personal development of young people.
Socio-cultural Community

According to Murrell (2009), achiever communities have specific qualities and features that involve students in the common practices of civility, care and democracy. Aside from these qualities Murrell adds a few more that hone in what is a socio-cultural community. A socio-cultural community requires cultural practices of inquiry whereby young people look deeply at the social and cultural landscape of the community. This may entail an analysis of confrontations, issues and problems concerning racism or racialized practices in the school. If these interrogations do not occur, then it would inhibit a healthy formation of identity and agency for students.

Another feature of achiever communities is a clear indication of talents, practices, roles and behaviors valued by the community. The community must offer multiple and varied opportunities for students to practice and acquire the behaviors. If this is achieved then we have a community of practice where all members are engaged and participating therefore fostering a rich and intellectual life composed of practices of learning, cooperating and being. “Activity as shared action that is productive, purposeful, and meaningful is a core concept in the situated identity framework— a notion grounded in the socio-cultural theory of Vygotsky” (Murrell, 2009, p. 109). Vygotsky’s theory is that individuals are inseparable from kinds of activities in which they are engaged in and the cultural and social environments of which they are part of. In summary, socio-cultural communities foster the developmental progression of identity by instilling the aforementioned qualities.
Socio-symbolic Community (figured world)

It is difficult to make a distinction between socio-cultural community and socio-symbolic community but the distinction has to do with imagination and the shared symbolic constructions of individuals. In socio-symbolic communities, the members’ share a high degree of meaning, inter-subjectivity among members of a group regarding a set of shared imagined social and symbolic material. Most commonly, cliques, posses or crews are bound together by a shared imagery of self-definition. The ideals and values are shared by a group of individuals, in the figured world. The socio-symbolic community is key to identity formation because students know that there are other peer or community members in solidarity with their positionality and/or agency.

Communities of Practice

Community of practice is a term coined by Lave and Wenger (1991) that people in a community are bound together by joint enterprises, as shared repertoire of skills and common stake in something. In situated-mediated identity theory community of practice is a tool for identifying the settings and communities with a particular set of proficiencies and aims interested in developing young people. Together individuals can carry forward with identity formation.

Cultural Practices

The final part of situated mediated identity theory is the cultural practices of achiever communities, which include primary socialization, secondary socialization, and improvisational self-determination. This portion of the framework focuses specifically on the cultural practices of young people appropriate as the tools for defying, projecting and
improvising self in school settings and the roles these play in achievement motivation.

The framework focuses the motivation of students from diverse backgrounds. According to Murrell (2009), “the total story of human motivation is not just one of push from within; it also involves a pull from without” (p. 130).

Primary Socialization

Families—parents, brothers and sisters, and kin-- are important first contexts in which children are socialized in ways of being as well as the operational capacities of life. Therefore, families constitute primary socialization. Primary socialization that is best for identities of achievement is those that match the socio-cultural context of the school. There is a large body of literature on cultural incongruity that documents the ways that children from ethnically, linguistically and racially diverse background bring cultural practices to school that place them at a disadvantage because they do not match the culture patterns of school (Bordieu, 1977). However, educators must be cognizant of skills that do match the culture patterns of the school and capitalized on them. But most importantly, educators must tap into the “funds of knowledge” youth brings to the community or the classroom (Moll & Greenberg, 1990).

Secondary Socialization

Secondary socialization refers to the aspects of human ability that allows an individual to develop his/her positionality. The two aspects are: impression management and sense making. In impression management an individual is intentionally projecting an image of self for others to consume pursuant toward a particular goal. Students, like most humans achieve a goal through impression management, thereby establishing their
presence. According to Maslow’s (1970) hierarchy human express their basic need of belong and “I am, I’m here and I matter.” Furthermore, an individual wants to inscribe themselves as a symbolic field of self. In summary “the impression created is a product of what the individual projects, as well as how the collective responds to the projection” (Murrell, 2009, p.140).

Another attribute of secondary socialization is: making sense of self. Critical literacy, a particular form of sense making has been pivotal promoting identities of achievement, positionality and agency. Critical literacy allows for marginalized students to have a voice, open avenues for engagement and participation, and allows for a forum of formal and informal discursive practices. Literature has shown “linkages between individual’s identity—their sense of well-being and concept of self—and their proficiency and skill development in school settings has been that of primary interest in education and human welfare, and across social science disciplines” (Murrell, 2009, p.146).

Improvisational Self-determination

According to Murrell (2009), improvisational self-determination is the exercise of agency, as a creative process. It is based on things that the individual does well, but they are typically not things permitted in school settings. The moment a teacher or any person in the position of power challenges a student’s self-esteem; the student imagines himself or herself doing something they are good at. Most often, these are activities. In order for improvisational self-determination, to take place youth must have opportunities to show the activities that they excel in and incorporate a sense of efficacy in the academic task it
would be possible for students to actively work on developing an identity of achievement. “More important was realizing the power of conjoint activity in an endeavor where the young person is proficient” (Murrell, 2009, p. 149). The implication for educational practice is to look to create opportunities for improvisational self-determination.

Summary of Situated Identity Mediated Identity Theory

Situated mediated identity theory in concerned with the identity development, positionality and agency of students from diverse backgrounds. In addition to identity development, Murrell included communities and practices of achievement communities. Refer to table 2.2, for the overview of the framework. The elements of the 3 X 3 framework assist students of color that are enduring attacks on their capabilities, talents and values by promoting identities of achievement. The attacks may be self-inflicted or “mediated by the quality of school experiences and social interactions with others in school setting in which those beliefs play out” (Murrell, 2009, p. ix). The core preposition of the theory is: “identity is our agency in activity; who we are is a matter of what we choose to do and how we choose to invest in that doing” (Murrell, 2009, p. x).

The second part of this chapter, examines topics pertaining to the investigation. This investigation attempts to address the following research questions:

1. How do the familial expectations of female students participating in the International Baccalaureate Program Diploma Program at Luther Burbank High School, in South Sacramento shape their academic experience during the final high school years?

2. And how might family shape their post high school goals and aspirations?
In order to answer these questions, the following topics must be understood: academic achievement, familial obligations, and family-school relationship.

**Academic Achievement of Minority Students**

Social identification is crucial to achievement. Fordham and Ogbu (1986) are two researchers that have investigated the relationship between social identification and academic achievement. While their research is mostly on African American boys, they argue that African American boys’ academic failure represents their desire to maintain their solidarity with their own culture (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). If African American students strive for academic achievement then they are acting “white” and experience academic disidentification. Steele (1992) refers to this as academic disidentification, as a process whereby the general self-concept becomes increasingly less identified with academic performance the longer one stays in school. In the investigation at hand, young girls pursuing an IB Diploma are also experiencing to some degree academic disidentification. Evidence of academic disidentification includes: both enrollment and retention rates of females in the IB diploma program.

Cultural ecological theory would refer to this situation as *oppositional identity construct* and *oppositional identification* (Ogbu, 1985). Oppositional identity construct is when a person chooses to do the opposite of the dominant culture. “Oppositional identity—a social identity defined in contradiction to a White persona so as to avoid “acting White” (Fordham, 1996; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). In contrast, oppositional identification is when an individual identifies more with the dominant culture.
Another element to consider is an individual’s identity in the broader societal, political and cultural context. In order to properly examine the broader context of an individual, it is necessary to examine the history of the individual and his/her position in society. For example, Comer (1988) points out, in the United States African Americans were slaves, they were forced to depend on their masters and made believe that they were processions. They hardly had opportunities to become self-sufficient. In contrast, Anglo culture places high value on independence and personal advancement. The result of very different histories is present today; the achievement gap between Anglos and African Americans.

Ogbu’s (1988) notion of voluntary and involuntary minorities attempts to explain why certain individuals’ social identity is affected by their broad societal, political and cultural context and ultimately affects academic achievement. According to Ogbu and Simmons (1998) minorities are classified into two kinds: voluntary and involuntary. “Voluntary (immigrant) minorities are those who have more or less willingly moved to the United States because they expect better opportunities (better jobs, more political or religious freedom) than they had in their homelands or places of origin” (Ogbu & Simmons, 1998, p. 46). Voluntary minorities have often migrated to the United States.

“Involuntary (nonimmigrant) minorities are people who have been conquered, colonized, or enslaved” (Ogbu & Simmons, 1998, p. 46). Involuntary minorities were brought to the United States against their will and most have been forced to be here. The legacy and terms of minority groups has a vast effect on social identity as well as academic achievement.
Familial Obligations

At LBHS, students self-select to be full diploma candidates well aware of the academic rigor, however they are unaware of the potential familial conflict and/or strain that may arise. As a result, each year a handful female students opt out of the full diploma program. This investigation specifically focuses on female students that have completed the IB diploma program, exhibit strong familism and are currently enrolled in a four-year university. Their narratives will inform IB educators, current IB diploma candidates and parents of students the way in which females mediate between two identities: academic identity and family identity.

Six participants serve are the subjects of the study. All the participants are recent LBHS graduates and are full time students at various universities. These ladies were asked to participate because they possess strong familism; they were full diploma candidates and are academically motivated. Half of participants were the first in their family to attempt the full diploma; the other half had older siblings that had participated in the IB program. Graduates from the diploma program were favored over current students because they have already completed the program as well as have had sometime to be away from home, therefore they can better reflect how they made it through the program while keeping up with familial obligations.

For the purposes of this investigation family obligation refers to the extent to which family members feel a sense of duty to assist one another and take into account the needs and wishes of the family when making decisions (Fuligni, Tseng and Lam, 1999).
Family obligations include: language and cultural brokering (Buriel, Perez, Ment, Chavez, & Moran, 1998; Orellana, 2001); taking of younger siblings and family elders (Gándara, 1995; Valenzuela, 1999); financial contributions to the home (Fuligni & Pendersen, 2002); and remaining close to home (Espinoza, 2001).

“Given the diversity of cultural values, social roles, and economic conditions in American society, it is possible that the changes in family obligation over the transition to young adulthood vary across different social groups” (Fuligni & Pendersen, 2002, p. 857). Research by Fuligni et. al (1999) found American high students from Asian and Latin families exhibit stronger and greater familismo or familism than students from European backgrounds. Both groups possess stronger values and greater expectations regarding their duty to assist, support, and respect the wishes of their families.

There are differences between American family obligations and non-American family obligations. Fuligni and Perdersen (2002) observed that American families children have fewer obligations, most of the children’s time is spent in school or in leisure activities, children rarely engage in wage labor to help families but if they do have a job their salary is mostly for personal expenses. In contrast, the role of the children in non-American families is to assist and respect the family. The literature has coined the term familismo or familism for strong family loyalty. Familismo or familism (Tseng, 2004; Vega, 1990) is a situation where an individual has a strong identification and attachment to the family (both nuclear and extended family). Familism requires individuals to prioritize family over individual interests. There has been only minimal
amount of research done on familism and even less on females in academically rigorous programs in the high school years.

It is important to note that the female IB diploma candidates are at a pivotal point in their lives. According to Fuligni and Pendersen (2002), in high school there is a strong sense of obligation to the family and an emphasis on educational success. The emphasis is high because the young ladies will have to make choices about their future as well as the families’. After completing the IB program most will go on to college and move away from their families. According to Arnett (2001) entering college represents a major developmental transition that includes: greater independence, increase in the physical distance from family and greater responsibility for success and failures. Families with familism as a core value will often times prefer that their children attend college nearby so that the children can still fulfill their family obligations. If children leave the family to attend college then it is perceived as a sign of disrespect because the child has chosen their individual interest over the families. Non-European families often see post secondary education as a threat to the family unit. In contrast the student sees college as a way to better help the family and uses family as the motivation to do well in school (Gándara, 1995).

Situated mediated identity theory is the primary theoretical framework of this investigation. According to the theory, “the notion of identity is active, socially mediated, and determined (at least in part) by our intentional action. Identity is our agency in activity—who we are is what we choose to do and how we choose to invest in that doing” (Murrell, 2009, p. 101).
Female students must decipher between mixed messages sent by the family. Families with strong familism, simultaneously tell their daughters to become self-reliant yet place primary importance on becoming *mujeres de hogar* (women of the home) (Villenas & Moreno, 2001). Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) speaks to the cultural tension produced by the gendered lessons of Mexicana/Latina mothers. She writes, “Through our mothers, the culture gave us mixed messages: ‘No voy a dejar que ningun pelado desgraciado maltrate a mis hijos.’ (I’m not going to let any lowlife mistreat my children.) And in the next breath it would say, ‘La mujer tiene que hacer lo que diga el hombre (The woman has to do what the man says)” (p. 18).

Furthermore, females have a heavier burden of “virtues of obedience and purity for little girls, virginity, honor, and continued obedience for young single women, and commitment to the home as a respectable wife” (Villenas & Moreno, 2001, p. 677). Families feel threaten, when young women leave home for college because of their teachings will now be put to the test.

To make matters worse, there is a culture class between schools and families. At school students are expected to participate in an individualistic-oriented school culture but at home there is a collectivist-oriented family culture. In the middle of the clash are students who must mediate between two opposing paradigms. Chicana feminist theorist, Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) provides a personal example being between two opposing paradigms being Mexican and American all at the same time. Furthermore, she proposed a third, hybrid identity that develops from the process of constantly straddling two cultures in everyday life called the *mestiza* identity, “the new mestiza copes by
developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity . . . she learns to juggle cultures” (Anzaldua, 1987, p. 18). The term *mestiza* is used when a female is balancing between two opposing cultures.

An investigation on doctoral female students by Espinoza (2001) observed the way they balance between school and family. The study found that there are two kinds of students: there are the integrators and the separators. The integrators managed to familial obligations by explicitly communication with family about school priorities as well as compromising with family about time. Whereas, the separators actively arranged their lives to keep family and school separate in order to minimize tension. Furthermore, biculturalism theory confirms, students’ management of two cultures lie on a bicultural scale, ranging from blended bicultural (integrator) and alternating bicultural (separator) (Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997). In the current study, female IB diploma candidates would be classified as blended bicultural because of the proximity of home and school and living in the same home with family. After the diploma candidates matriculate, it is predicted that some will continue to blend their academic and familial obligations where as others will entirely separate the two. Regardless of the distance between, individuals with strong family loyalty will always consider the family before making life-changing decisions.

Family-School Relationship

Research shows that there are differences between social classes in the strategies used to teach young children. Mothers have been the focus of research because they are primarily responsible for a child’s education (Stevenson & Baker, 1987). These
differences have a profound impact on the academic achievement of children. A study by Laosa (1978), observed 43 mothers while scaffolding children in building a tinker toy. The women participating in the study varied in educational level and occupations. The study showed that mothers with higher educational level used more inquiry and praise whereas mothers with lower educational level used modeling and (for boys only) mothers appeared to physically punish and control (Laosa, 1978). Previous research shows that the mother’s education level has been found strongly correlate with children's measures of intellectual development (Bradley, Caldwell, & Elardo, 1977). The higher education of the parent is proportional to the intellectual development of the child. Mothers with higher educational levels predispose children to higher order thinking processes, such as inquiry, application and analysis. Bourdieu (1977) claims, “the cultural experiences in the home facilitate children’s adjustment to school and academic achievement” (p. 238). As a result, it seems plausible that the cultural capital of student’s whose parents have a higher educational attainment better aligns with the cultural capital of the school.

Bourdieu (1977), a French sociologist, pioneered and is credited for the framework of cultural, social and symbolic capital and social class reproduction. According to the theory, schools draw unevenly from social and cultural resources of members of society (Lareau, 1987). The culture capital of White, middle class families best aligns with the cultural capital of schools. The cultural capital students’ is an explanation used to explain why people of color are not academically successful. Often times, the literature blatantly says that students of diverse backgrounds do not have any cultural capital, when in fact they do, but it is different from the status quo. As Lareau (1987) asserts in her study of
working- and middle class school communities, “parents who understand and share middle-class values of schools are able to intervene on their children’s behalf to assure that they benefit from all the school has to offer; lower –income and minority parents seldom share the same knowledge, dispositions, and skills to allow them to effect similar outcomes for their children” (p. 81) Furthermore, cultural capital naturally allows for the further exploration of family-school relationship.

Family-school relationship has changed throughout time; three distinct major stages have been identified thus far. During the first stage, parents in rural areas provided teachers with food and shelter and as a result family and education were heavily intertwined (Overstreet & Overstreet, 1949). The second stage is signaled by the rise of mass schooling, parents provided the political and economic support for the selection and maintenance of school (Lareau, 1987). During the first two stages of parent-school relationship, parents were structurally involved in the maintenance of the education, but do not participate in the cognitive development of their children. In the third stage, parents play a growing role in a child’s education development by reinforcing curriculum and promote cognitive development at home (Mehan, Hubbard, & Villanueva, 1994). Additionally, parents are now present in the classroom. In the third stage, parents and teachers are no longer in separate spheres instead they are partners in a child’s education and development. “Many in the field of education and public policy are convinced that involving parents in their children’s formal education is one of the most beneficial interventions for their academic success” (Olivos, 2006, p. 17). Parental involvement in schools includes: improving school services to families by making schools accountable to
parents; strengthening the ties between schools and families and; better serving students by taking advantage of the parent’s rich stories and knowledge about their children (McGarth & Kuriloff, 1999).

Assuming that the poor academic performance of minority students lies in the failure to bridge social and cultural gaps between home and school, the experiences of the minority parents will be different than those of White, middle class folks. “Research concerning families and schools has found that schools tend to serve parents differently by race and social class—just as schools have long served students differently by their race and social class” (McGarth & Kuriloff, 1999, p. 605). The family-school relationship is two-sided, it encompasses what the school asks from the parents in the educational experience of their children and the way in which parents respond to the requests.

Generally speaking, the school perspective is that if a parent helps their child at home with homework, attends school sponsored events, attends parent-teacher conferences, responds to notices sent home from school and/or volunteers in the child’s classroom is considered an “involved parent” (Lareau 1987, Olivos, 2006). “Parental involvement is characterized quantitatively rather than qualitatively” (Olivos, 2006, p. 19). Schools place different values on parents based on their race and social therefore perpetuate hegemony and exclusion of minority parents.

For example, White upper-middle-class parents, tend to have more success making their voices heard in schools. They have political power and they carry an implicit threat of flight from public schools (Kohn, 1998). More affluent parents are never questioned
about their leadership, decision-making abilities or advocacy. “Yet, while these parents are revered for their effective parenting, they are also seen as ‘over-involved [sic] and intrusive’” (Fine, 1993, p. 689). In a study by McGrath and Kuriloff (1999) found that parents heavily involved in school were mostly all upper-class White women, many of whose primary occupation was that of a stay at home mom or only worked part-time. Men mostly had professional careers and were responsible for the financial well being of the home.

In contrast, working-class parents find themselves as the pawns in battles of larger political forces, between school administrators and teacher unions (Fine, 1993). Or the moment minority parents “[are] critical of the school and of the underlying school climate is considered and ‘obtrusive parent’ or worse yet a ‘troublemaker’” (Olivos, 2006, p. 19). Minority parents are perceived to be indignant and apathetic about their child’s education by teachers and schools. “They are criticized by school personnel for their of involvement and low presence at the school yet actively dismissed or repressed when they demonstrate acts of advocacy or activism on behalf of their children or their community” (Olivos, 2006, p. 101).

Lareau’s (1987) investigation of social class differences in family-school relationship found that the factors that influence parental involvement are: parents educational attainment; the amount of non work time parents can invest in children’s schooling; and the parent’s educational capabilities. Furthermore, Olivos (2006) added that parents are: undermined and/or criticized by school personnel; are assigned manual labor when they do come and help at school; experience paternalistic treatment by school
personnel; language barriers; and they are unnoticed by the school and feel unwanted.

According to McGarth and Kuriloff (1999) another factor that influences parental involvement is incidental exclusion by other parents. Parental involvement is a norm of affluent families hence this subgroup assumes the leadership role. The trend in parent groups is that cliques are created. Parents that socialize outside of school are part of the in-group. Research on parent groups found that affluent parents utilized the group as a form of social support in the absence of familial support (Lareau 1987; McGarth & Kuriloff, 1999). Thus, what appears to be a social deficiency of the upper-middle-class parents in the eyes of [minority parents] is a school advantage for their children, as these parents turned to schools for social support and recognition” (McGarth & Kuriloff, 1999).

Despite the odds preventing parents of diverse backgrounds to be involved in school and the strained relationships between home and school, minority parents and children look at school with hope for a better future (Comer, 1988). Positive interactions between school and parents must occur in order for parent-school relations to improve. Teachers must be trained in teacher preparation programs to facilitate the task. Olivos’ (2006) work suggests transformative parental involvement whereby “bicultural parents are invited into the schools with the understanding that they and the educators that serve their children share equal responsibility and power to transform the schools, the school system will continue to confront what is quite possibly the nation’s greatest contradiction, the inability to close the educational achievement disparity between specific social groups” (p. 108).
Summary of Literature Review

This literature review can best be summed up as having two parts. The first part of the review focused on the background and application of situated mediated identity theory. The latter part described specific instances such as: the academic achievement of minority students; familial obligations and parent-school relationship that will assist with data analysis later in the investigation.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

This study focuses on the experiences of female IB diploma candidates. The IB program is the academically rigorous program offered at Lucky Banks High School (LBHS). In this chapter, setting, design of study, participants and data collection procedures and data analysis procedures will be discussed. The methodology used in this investigation is a qualitative data collection.

Setting of the Study

Lucky Banks High School (LBHS) is located in Northern California. The surrounding community is characterized as being ethnically and linguistically diverse. According to Onboard Informatics (2009), African-Americans, Hispanic/Latino, South East Asian and Pacific Islanders are the major groups of the area. The people of the community have jobs mostly in the service and labor job sectors, with a household mean income of $32,412, and the average household occupancy is 5.3 persons. As a result, a high percentage of children come from a poor and crime stricken neighborhood where street gangs are common. Due to the national and state economic crisis, many auto dealers, supermarkets, department stores and strip malls are vacant.

LBHS is a Title 1 school, where at least 82% of students qualify for free or reduced lunch (California Department of Education, 2010). It is a comprehensive high school of 2,031 students. The table 3.1 summarizes student demographics according to 2009-2010 enrollments by ethnicities and other characteristics.
Table 3.1: Student Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Students</td>
<td>2,031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/ African America</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/ Latino</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Islander</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White (not Hispanic)</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomically disadvantaged</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Learners</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dropout Rate</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduation Rate</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009 grads meeting UC or CSU course requirements</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students attending UC</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students attending CSU</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student attending Community College</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

California Department of Education, 2010

The school is organized according to small learning communities (SLCs). Each SCL has a different theme based on career pathway and/or specialty program. The SCL consists of approximately 300 students and a group of “core” teachers (California Department of Education, 2010). SLCs provide a more flexible and personalized learning environment to meet the needs of students and teachers. In ninth grade, LBHS students self-select into the SLC that best aligns with their career objective and/or the SLC that
houses a specialty program that enables academic success. “Membership in SLCs is based on students’ and teachers’ interest to ensure access and equity” (Armstead et al., 2010, p. 366). According to a study in Florida, most students’ attitudes about SCLs further validate the current literature. Students described: building positive relationships with teachers and other students; within their “community” they felt free, more motivated and able to reach specific, concrete and high aspirations (Armstead, et al., 2010). In summary, the literature states, “In the SLC model, large publics high schools are redesigned to replace large impersonal schooling with smaller, more career-oriented educational environments” (Supovitz & Christman, 2005, p.650).

While in high school, all of the participants in the study were part of the International and Environmental Studies (IES) SLC. The SLC houses the International Baccalaureate Programme. The IB Programme is an academically rigorous program recognized worldwide at colleges and universities. Students have two options they can do, the full IB diploma program or earn certificates in chosen subjects. The full IB diploma program is completed in the junior and senior year, whereby students take six IB courses; write a 4,000 word extended essay on a topic of his/ her choice; and complete a “Theory of Knowledge” course and engage in 150 hours of Creativity, Action and Service (CAS) (International Baccalaureate, 2005). The program is intended for students who are serious about their academics. By nature, it is a very intensive and rigorous program and as result the majority of the IB students opt for certificates in desired subjects. Students test in their respective subjects in May, along with all IB students worldwide.
Students often see IB students as the “smart kids” and/or “over achievers”; these stereotypes relegate them as superior to the rest of the student population, thus creating student stratification based on academic achievement. The IB students are at the top and Non-IB students are lower. The students create this social stratification because all IB students self-select into the program. Essentially, any student can do the IB program as long as they are willing to take the academic challenge. Many of the students in the IB program choose to be in the program because it will make them more competitive for college admissions. The rigor of the IB program is comparable to that of college level courses; therefore, the program prepares students to do well in college.

In 2010, the LBHS IB program celebrated its five-year anniversary. At the five-year mark, IB coordinators Chris Smith and Cathy Jones led the sites’ self-study with the help of an IB teacher committee. The study was a self-assessment of the program’s strengths, limitations, and structure. The committee identified parental involvement and their lack of program knowledge as one of the largest limitations. The same limitation holds true for the rest of the school. Parental involvement is minuscule at LBHS for a variety of factors such as: language and cultural barriers, schedule conflict and lack of knowledge about the educational system. School and more specifically IB information; is mostly communicated to parents by students, if at all.

During a self-study meeting in the spring 2010, teachers noticed that if students had older siblings that had gone through the IB program before, these students would have better support from home. Older siblings play a crucial role for families because they are the liaison between home and school. The eldest child for the family is the
primary language and cultural broker (Espinoza, 2001). Also, in accordance with the laws of primogeniture, the eldest sibling has more responsibilities than the rest of the children and must serve as a role model (Lamb, 1982). Sibling-sibling interaction is as crucial to identity and personality development as parent-child interactions. “Note that personality development and change occur throughout life, not just in the early years. Much of the continuing influence which molds personality comes not from parents but from siblings acting as role models or competitors with, each other” (Adams, 1972, p. 415). In order to answer the research questions:

1. How do the familial expectations of female students participating in the International Baccalaureate Program Diploma Program at Lucky Banks High School, in Northern California shape their academic experience during the final high school years?

2. And how might family shape their post high school goals and aspirations?

Two groups of female students will participate in participatory action research (PAR) whereby they will identify the manner in which familial expectations shape their academic experience.

Design of the Study

In order to begin to address the research question, one must be cognizant of the investigator’s positionality on the topic. Hidalgo (1998), of the Education Department in Westfield State College, asserts that no research is neutral or objective. The investigator in relation to his/ her participants is either an insider or outsider. An “insider” positions him/herself in relation to the participants, by sharing similar backgrounds and/or
experiences as the participants (Chavez, 2008). In contrast the “outsider” positionality has been socialized outside the community being studied. Chavez in “Conceptualizing from the Inside: Advantages, Complications, and Demands on Insider Positionality” summarizes the investigators’ positionality on a continuum. The investigators positionality spans from close to distant, indigenous or external, to the participants background and/or experiences. The investigator may identify anywhere along the continuum with markers at “indigenous-insider,” “indigenous-outsider,” “external-insider” and “external-outsider,” respectively (Chavez, 2008). Each position has its advantages and drawbacks that the investigator must be cognizant of. For example, as an insider one has access, both physically and/or socially to the participants. Being an insider, allows for quick rapport with participants, access to participants, insights to linguistic, cognitive, emotional and psychological needs of participants (Chavez, 2008). However, the insider position must distinguish between dual roles: as the investigator and the acquaintance of the participant. In contrast, as an outsider it does not guarantee access to participants and there is not a personal relationship with the participant at stake.

In relation to the aforementioned research questions the investigator’s positionality is that of an indigenous-insider. The researcher is indigenous in that she shares a few identities with the participants. The following identities are: similarities based on gender; experiences in an academically rigorous program; experience as a first-generation, college bound student; and experiences negotiating between family and academics are shared between the researcher and the participants. These identities make the researcher indigenous to the experiences of the participants because many of the
experiences are shared or the realities resonate with investigator. The investigator’s
teaching position at LBHS allows for the recruitment of participants and deeper insights
to their lived experiences. The girls participating in the investigation were former
students of the investigator and have maintained a positive relationship with the
investigator after graduation.

However, there is a degree of detachment from the participants and their
experiences. The investigator’s high school has a very different student body than that of
LBHS; the high school is in a predominately white middle-class community. The familial
obligations and cultural capital of most honors students were different than those of
LBHS students. For example, LBHS students have financial responsibilities and specified
familial roles that take precedence over academic obligations. School is not their first
priority, family is. In contrast students in more affluent high schools experience the
opposite. School is the most important priority and familial obligations are waived to
meet academic demands. As the teacher of the participants, the researcher had pre-
conceived bias about high achieving students. She felt that student’s families would
provide the support needed to help students get through the program. Instead of families
being a partnership with the IB program’s academic demands it appeared that families
were hurdle. Hence, this investigation aims to figure out what specific support families,
of underrepresented youth, can provide to students while in the IB program. And how
can educators of this subpopulation benefit and better capitalize on familial support?

It is also important to consider that the researcher participated in the AP program
ten years ago when college admissions were not as impacted and competitive as they are
today. Therefore, some of the stressors and motives for participating in an academically rigorous program were not as high. Additionally, one cannot compare the IB program with AP; there are too many philosophical and logistical differences. Another consideration is that the researcher does not share the same cultural identity as the participants; she identifies as Chicana/Mexicana while the majority of the participants are Southeast Asian, most identifying as Hmong. While there may be some cultural generalizations and familial expectations, others are unknown and misunderstood.

Being cognizant of one’s positionality will allow the investigator to better approach the research question. Knowing the similarities and differences between the participants and the researcher will highlight the most appropriate methods that best address the research questions. Foster (1994) authors of “The Power to Know One Thing is Never the Power to Know All Things: Methodological notes on two studies of Black American Teachers,” all support and endorse the insider position. The researcher is best suited for this investigation because she will accurately, humanely and respectfully tell the story of the female participants. “Social science reveals a growing trend toward “native anthropology” and other insider research, studies by ethnic minorities of our own communities” (Foster, 1994, p. 134).

Participatory Action Research & Ethnography

The methodology utilized in this study is participatory action research (PAR). PAR builds on Critical Pedagogy and the works of Paulo Freire (1970) where participants name, reflect, dialogue and take action on a given problem. PAR is unique in the sense that: participants are not only invited to be participants but are involved in the entire
research process (Holland, Ross, & Hillman, 2010,). Additionally, when working with youth and children PAR uses “‘child-centered’ forms of communication such as play, art, drama, games and photography” (Holland et.al, 2010, p. 361). Photovoice, a form of PAR will be utilized in this investigation. Photovoice uses photography to “capture and convey the point of view of the person holding the camera” (Graziano & Heeren, 2008, p. 176). Photographs are the raw data as well as a baseline for dialogue that will occur during interviews and group sessions. In PAR, the research must be about the participants’ lives and/or life experiences. But most importantly, PAR teaches its participants to engage in “research into other people’s lives, concerning topics that they have identified as of interest to them” (Holland et. al, 2010, p. 361). According to Holland et. al, (2010) “much ‘innovative’ participatory research is simply a form or extension of the long-established traditions of ethnographic research” (p. 362). Therefore, the primary academic camp of the investigation is ethnographic research. Ethnographic research is a qualitative approach that studies the cultural patterns and perspectives of participants in their natural settings (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982).

Sampling Rationale

The six girls participating in the study were former IB diploma candidates, five are currently enrolled in four-year universities and one finishing her associates of science (AS) degree. Additionally, the participants exhibit strong familism and have high academic goals. Three girls have older siblings who had completed the IB diploma program while the rest were the first in their families to do the IB program. The experiences of both groups of girls are important to look at because it will highlight to
what extent their family has shaped their academic experiences. Based on the observation noted by the IB teachers working on the IB self-study, girls who have predecessors that have gone through the program will have a different experience than their counterparts.

Participants

Nina

Nina is currently a sophomore at the University of California Santa Cruz (UCSC) majoring in biological sciences and hopes to attend medical school after graduating from UCSC. She graduated from high school in 2009 and is the first in her family to enroll at a four-year university. She was born in Fiji and immigrated to the United States when she was two years old. Her parents are married and have five children, four girls and one boy. Nina is the youngest daughter and the second youngest child.

Ronnie

Ronnie is currently a freshman enrolled at the University of California Santa Cruz (UCSC) and has not declared a major but has an interest in environmental science. She graduated from high school in 2010 and is the second person in her family to enroll in a four-year university. She has an older sibling at Sacramento State University but she is the first to move away for school. Ethnically she and her family identify as Hmong. Her parents divorced five years ago, She and her five siblings live at home with mom. She is the third eldest child.

Sonja

Sonja is currently a freshman enrolled at the University of California Santa Cruz (UCSC) and has not a declared a major but has interest in owning her own business in the
future. She graduated from high school in 2010 and was the first in her family to enroll in four-year university. She was born in the United States but her parents immigrated from Laos, ethnically she and her family identify as Hmong. Her parents are still married and have ten children, four boys and six girls. Sonja is the fourth eldest child.

Michelle

Michelle is currently a freshman enrolled at California State University Sacramento (CSUS) and lives at home with her parents. She has not declared a major but would like to be a teacher. Michelle graduated from high school in 2010 and is the first in her family to attend a four-year college. She and her family identify as Hmong. Her parents are still married and have six children, three girls and three boys. Michelle is the fourth eldest child.

Kiara

Kiara is a second year student at Cosumnes River College (CRC). She will be finishing her Associates of Science and plans to transfer to UC Davis, and after college she hopes of becoming a gynecologist. Kiara graduated from high school in 2009. Her parents and she identity as Fijian. Her parents are in the middle of divorcing and are separated; they have three children, one girl and two boys. Kiara is the oldest child.

Kim

Kim is a first student year at the University of California Davis (UCD) and has not declared a major but has an interest in community and regional development. She graduated from high school in 2010; she is the second person in her family to attend a
four-year college. Kim’s parents are married; they have five children, three girls and two boys. Kim is the middle child.

Data Collection

Data collected to address the research question will be done through focus group sessions, which will be audio recorded and transcribed. At each focus group, participants will be asked to bring family photos. The photos will serve as initial talking points for the participant and I to dialogue about the way family has shaped their academic experience. The first group session will include only first generation diploma candidates and the second group session will be between diploma candidates that have predecessors who have completed the IB program. The focus group questions will be used to guide the discussion and dialogue. Refer to Appendix A: Focus Group 1 First in their family to take IB courses and Appendix B: Focus Group 2 Students with older sibling(s) in IB Courses for the interview questions. The interview questions were developed using the investigation’s literature review.

Data Analysis Procedures

After completing both group sessions, the audio recordings will be transcribed and coded for themes. Themes were found according to situated mediated identity theory framework. The 3 X 3 matrix is the tool for analyzing the data; refer to table 2.2 for the matrix. Group sessions are important to address the research question because it honor’s the individual’s voice and demonstrates the collective voice for females in the IB diploma program.
Summary

This investigation is a comparative study between female IB diploma that are the first in their family to attempt the diploma programs and those who have had older siblings participate in the IB program. Participatory action research (PAR) is the methodology used in the study.
Chapter 4

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

The purpose of this investigation is to shed light on the experiences of former female IB diploma candidates at Lucky Banks High School in Northern California. Their experiences are significant because the six participants were able to complete the IB diploma program and are currently enrolled in four-year universities or will soon be. This investigation focuses on the way in which these girls were able to balance and mediate academic and familial obligations. At LBHS, there is a high attrition rate of diploma candidates; most often in females, and their grounds for changing academic course plans is family. The questions guiding the investigation are the following:

1. How do the familial expectations of female students participating in the International Baccalaureate Program Diploma Program at Luther Burbank High School, in South Sacramento shape their academic experience during the final high school years?

2. And how might family shape their post high school goals and aspirations?

In order to best address these questions, two focus groups were interviewed and audio recorded. Initially, one subgroup was to consist of three girls that had an older sibling(s) participate, to some degree, in the IB program. The other group was to consist of three girls that were the first in their family participate in the IB program. Due to time and transportation constraints, two focus group interviews took place, but there was a mixture of participants. The interviews were transcribed and coded for themes. Themes were
found according to situated mediated identity theory framework. The framework is by Peter C. Murrell who proposes that students of ethnically, racially, linguistically and economically diverse backgrounds must undergo an identity progression: situated identity, positionality and agency, in order to endure the criticisms and attack from middle class, White- based education system; and they must establish a culture of academic achievement for minority students.

The framework’s 3 X 3 matrix will be the tool used to describe the study’s findings. This chapter begins with a description of the participants; their families; and future goals and aspiration. Next, is a summary of the findings and a conclusion with explanation of the findings.

Participants

The six girls were selected to participate in the study because they are recent graduates from LBHS, and during their junior and senior year, the ladies were part of a small cohort of diploma candidates. The girls exhibit strong familism and since high school, they have had high ambitions of post secondary education. The experiences of these six young ladies are not representative of all female diploma candidates, but they serve as a case study of “typical” IB diploma candidates at LBHS. They are typical in the sense that more than 75% of IB diploma candidates are ethnically Asian; many have large families; and most qualify for exam fee waivers.

The LBHS IB program does not serve the same population of students that IB traditionally serves. The program at LBHS serves ethnically, racially, linguistically and economically diverse students. It is also unique in that students self select into the
program and there are no requirements for the program. The program identifies students who may be good candidates in their freshmen and sophomore year, but students make the commitment during their junior year. There is also flexibility for students who do not want to do the full IB diploma; they may opt for certificates in courses of their choice.

Table 4.1: Overview of Participants in the study, briefly describes the participants of the study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Nina</th>
<th>Sonja</th>
<th>Ronnie</th>
<th>Kiara</th>
<th>Michelle</th>
<th>Kim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>Fijian</td>
<td>Hmong</td>
<td>Hmong</td>
<td>Fijian</td>
<td>Hmong</td>
<td>Hmong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS Grad Yr</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Attending</td>
<td>UCSC</td>
<td>UCSC</td>
<td>UCSC</td>
<td>CRC</td>
<td>CSUS</td>
<td>UCD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major</td>
<td>Biological Science</td>
<td>Undeclared</td>
<td>Undeclared</td>
<td>Biochemistry</td>
<td>Undeclared</td>
<td>Community &amp; Regional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living Situation</td>
<td>On Campus</td>
<td>On Campus</td>
<td>On Campus</td>
<td>At Home</td>
<td>At Home</td>
<td>Off Campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents marital status</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth Order</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total # of siblings</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Sisters</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Brothers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to better illustrate the identity progression of the participants and their personal experiences, let us use narrative description. Narrative description allows for a humanization of the person.

The participants in the study were all former students of mine (the investigator) and I continue to maintain a positive relationship with each of the young ladies. At this
time, I would like to take the opportunity to describe each of the participants, their family and future aspirations:

Nina

I first met Nina in 2006, as a student teacher at LBHS. She was one of the students in third period Physical Science. Nina stood out from the class of freshmen because she was very mature and kept the young boys on task. She preferred to work and socialize with girls; this is probably because they were more mature. I was a student teacher at LBHS from 2006 to 2007, and then in 2008, after teaching at a middle school. I returned to LBHS and have been teaching there since. Upon my return, Nina has blossomed in a beautiful young woman and was now accompanied by one of her “annoying” male peers.

Academically, Nina was one of the strongest diploma candidates. She was diligent, reflective and outspoken. That particular year, the cohort had mostly male teachers; on various occasions Nina shared the discomfort she felt in her classes. One teacher in particular favored male students and made snide remarks about females in science courses. In her opinion, most teachers were not as approachable and/or as helpful. Given the situation, Nina established a relationship with Ms. Jones and myself; she sought after us for academic help as well as emotional support. Her actions demonstrate how aware Nina was of support system and the manner in which she made up for the deficiencies in her support system. Despite the negative experiences with her male teachers, Nina persevered and completed the diploma program.
Its no surprise, that today as a second year student at the University of California Santa Cruz (UCSC), she has found a female professor to mentor her. Nina is majoring in biological sciences; she hopes to attend medical school and become a gynecologist. She would like to practice gynecology because she feels that women need women to assist each other with female health related problems. While at UCSC, she has begun to establish a support system that will enable her to graduate and move on to medical school. She was accepted to a program that offers tutoring and academic advice to pre-med students. Additionally, she seeks a balance between her academic and social life. For the time being, Nina has found her niche at UCSC, although it is different from home.

At home, Nina is the youngest girl; she has three sisters and one younger brother. When she was baby, her family moved to the United States from Fiji, like many immigrant families in search of a better life. Her family finally settled in Sacramento when she was twelve years old because homes were affordable. She is the first in her family to attend a four-year university and move away. Initially, her parents were weary of her leaving home; they had expected Nina to be married by age eighteen. Her parents are very overprotective, especially when it comes to boys because her older siblings have had children out of wedlock or have married at a very young age. Nina uses her family’s’ preconceived ideas about her as motivation to prove them wrong.

Sonja

Of all the participants, I have known Sonja for the shortest amount of time. Like the rest of ladies, she was a student in my IB Environmental Systems & Societies. Sonja in class was one of the few students that would ask for clarification and was not afraid to
communicate with me when she did not understand something. Advocating for herself and others comes easy for Sonja. Another, noteworthy quality of Sonja is her tenacity. For example, one of her hobbies while in high school was soccer. Her mother did not approve of her playing soccer because she believed that Sonja was mutilating her body. There were times after school she would do homework at school or in my classroom, then go to soccer and finally home. She found ways of doing the things she enjoyed while taking care of her academics.

Sonja is currently a freshman at UCSC; she has not declared a major yet, but is exploring different areas of study. Her family would like for her to pursue a career in the medical field, but she knows that is not for her. She is brand new to UCSC and is still adjusting to her new environment and experiencing a culture shock. Like most college freshmen, she is looking for her niche and figuring it all out. While Sonja has older siblings in college and her father has some college, none have moved away from home.

In fact, Sonja is the first in her family to leave home. Her parents have eight children, three girls and five boys; Sonja is the fifth eldest. Her mother is primarily responsible for the family’s income and earns a living by growing produce and selling it to local Asian markets. Her siblings have temporary jobs throughout the year to help the family. Interestingly, her father is a Hmong Shaman and is held with high regard in the Hmong community. Her culture is very much ingrained in her; therefore, conflicts arise when she chooses to do things that are not aligned with the Hmong culture. For example, her family expressed disappointment when Sonja took Spanish in high school instead of Hmong.
Ronnie

I got to know Ronnie during a trip to Corvallis, Oregon when she and five other diploma candidates attended the IB International Student World Conference. The conference was filled with many “firsts” for Ronnie. It was the first time she had been on a plane; the first time she had left home; and the first time been to the beach. Aside all her “firsts,” Ronnie was open-minded and willing to try new things. These qualities best sum up Ronnie’s outlook on life. In addition, Ronnie is a creative person. She enjoys playing guitar, drawing, and finding new ways to express herself. In the classroom, she would think of creative approaches to problems. At the end of her junior year, she wanted to change from full diploma candidate to certificate student; she was encouraged to give it another try and she did. Of the diploma candidates from her year 2011, she was the student that had made the most improvement in regards to her study skills. She was diligent, managed her time well, and knew when she had too much on her workload load.

Currently, she is a freshman at UCSC. While she has not declared a major, she is interested in Environmental Science. She is not the first in her family to attend a four-year university; one of her older sisters attends CSUS, but she is the first to move away. Like most freshmen, she is beginning to acclimate herself to UCSC and figure out the system. Ronnie does not have a concrete career objective; she just knows she wants to travel and help others.

Before moving to Santa Cruz, Ronnie lived at home with her mom and five siblings, two sisters and three brothers. Her parents have been separated for some time and as result her mom and older sisters are in charge of the home. Ronnie identifies as
Hmong, but does not speak the language. Her mother and grandmother want her to be “good” while at UCSC and take care of herself.

Kiara

Kiara and Nina were classmates; she was one of my students in 2007 and 2009. After working at another school for a year, I returned to LBHS. To my surprise, Kiara had transformed into a beautiful, graceful young lady. Kiara is very charismatic and approachable; she is the type of student who works well with anyone. However, her benevolence is often mistaken as being fragile, but its quite the contrary because Kiara is determined to pursue her goals. Like the rest of the young ladies, Kiara is very hardworking. She recognizes that school does not always come easy to her, but she does not shy away from hard work.

In Spring 2012, she will complete her associates degree at Cosumnes River College. She is studying biochemistry and plans on transferring to UC Davis in Fall 2012. Eventually, she would like to obtain her doctorate. Her high academic aspirations come from her mother, who has a master’s degree in engineering. Ethnically, Kiara and her family are Fijian. She is the eldest of three children and the only daughter. She has been the glue of her family the last few years. Kiara’s parents are currently divorcing; this has been especially hard for her younger brother (now a senior in high school). As a result of the separation and other family matters, Kiara has gone to work full time and continues to manage family and academic obligations.
Michelle

Michelle stands out for her leadership capabilities. Michelle was always taking the initiative on various school projects and extracurricular activities. She was honored as LBHS Salutatorian for the Class of 2011. As a result of her leadership and academic scholarship, Michelle attended the IB International Student World conference. Like Ronnie, she experienced many “firsts.” In my observation the most profound impact the conference had on Michelle is a curiosity and passion for learning. She is currently a freshman at California State University Sacramento (CSUS) and has not declared a major because if it were up to her, she would major in everything. Once she completes her bachelors, she would like to pursue a career in teaching.

Michelle chose to attend CSUS, despite her other options because she wanted to remain close to home. She is the fourth eldest of six siblings. Her parents are married and all their children remain at home. Michelle has a close relationship with her sisters; she looks up to her older sister and keeps special tabs on her younger sister. In high school, she was able to manage academic and familial responsibilities by communicating with her family about her obligations. She continues to do the same in college.

Kim

The end of high school was bitter sweet for Kim; she and her family lost her brother a few weeks before graduation. Kim is one of five children, two sisters and two brothers. The loss of a family member has profound affects on a family. Yet, Kim is resilient because during these hard times, she was the eldest child at home to help her family. While she continues to mourn the death of her brother, she pushes forward and
continues on her path. She has a great support system at home and her parents continuously motivate her and her siblings. Kim is currently a freshman at the University of California Davis (UCD), majoring in community and regional development. After UCD, she would like to pursue a career in social services and help people. She chose to go to UCD because her older sister was already there; she lives off campus with her sisters and cousins.

All the ladies in the study are resilient young women who have the desire and drive to continue acquiring higher education. The IB diploma program for all the ladies was a way to prepare them for college. It instilled valuable skills such as time management and critical thinking, and it created a community of academic achievement and support between peers and teachers. Of the six ladies participating in the study, only one of them earned the IB diploma. Obtaining the diploma is not the important part; understanding the process and being reflective of the mistakes and triumphs is what is important.

Professor Duncan-Andrade (2010) uses Tupac’s poem *The Rose that Grew from Concrete* as a metaphor for students in urban school systems. The question to students should not be why are you failing, instead he poses how are you growing amidst so many injustices and a toxic environment. These six ladies are proof that it can be done. However, the focus of this study is family and academic achievement. We will now turn to the analysis the data using situated mediated identity framework.
Data Analysis

Data was collected through two focus groups. As previously mentioned, one focus group was supposed to include girls that had older siblings participate in the IB program and the other was between girls who were the first in their family to do the IB program. However, due to time and transportation constraints this did not occur; the focus groups had a mixture of girls. Nina, Sonja and Ronnie participated in the first focus group; it took place at UCSC. I made a trip to Santa Cruz to meet with the ladies; they were very excited to have a familiar face from back home. Santa Cruz is approximately three hours from their hometown in Northern California. Coming home involves money therefore for many of them it is not a possibility except for the holidays and breaks. Kiara, Kim and Michelle participated in the second focus group interview; we met at a local coffee shop for the interview. Even though we reside in the same area, the ladies were still happy to connect with me. In general, they felt privileged to be asked to participate in the study and many found this opportunity empowering and therapeutic. Kiara states:

I’m really glad you chose us, I really am. When I first graduated you know, I was really happy to finally tell someone what I went through. Every time people ask me why am I so motivated? Why are you this? I try to explain to them, but they can’t relate to what you been through, what you had to go through. And finally there is someone out there who really cares about what we went through in high school, how many struggles we had to go through to be who we are today, who will be tomorrow. I really appreciate it the fact that you called us here, I felt really special, and you chose us. Most teachers forget their seniors, I felt really happy.
These are the opportunities to tell your story that people don’t know. It could help someone else, another girl or another family, that could have a better opportunity then what we did.

Table 4.2: *Findings Using Situated-Mediated Identity Theory Framework* summarizes the themes found in the data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity Development</th>
<th>Social Context</th>
<th>Cultural Practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Situated Identities</strong></td>
<td><strong>Socio-Cultural</strong></td>
<td><strong>Primary Socialization</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Participants are aware of the various identities they have and the way in which their identity has changed</td>
<td>• Care heavily emphasized by family.</td>
<td>• This entire investigation concerns itself with family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positionality</strong></td>
<td><strong>Socio-Symbolic</strong></td>
<td><strong>Secondary Socialization</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Family values</td>
<td>• Mothers</td>
<td>• Impression management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Family expectations</td>
<td>• Sisters</td>
<td>• Sense making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Individual goals</td>
<td><strong>Community of Practice</strong></td>
<td><strong>Improvisational Self-Determination</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Culture</td>
<td>• From data collected no data addresses this aspect.</td>
<td>• From data collected no data addresses this aspect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agency</strong></td>
<td><strong>Improvisational Self-Determination</strong></td>
<td><strong>Improvisational Self-Determination</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Course selection</td>
<td></td>
<td>• From data collected no data addresses this aspect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sibling expectations</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The table has three sections: identity development, social context and cultural practices, these three sections are the sections of situated mediated identity theory. We now turn to an explanation of each of the themes the table.

**Identity Development**

Situated mediated identity theory is about the identity development of ethnically, racially, linguistically and economically diverse students. Identity development includes: an awareness of situated identities, positionality and agency. The data reveals that the
ladies are aware of the varying identities depending on the context. For example, there are different behaviors and norms required in each context. The contexts referred to in the interviews are: cultural, gender, family, and academic identities. The mediating between their different identities results in positionality and furthermore agency. Positionality is the social identification concerning the tension between individual representations of self and the ascriptions made by the individual by wider society. And agency is the critical conscious understanding of both one’s situation and positionality. The following examples demonstrate the progression of identity development.

Example 1: Academic requirements

Ronnie and Sonja shared the ways in which they had to exhibit agency pertaining to course requirements. The IB diploma program requires students to take a foreign language. According to IB, “The main emphasis of the modern language courses is on the acquisition and use of language in a range of contexts and for different purposes while, at the same time, promoting an understanding of another culture through the study of its language” (International Baccalaureate, 2005). Given that fact, that one of the program’s ideals is “international mindedness”, requiring students to take another language other than their own is a novel idea.

LBHS only offers two IB languages, French and Spanish. IB diploma candidates have no choice but to take one of the two because it fulfills the requirements of the diploma. LBHS offers Hmong as a foreign language in addition to French and Spanish but it does not fulfill the IB requirement because it is not a “modern or classical” language. This shows the first attack against student’s cultural identities, specifically for
our Hmong students. It reinforces that their language is not as important or useful in the real world. Ronnie explains:

[My mom] wouldn’t really understand and she especially didn’t like it. She started noticing freshmen, sophomore school year about me [sic] taking classes in French and she really did not like that. I am Hmong and I am not good at Hmong. I speak it a bit, I understand the words but I don’t know how to write it or read it, only a few words like less than five [sic]. She thought that my two older sisters took Hmong then I should learn it because I can get [sic]. It is important but I didn’t mind; it’s not like with the IB program, but she did not understand it.

Furthermore, Sonja adds:

And there was that issue about language. I took Spanish, so whenever I was in the living room trying to do my homework I would be practicing pronouncing it [sic]. My mom would come by and she say ‘I don’t like that…I wish you take Hmong’ [sic], because they have Hmong offered at Burbank [sic]. I was like well this is important, and of course she doesn’t see why it is important. I saw it was important [sic] in the sense that it can be used it in a lot of places. It’s one of the top languages, as opposed my own language.

Despite their parent’s disapproval of their foreign language class, the students still took the course because it was a requirement of the IB program and saw the advantages of the language in their future career. Ronnie believed that the IB program was important in helping her get into college and was willing to forfeit the opportunity of learning her own language. Beyond college, Sonja saw the future benefits in learning Spanish given the
fact that she resides in California. Although, Nina is not Hmong and did not experience
the same reprimands from her family for electing to take Spanish, next quarter she will be
taking Spanish for medical careers. Like Sonja, she sees its potential benefits. While
choosing courses seem like insignificant demonstrations of agency, they prepare students
for more significant events.
Example 2: Relationships

At the end of the interview at UCSC, I asked the ladies if there was anything they
would like to add? Nina took the initiative and addressed her relationship. After, Sonja
and Ronnie shared similar experiences with their relationships. The girls described the
different positionalities imposed on them by their families, cultures, partners and others.
In the following excerpt Nina discusses her families’ disdain for being in a relationship.

Well there was one thing… When I was dating Dom, we were walking back to
school when my uncle saw us, and he told my dad. My dad drove from West Sac
and followed us in the little car. Yeah, we got caught and there was a whole lot of
drama with that. First of all I shouldn’t even be with a boy, I shouldn’t be dating a
boy, second he was Asian, it was not pretty. My mom told me, I can still
remember, I wasn’t going to graduate high school and I wasn’t going to do
anything with my life. I was just going to be a bum and she told my nieces ‘don’t
follow in her foot steps, she is a bad influence.’

This excerpt demonstrates that the extended family, in this case an uncle, is also involved
in “protecting” the young ladies. Additionally, Nina already knows her families’ position
on her dating and especially dating a young man that is not of her same ethnicity.
Furthermore, Nina’s mother assumed that history would repeat itself again because her older sister had a failed relationship at a young age. And the families’ position continues to be passed down to Nina’s nieces.

In Nina’s case, her parents were totally against her dating. However, in Ronnie’s situation her mother is against her dating a young man that is not Hmong. The following excerpt shows her mother’s perceptions:

My mom could kind of tell I liked somebody, because he would call. I actually never told her, she could tell. But I never told her he was Laotian. The thing between Hmong people and Laotian people is that back in Laos, Thailand the culture… when the Hmong people were in Laos, the Laotian people would kill Hmong people. They just hurt all the Hmong people, the real cultural Hmong people are like it’s all their fault for not that there’s much of us [sic], well they killed us…She thinks he will rape me… She is really disapproving of it. She says ‘he is going to rape you.’ When my mom actually found out he was Laotian, I think through my sister (I share a room with my second oldest sister and we would talk a lot. I would tell her about it… when I was going into a relationship phase, I would talk to her about it.) I guess my mom asked her about it when they were doing something together, ‘how’s her boyfriend? What race is he?’ I think she found out through her. I don’t know how it really came out but I know when she found out she really didn’t like it. When he first came over, she just hated him and you can tell in her eyes ‘I hate you’ she already know, she had a hateful look.
We argued a lot and I think that is part of the reason why our relationship was so sour.

Ronnie’s mother was against her dating a Laotian boy because of the history between the Hmong and Laotians. She envisioned her daughter would end up raped or dead like some of her ancestors. This instance demonstrates how influential the histories of people can be on one’s positionality.

Against their parent’s wishes Nina and Ronnie continued to see their boyfriends and did not allow their parent’s positionality to keep them from being with their significant others. Sonja on the other hand, considers her mother’s point of view.

When we first got together, we didn’t really establish any about how we would tell our parents or not [sic]. Eventually my dad found out, because my cousin also went to Burbank and she saw us a lot of times. She told my mom and she asked my mom if my mom knew. My mom didn’t so then she confronted me one night, ‘are you dating that Indian guy?’ and I was like ‘no mom we are just friends’ because we were just friends at that time. Once we were in a relationship, I brought him over once and she was okay with it. She is always nice to people outside of our house, she always caters to them [sic]. To her, he seemed very nice but once he left and the more he came, the more she started noticing things she wouldn’t like. She wanted me to date a Hmong guy, obviously she even told me, ‘you know they don’t eat the same and even marrying into his family, you have to cook and eat what they eat. You can’t cook your own.’ I was like ‘oh mom, that is not true, that’s not really true.’ It came to a point she kept talking about marriage
and marriage. We [Sonja & boyfriend] already talked about how we were not going to talk about that or worry about that, because that is way too far into the future to be talking about now. My mom kind of got into my head, and I started feeling insecure, because it is kind of a contradiction I guess, like why would you be with someone if there is not much of a future to it. But then I didn’t want to date a guy just to marry him, but I didn’t want to do that either. I was stuck between the two.

This example clearly shows how a young person can be stuck between two positionalities and two identities. Sonja is between her personal thoughts on marriage and her families. Ultimately, Sonja and her boyfriend are still together and coincidently they are both at UCSC.

Situated mediated identity theory is primarily concerned with creating communities and identities of achievement, but relationships are equally important in the process. For young girls, romantic relationships have the power to sway their goals and aspirations in either direction. Their relationships can be supportive and between likeminded individuals, or the relationship can be a distraction from allowing the girl to achieve her goals. It appears as if Nina, Ronnie and Sonja experienced the first rather than the latter. Ronnie and Sonja’s boyfriends are also studying at UCSC and continue to encourage one another to do well in school. As for Nina, her boyfriend lives in Sacramento and is supportive of her education.

All of their families know that they are in a relationship despite their wishes and slowly but surely they are beginning to change their minds. “One of the things she
approved of about him is that he is going towards the medical field and she wants that, so she wanted me to follow him” (Sonja, 2011). Nina sums up their position and agency regarding relationships. She states, “my mom does support me a lot now and so I do that she always tells me. She says don’t have a boyfriend ever or boyfriends will ruin you. I want to tell her, ‘look at me now, a man didn’t ruin me!’”

Example 3: Sibling nurturing

Most of the girls in the study are well aware of the varying expectations for all their siblings. Expectations differ based on gender, birth order and motivation. They feel like these expectations are unfair and that some of their siblings do not aspire to their full potential because they conform to the expectations. Actively participating in the raising of their younger siblings is another way in which the girls demonstrate agency.

In the Hmong culture, men are held with high regard. Michelle shares an instance where her older brother was given special consideration.

In our culture, the boys always come first especially with the oldest siblings being a boy affects everything. My mom, she would just like ‘Oh your brother is sick, we have to do ceremony. ‘Your brother got into car accident or is sick, lets have a ceremony.’ What about the girls? Apart from being in the middle, we’re also girls, we are five girls and two guys. I can totally tell the difference on how they treat my older brother and how she treats us. He got into a car accident, wait no he got DUI arrested, I’m like ‘Dude he totally deserves it, you’re not suppose to be driving while you’re drunk’ my mom says ‘We have to do ceremony’ because in
our culture his soul is probably sacred or something like that. We had to do a ceremony for him.

Michelle’s story shows the compound effect of being male and the eldest in the family relegates one into a special place in the family. Kim agrees with Michelle and adds another variable to expectations of children.

Same thing with Michelle, guys get valued and girls get less of the attention, but then ever since my older brother failed to impress my parents. They then had the assumption that my younger brother was probably going to do same thing. After that, they recently turn the spotlight on my sister and I, basically the smarter you determines how much they going to treat you better. I didn’t like that because I felt like the pressure was on me and my sister [sic], as if we were in a competition against each other. I just didn’t really like that. My parents, they don’t think my younger siblings well do as well as we did. I kind of felt that its unfair, they are still young they just don’t understand. The smarter you are the more they expect from you and that makes it hard.

According to Kim, the smarter you are, the more obligations the person has. And in her family her older siblings predict what will become of younger siblings. Like Kim says all her sibling are different and still young. There is still an opportunity to put them on the right track.

Many times the girls themselves were the ones steering their younger sibling in the right direction. One of their family obligations was to watch and raise their younger siblings. Ronnie is very aware of the surrounding for her younger brother. She says:
My main responsibility is to take care of my little brother since a long time ago because I am a kid person. So I’ve always had to take care of him but it was good but then sometimes it would be hard because I care about how he grows up, I don’t want my brothers to be a bad influence on him. They’re not bad. They’re just lazy [sic]. And I don’t want him to be like that they mess around with him and make him cry sometimes, it’s annoying really kiddish [sic].

Michelle also says:

I feel like that [my parents] don’t put any pressure on my little sisters, so they are just going to school, they say school is so boring and stuff. I have to always be the one caring first [sic]. I just hate it because I feel like they put everything on me to do to the cooking and family stuff. It’s just hard. My older siblings, they just do their own things but for me I have to, I don’t know I think it is just the way I am, I just care too much sometimes, so I have to make sure my little sisters are getting things that I didn’t get from my parents.

Michelle and Ronnie take on the role of parents and instill their values in their younger siblings. For most of the girls raising their siblings is away of exhibiting agency.

Social Context

The second part of situated mediated identity theory is social context. The social context that an individual finds himself or herself in will enable identity development. Social context includes the three following communities: socio-cultural community, socio-symbolic community and community of practice. The socio-cultural community is concerned with attributes and qualities a person must have for proper identity
development. The socio-symbolic community is a community of individuals that are like-minded and have a shared imaginary of self-definition. Finally, community of practice activity setting is a group of individuals that are bound together by a common goal. The data collected only speaks to the first two communities. Further investigation is needed to address the final community, community of achievement. A subsequent interview is necessary to ask the girls about their peers in the IB program.

Socio-cultural community

As previously mentioned, socio-cultural communities foster a healthy developmental progression of identity by instilling the following qualities: civility, care, democracy, practice of inquiry and identification of talents and behaviors valued by a community. In anecdotes shared by the ladies it appears that care is the quality most often instilled by the family. The theme of care shows up in different instances. For example, Kiara’s family is very adamant about her physical well being and taking care of herself and body, although they did not communicate this in the most diplomatic manner. Michelle’s family shows care by doing ceremonies in honor of their children’s spirit. Ronnie and Sonja’s family emphasize the notion of caring for oneself and the family by effectively managing money. Nina’s parents care for her by financially supporting her while in college. Kim’s parents emphasize the notion of care and love for the family even more after her brother’s passing.

The value of care is fundamental to all families. Each family shows care in different ways. Kim’s phone conversation to her father best captures this value,
When I was in S.T.E.P., I guess I was bored and it was the first night sleeping at Davis, away from home and after all that tragedy and I decided calling home /sic/. I was talking to my dad and he was just telling me. ‘Don’t worry about it, we are all okay. Just focus on what you went to do and time flies and you’ll be back home.’ After that I cried my butt off I was so touched. I just felt loved first time from my dad. Even though he suffering, he is finally expressing himself. He’s just like ‘you should go on with your education that is something valuable.’

Even in the most difficult times, family cares for you and gives you the motivation to continue.

Socio-symbolic community

Communities of achievement are necessary so that students develop academic identities. Not only do students need the aforementioned qualities instilled in them but they also need a network of people that have similar self-definition. This network is known as a socio-symbolic community. In the data collected older sisters and mothers are the most predominant figures that share similar definitions. It is not surprising that they share similar definitions of self because of their gender. When asking the second group, if education was important to their family? Michelle responds:

It is important to my family, especially to my mom. I am not really close to my dad, so we don’t really talk and have conversations but whenever I tell my mom I want to quit going to college or going to high school, she would always be ‘Don’t be like me or your dad. We didn’t get any education at all.’ When they came here, they already had four children, they were already old and they can’t get another
education [sic]. That really encouraged me to do better. My mom never got the
opportunity. I don’t just have the opportunity but advantage to get a higher
education and to do something good with it. That is what motivates me and
encourages me to do good in school [sic]. My sister also told me was that she
hated going to school but if she didn’t she didn’t know what to do and found life
pointless. I totally agree with her, because if I am not going to college I am going
to be stuck at home just going to work. Education is always at the back of my
mind.

This passage shows the way Michelle, her mother and sister share similar images of self.
Although, her mother did receive any formal education she values education for her
children. Michelle and her mother also share similar beliefs in regard to education.

My mom she came here when she was seventeen and got married; she also had
the same [hope] for me when I was in high school. When she came here, she
struggled a lot with her in-laws. She went to college, she went to Sac City, then
went to Sac State then she went to a private college and now university. She got
her master’s in computer engineering, and she has a double major in mathematics
as well. In my family, education is really important and that’s why I think they
put me in the IB program. Because of my mother, I think that is why I have that
motivation because of all her struggles that she told me about. Just the fact that
my mother has her master’s is a big thing in any family who has a parent that is
that educated, who understands you in that way. Even though I struggled in high
school, my mom was always there for me, always motivating me to go to school,
get IB done even though she pressured me with other responsibilities. It was always my mom that would come back and say education was important and that you have to go to college.

This passage shows the mutual understanding and motivation for daughter and mother alike. Kiara’s mother showed her that she could go to school and manage a family.

Community of Practice

As previously stated, the data collected cannot speak to this portion of the framework. Further data needs to be collected in order to describe how the ladies enacted the ideals their families have instilled in them while in IB program.

Cultural Practices

The final piece of situated mediated identity theory is cultural practices. Included in cultural practices is: primary socialization, secondary socialization and improvisational self-determination. The focus of this investigation is on primary socialization also referred to as family or kinship. Therefore, this aspect of the framework has already been accounted for. Secondary socialization refers to the aspects of human ability that allows an individual to develop his/her positionality. The two aspects are: impression management and sense making. Improvisational self-determination is the exercise of agency, as a creative process. In this part of the analysis, we will examine the way in which the girls use impression management and make sense of their situation. The interview questions in the study most pertained to family, in the data there is no data that speaks to improvisational self-determination.
Secondary socialization

Examples of impression management were most often demonstrated when the girl’s families would speak about them to others. For example, Nina recollects her mother talking about her:

At first she was reluctant to let me leave. I never told her I was applying to college, never asked for help. None of my other sisters went to college, so she never expected anymore from me. And so when I did, she was really proud, even until the day anyone she meets she says ‘oh yeah my daughter goes to UC Santa Cruz’ she did that at the hospital when my sister was having her fourth kid. She tells the doctor, ‘my daughter wants to be doctor too you know, she’s going to UC Santa Cruz.’

This excerpt shows how Nina’s mother’s perception as her daughter has changed as a result of Nina’s right doing. Having her mother boast about her is necessary for Nina because it symbolizes that her mother now accepts her choices and shares it with the world. There is now acceptance and approval of her choices.

The second piece to secondary socialization is sense making. In the following excerpt shows Kiara’s thought process when considering a pre-arrange marriage set up by her parents:

They even almost forced me to getting married when I was in high school. I was engaged in my senior year of high school. That was just another pressure and I just thought of ‘Why am I going through this?’ I agreed to it, I agreed to everything my parents told me because I was the oldest, I have to listen to them, I
was taught that. They told me that education was the key but then why would they want me to take that responsibility to get married. They put me through an engagement, they put me through meeting the guy, everything. After high school ended in June, I was suppose to get married to him in August, but I decided for myself that this is not the right thing to do. I don’t know what clicked into my mind, but it was the right thing. My senior year before we started IB exam, I just told them that ‘No, is not right.’ That was the first time I rebelled against their decision. ‘You guys always told me that education is important, how could you put me through something like this?’ My mom went through so much, because she was married, it took her ten years to get a degree that she could have gotten in five years. Not because of money problems, also because of her in-laws, because she was forced to have children. She was forced to have me, as her oldest child. I just see that and I don’t want to go through a life that my mother went through, I want to get educated, go through things in a certain step and have those goals. When I have sensible supportive parents, I thought ‘Why would they put me through this?’ It is just that they thought it was the right thing to do but they didn’t think about the outcome of what they were doing, my mom didn’t think they were putting me through the life that she had at once.

Kiara’s circumstance was so severe, she needed a way out, and she resorted to making sense of her situation and finding her voice to stand against her parents.
Improvisational self-determination

As previously stated further investigation beyond the scope of this study is needed to demonstrate the way in the participants show improvisational self-determination.

Summary

This chapter examined and analyzed the data collected using situated mediated identity theory. The first part of the chapter described each of the participant’s family and future goals and aspirations. Then the chapter looked at each portion of the framework: identity development, social context and cultural practices. The section on identity development demonstrated the ways in which the ladies developed and exercised agency. The data found that care is a value reinforced by the family as part of socio-cultural community and the ladies found allies in their mothers and older sisters hence establishing a socio-symbolic community. Finally, secondary socialization, a type of secondary socialization, showed that the ladies right doing at home and school allowed for positive impression management. And that their personal home situations and the experiences outside of the home allowed for sense making.
Chapter 5
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this investigation is to shed light on the experiences of former female IB diploma candidates at Lucky Banks High School in Northern California. Their experiences are significant because the six participants were able to complete the IB diploma program and are currently enrolled in four-year universities, or will soon matriculate. This investigation focuses on the way in which these girls were able to balance and mediated academic and familial obligations. At LBHS, there is a high attrition rate for diploma candidates, most often in females; and their grounds for changing academic course plans is usually for family reasons. The questions guiding the investigation are the following:

1. How do the familial expectations of female students participating in the International Baccalaureate Program Diploma Program at Luther Burbank High School shape their academic experience during the final high school years?

2. And how might family shape their post high school goals and aspirations?

In order to best address these questions, two focus groups were conducted, transcribed, and coded using situated mediated identity theory as a framework for identifying themes. This entire study focused on the family or primary socialization of the participants.

The participants in the study demonstrated agency in various capacities. Some examples of agency include, but are not limited to: selecting courses; moving away from
home; instilling the value of education in younger siblings; partner selection; and standing up for themselves when parents tried to imposed their view points on them. The findings of the study further validate, literature on familial obligations. Family obligations include: language and cultural brokering (Buriel, Perez, Ment, Chavez, & Moran, 1998; Orellana, 2001); taking of younger siblings and family elders (Gándara, 1995; Valenzuela, 1999); financial contributions to the home (Fuligni & Pendersen, 2002); and remaining close to home (Ezpinoza, 2001). The findings show that the participants all have aforementioned family obligations. It was also evident in exercising agency, that the participants would prioritize family over individual interests. The fact that three participants remained close to home, rather than moving away from the family demonstrates family as a priority. The three participants that went to college in Santa Cruz went with the intention of helping their family at a later point, mostly through financial means.

Another theme that surfaced was care. According to Murrell (2009), care is one of the qualities all students should have in order to have a healthy identity formation. Each respective family instilled different forms of care in their daughters such as: care for the family; care for one’s physical appearance; care for one’s finances and care for the family’s name and integrity. In analyzing the data, it appears that caring for the family’s name and integrity is of the upmost concern for the participants’ family, especially for those that went away for school. Females have a heavier burden of “virtues of obedience and purity for little girls, virginity, honor, and continued obedience for young single women, and commitment to the home as a respectable wife” (Villenas & Moreno, 2001).
The participants in the study respect themselves by not putting themselves in compromising positions with their significant others and are very cognizant of their relationships and its impacts on their future goals.

Another part of situated mediated identity theory is one’s socio-symbolic community. Not surprising, mothers and older sisters were part of this community because they had a shared imagery of themselves. According to the literature, mothers are primarily responsible for a child’s education and have the greatest impact on their academic success (Stevenson & Baker, 1987). The participants’ mothers and older siblings were most often the breadwinners for the family and/or had the highest education in the family. They are positive role models for the participants and understand how difficult it can be to attain higher education or better circumstances for the family. Moreover, research shows that the mother’s education level has been found to strongly correlate with children's measures of intellectual development (Bradley et al., 1977). Mothers and older siblings wanted the participants to be able to take care of themselves; much of the same way in which mothers took care of the family. They encourage the ladies to do well in school and work hard. And are in solidarity with their future goals and aspirations.

The final aspect of situated mediated identity theory that the data addressed was secondary socialization or the manner in which an individual uses impression management and sense making to develop his/her positionality. Nina demonstrates impression management by sharing with all, especially her family, her future goals of becoming a gynecologist. She uses her future endeavor as a way to have others take her
seriously because women in her culture generally do not have as much power as men. Men are encouraged to pursue professional degrees and women are expected to stay home and take care of the family. According to the literature, students like most humans achieve a goal through impression management, thereby establish their presence. According to Maslow’s (1970) hierarchy human express their basic need of belong and “I am, I’m here and I matter.”

There are two aspects of the theory that the data did not address, community of practice and improvisational self-determination. In order to address these two parts of the framework additional data would need to be collected. The interview questions would need to inquire about their peers and academic environment while doing the IB diploma.

Conclusion

The investigation showed that families play a big role shaping the academic experiences of female IB diploma program as well as their post secondary education goals and aspirations. Some of the participants had more pleasant experiences than others. For example, Kiara was in an arranged marriage during her senior year and almost had to abandon school to assume the responsibilities of a marriage. In the end, Kiara did not marry because she felt it was not for her; she demonstrated tremendous agency. She demonstrated agency because her culture practices arranged marriage; her family has already been through the trouble of finding a suitor for her; and was raised to do as her parents tell her. Not marrying was the first time Kiara defied her parents. Today, she continues to pursue higher education. Each of the participants in the study had trials and
tribulations they needed to overcome, but needless to say all the ladies persevered and are now well on their way to obtaining a post-secondary degree.

The act of pursuing post-secondary education is crude agency because it defies gender roles, exceeds familial expectations and breaks beyond family norms. It could be argued that the participants in the junior and senior year of high school became fully aware of all their situated identities and began to make sense of the various positionalities imposed on them. Ultimately, they made the choices they saw fit for themselves.

Throughout this study, the subjects exposed some of their most personal experiences, their family’s stories. Story telling is an important tool because it is an acknowledgement of the lived experiences of the participants. Furthermore, the investigation design, PAR and focus groups, was intentional so that participants could share their experiences with peers and together they would begin to make sense of their experiences. Situated mediated identity theory, requires educators or people working with youth to create communities of practice. Communities of practice are “a conceptual tool for identifying the settings and communities with the particular set of proficiencies and aims interested in developing young people” (Murrell, 2009, p.130). Situated mediated identity theory, is a framework whose primary objective is to foster identity development and agency in youth from racially, ethnically, linguistically, economically diverse backgrounds. For the six participants in the study, “identity is our agency in activity; who we are is a matter of what we choose to do and how we choose to invest in that doing” (Murrell, 2009, p. x).
Recommendations

After reviewing the literature, collecting and analyzing the data, there are several recommendations to be considered. First, educators working with students of diverse backgrounds, should take the time to ask and listen to the stories of students because they are powerful tools. The stories give one an insight as to why students are the way that they are. Honor students’ backgrounds, skills and attitudes they bring to the classroom, it is only a matter of time before one unlocks their talents. The portions of situated mediated identity theory not addressed in this investigation, communities of practice and improvisational self-determination, would be areas for future research. The framework may be used as a method of cultural inquiry into teaching practice, for educators.

The next recommendation is to the LBHS IB program, extend the IB community beyond school grounds and find creative ways to engage families. The school already has a home visits program in place; the IB program can utilize the program to continue to do home visits to IB parents. However, add to the team a former IB diploma candidate. In adding a former IB diploma candidate to the team would allow for a former student to advocate on behalf of their younger peers as well as serve as becoming a recruiter for the program by sharing with the families the benefits of the program. Ideally, visits should take place during the summer, when former IB candidates are home from their first year of college. Furthermore, the LBHS IB program can better support students by creating support groups for diploma candidates. The support group would offer diploma candidates an opportunity to give and receive emotional and practical support to one another. The participants in this study often felt as if they were the only ones
experiencing hardships and/or did not have anyone that understood what they were going through. The support groups should be informal and simply a space for students to reflect and inquire. Furthermore, the support groups may be areas of future research. One may look at the way in which IB peers shape the academic experience of other peers.

Third, to the families, be proud and acknowledge how resilient children are as IB diploma candidates are motivated and only try to do their best to help the family. Despite, the cultural incongruities between family and school parents have the right to be involved in their child’s education.

To the future IB diploma candidates at LBHS, it’s not about the results its about the experience. The IB program is a practice for college. In an education system, where one must always prove oneself and compete for one’s place, students must not relinquish spots all students deserve to be there. Finally, the choices one makes will have profound effects on the family. The single act of one pursuing higher education, allows younger siblings, cousins and nieces and nephews to never not know what college is like or the opportunities it may bring to the family.

Situated mediated identity theory is an alternative framework for students of diverse background. Given all the concern and research on students of color and their inability to be as academically successful as their Anglo counterparts, researchers must use this alternative since traditional identity theory does not address the realities of urban youth.
APPENDIX A

Focus Group 1 Questions

First in their family to take IB courses

1. What kind of responsibilities do you have at home?
2. What kind of responsibilities did you have during the IB diploma program?
3. How do you manage home and school responsibilities?
4. During the IB program was there ever any conflict between family and academic expectations? If there was a conflict, how did you overcome the conflict?
5. Do you ever feel that you are treated differently in your family because you are female? Explain why?
6. Can you describe the dynamics of your family? How do you fit in with that dynamic?
7. How did you feel about being the first in your family to do the IB diploma program?
8. Is education important to your family?
9. When you think about the future, can you identify any goals? If yes, what are your goals?
10. When your family thinks about your future, can they identify any goals? If yes, what are they? If no, why not?
11. Did you feel you had the support you needed from your family to do well in the diploma program? What kind of support did you have or felt was missing?
12. Does birth order affect family expectations? Why or why not?
13. How has your family shape your future goals and aspirations?
APPENDIX B

Focus Group 2 Questions

Students with older sibling(s) in IB courses

1. What kind of responsibilities do you have at home?
2. What kind of responsibilities did you have during the IB diploma program?
3. How do you manage home and school responsibilities?
4. During the IB program was there ever any conflict between family and academic expectations? If there was a conflict, how did you overcome the conflict?
5. Do you ever feel that you are treated differently in your family because you are female? Explain why?
6. Can you describe the dynamics of your family? How do you fit in with that dynamic?
7. How did having a sibling in the IB program influence your participation in the IB program?
8. Is education important to your family?
9. When you think about the future, can you identify any goals? If yes, what are your goals?
10. When your family thinks about your future, can they identify any goals? If yes, what are they? If no, why not?
11. Did you feel you had the support you needed from your family to do well in the diploma program? What kind of support did you have or felt was missing?
12. Does birth order affect family expectations? Why or why not?
13. How has your family shape your future goals and aspirations?
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