AN EXAMINATION OF THE INFLUENCES OF RACIAL ETHNIC IDENTITY, FAMILIA, GENDER ROLES & SCHOOL STRUCTURES ON SACRAMENTO URBAN HIGH SCHOOL XICANA/LATINA EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS

A Thesis

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by

Karina Gabriela Figueroa

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Department of Bilingual Multicultural Education
Abstract

of

AN EXAMINATION OF THE INFLUENCES OF RACIAL ETHNIC IDENTITY, FAMILIA, GENDER ROLES & SCHOOL STRUCTURES ON SACRAMENTO URBAN HIGH SCHOOL XICANA/LATINA EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS

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Statement of Purpose

Xicana/Latina high school students are being failed by an educational system that is often unchallenged, as there is a tendency to focus on Xicana/Latina cultural deficiencies instead. For this reason, this research examined the home and family influences, gender roles, and the development of Xicana/Latina urban high school racial ethnic identities specifically focusing on factors contributing to their resiliency.

Sources of Data

This research was based on ethnographic methodology, which included surveying participant and having conversations and interactive dialogs with each participant. Other sources of data included student’s progress reports and transcripts.
Conclusions Reached

The findings revealed the participants shared common challenges both in the home and at school. Participants’ voices provided further understanding of their abilities to come to terms with their own identities while balancing their home and school responsibilities. The majority of participants reported substantial parental support in their academic endeavors. The most critical Xicana/Latina students consciously made the effort to find mentors, role models, and allies within teachers and peers through Xican@/Latin@ clubs and organizations.

Margarita Berta-Ávila, Ed.D.

Date
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In recognizing the influences contributing to my resiliency, I am reminded of my mentors, friends and family. They are a part of the person I am today. Profesora Margarita Berta-Ávila, my sincere gratitude, admiration and appreciation for your critical consejos and guidance. Melissa Moreno y Julie Figueroa, mis inspiraciones de seguir en esta lucha infinita. To Adriana Echandía for providing a safe space for me. To professors Duane Campbell and his beautiful wife Dolores Delgado-Campbell for the constant encouragement. A mi Peggy linda y querida, thank you for always believing I could do anything.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 2011, three Xicana/Latina high school students signed out of Libertad High School\(^1\) with the intention of becoming home-schooled. They remained uncertain of their future academic goals as their focus was on their present life situations. One of these students was a few months pregnant while the other two were concerned about graduating on time and “making up” credits. It was unreal to have these students expressing their frustration and stressful situations in their efforts to work hard and, as they stated, “make it” at Libertad High School. The researcher had worked with these three students and had become aware of their home situations and difficulties in meeting school criteria that seemed to further punish them instead of assisting these young women who aspired to reach higher education. The three students felt their only solution for ever having an opportunity to someday reach their educational and professional goals was to be home-schooled. It was evident these students had lost hope in Libertad High School, a public school, assisting them in reaching their academic aspirations. The high school students’ struggles in achieving their academic aspirations relates to those of other Xicanas/Latinas enrolled in those public schools throughout the country with a different purpose than to truly educate them.

\(^1\) A pseudonym has been assigned for confidentiality of the student population.
Statement of the Problem

Purpose of Schooling

As a nation, it becomes the responsibility of the education system to equip students with the tools to become critical thinkers and comprehend the issues surrounding them as they become aware of their dispositions. In such a process, students reach self-actualization and realization, gaining consciousness and awareness of their realities (Freire, 1970). However, the education of our children by providing them with the necessary knowledge, passion, civic capacities, and social responsibility necessary to address the problems facing the nation and globe has always been challenged by the existence of rigid disciplinary boundaries, the cult of expertise or highly specialized scholarship unrelated to public life, and antidemocratic ideologies that scoff at the exercise of academic freedom. (Giroux, 2009, p. 670)

Indeed, public schools today have become increasingly influenced by corporate and capitalistic ideologies disconnected from our children’s realities. The function of public schools remains highly contested as the push for standardized testing and merit may lead to adverse effects on our children. Therefore, the goal of this study is to examine Xicana/Latina efforts in bridging their unique experiences within themselves and their bicultural identities, their families, and gender roles along with their challenges in navigating through systemic school structures consisting of standardized testing, Eurocentric curriculum, and other requirements.
Bicultural Struggles: Xicana/Latina and United States Mainstream Culture

The reality is Xicana/Latina students’ racial ethnic identities, *familismo* or family culture and gender roles, have a complex relationship to their struggles in navigating through systemic institutional barriers. Xicana/Latina students hold a unique cultural experience not supported in high schools or higher institutions without regard to their home structures (Sy & Romero, 2008; Trueba & Spindler, 1988). This research seeks to examine the influences of Xicana/Latina personal identities as their backgrounds consist of intersectionalities: on being a mujer/woman, on being Xicana or Latina, on being Raza\(^2\). Women receive messages as they are raised in Xican@/Latin@ homes and their self-perceptions begin to take shape. Instead of creating further challenges and stereotypes portraying them culturally deficient, it is crucial to begin to focus on Xicana/Latina strategies in maneuvering through systemic challenges and achieving their goals.

The question remains: How can high schools and institutions of higher education facilitate the transition to college for these young women of color? First, it seems clear that researchers are just beginning to understand the kinds of pressures faced by many Latina…students. However, it is important to do so in a way that does not simply reproduce existing stereotypes of Latinas and their families. Therefore, there needs to be greater examination of within-group variation and factors contributing to resiliency. (Sy & Romero, 2008, p. 222)

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\(^2\) Term represents people with family origins from México, Caribbean, Central and South America (Berta-Ávila, 2004; Vasconcelos, 1979).
To avoid reproducing stereotypes, the understanding of Xicana/Latina challenges in negotiating their racial ethnic identities, family/home culture, and gender roles with academic requirements and institutional structures remains crucial.

Xicanas/Latinas are challenged in balancing their home cultural traditions and individual racial ethnic identities within United States mainstream culture (Espinoza, 2010; Valenzuela, 1999a). In addition, they often struggle to identify with educators who do not share experiences similar to theirs, making it difficult to relate to the school’s culture (Cammarota, 2004; Duncan-Andrade, 2005; Romo & Falbo, 1996). The school’s culture is highly influenced by institutionalized Eurocentric curriculum based on standardized testing deeming Xicanas/Latinas culturally deficient (Valencia, 1997). In turn, educators expect students to adopt White American values, forming stereotypes blaming Xican@/Latina culture while overlooking institutionalized and systemic factors such as tracking, curricula, and disciplinary policies (Nieto, 2003). Researchers present a myriad of factors influencing Xicana/Latina educational attainment. Indeed, their educational experience may become agonizing as they begin to self-actualize in the institutions where authoritarian educators display an arrogant and unworthy attitude over their rich cultural backgrounds and values. That is the experience of Xicana/Latina students adapting to White American mainstream values in public schools either by acculturating or assimilating (Nieto, 2003).
Xicanas'/Latinas’ Experiences in Hegemonic Public High Schools

So often do they hear that they are good for nothing, know nothing and are incapable of learning anything—that they are sick, lazy and unproductive—that in the end, they become convinced of their own unfitness. (Freire, 1970, p. 63)

Xicana/Latina urban high school students undergo a variety of institutional structures such as standardized testing, zero-tolerance policies, Eurocentric curricula and racial microaggressions, making their high school experience distressing and often disengaging. As a result, Xicana/Latina students may disengage in their academics as they struggle in the development of their self-perceptions, feeling insecure, or experience a decrease in their self-esteem. Too often, Eurocentric educators draw false generalizations and assumptions regarding Xicana/Latina students perceiving students as being overruled and controlled by their “sexist” fathers who do not value education. Such generalizations and assumptions regard the Xican@/Latin@ culture as faulty, blaming them for the school’s failure in truly educating our Raza.

Today, corporations heavily influence public schools by regulating standard-driven curriculum mandated by legislation to reproduce workers and sustain their profits (Lipman, 2009). The “economizing of education” has converted students to providers of the services for the wealthy (Giroux, 2009; Lipman, 2009). Such curriculum perpetuates the status quo, promoting a public education that produces workers to uphold capitalistic values. As ethnically diverse populations continue to be forced to assimilate through institutionalized and systemic racist structures, they develop a sense of inferiority
regarding themselves as followers and White Americans as their leaders and role models (Freire, 1970).

In their process of “economizing the education” of students at schools such as Libertad High School, public schools continue to disregard and omit the cultural experiences and history/stories of Xicana/Latina students. The author has witnessed, firsthand, the students’ efforts to survive and their quest to succeed at Libertad High School by resisting racial microaggressions and seeking other Xicana/Latina students for support. For example, on most days, it is common to find the author’s classroom heaving with Xican@/Latin@ students before school, at lunch, and after school engaging in dialogue with other Xican@/Latin@ students about their daily experiences. Similar to the findings by Sue, Lin, Torino, Capodilupo, and Rivera (2009), students commonly share stories about racial microaggressions with school officials, teachers, and students who make racial snubs and put downs such as, “I don’t see color, therefore I’m not a racist,” being complimented for speaking “Good English,” or about being ignored in a class. In addition, students share their challenges with other teachers who perceive them as culturally deficient, disengaging curriculum in classes, and zero-tolerance policies from administration that do not provide intervention and instead punish them when what they need is guidance and positive role models. These views toward the familia are mainly due to patriarchal structures laying the groundwork for both Xicanos and Xicanas to follow their expected gender roles (Valenzuela & Dornbusch, 1994). In countering such deficit-thinking practices of Xicana/Latina students, this research aims to examine
educational hegemonic experiences including their racial ethnic identities, familia/family and gender roles on their academic aspirations.

In making positive strides toward Xicana/Latina academic attainment, current academic trends reveal failing school structures with disregard to their racial ethnic identities, the family and their gender roles, and their academic experiences. The following section examines current statistical data regarding the lack of Xicana/Latina educational attainment in the United States. Therefore, the need of this study is to examine Xicana/Latina experiences both in the home and school to create proactive and positive approaches that will alleviate the pressures to instead make their education increasingly accessible. Also included are population patterns relative to educational attainment and the influence of economic background to social mobility.

The following section examines the background and need for the influences of racial ethnic identity, family, and gender roles on Xicana/Latina educational aspirations and their challenges in navigating through systemic school structures. As these students enter public high schools, as those attending Libertad High School, they become institutionalized and expected to follow the school’s policies to be eligible to attain their educational goals. As previously discussed, Xicana/Latina high school students are not performing at the high level of educational achievement as other ethnic groups. Thus, the need for this study becomes crucial for further understanding their experiences and to be able to address these issues and make significant changes to improve their access and attainment.
Background and Need of the Study

*If I want to talk to them about school, I’ll talk to my mom or dad…they give me inspiration.*  (Dianne)

In an effort to examine the Xicana/Latina educational experience and challenges within the struggle toward academic attainment, the author will inevitably focus on young female students. It is widely known young Xicano/Mexicano males are leading (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2010) in the numbers of dropouts and are most failed by our institutions. However, as an insider in the Xicana/Latina culture, the author felt the need to begin with the surrounding challenges with the young women who share similar experiences as the following statistics reveal. Xicana/Latina students’ racial ethnic identities, *familismo* or family culture, and gender roles, are intricately tied to their struggles in navigating through educational or institutional barriers.

Xicanas/Latinas in higher education are drastically underrepresented (Ginorio & Huston, 2000), as they comprise the largest ethnic group after White American women in the United States who have the lowest high school dropout or “push out”³ rate at 4.8% compared to Hispanics who have a high school push out rate of 18.3% (NCES, 2010). Xicana/Latina high school student enrollment in advanced placement courses is also lower. In their study, Ginorio and Huston (2000) found the Latina student enrollment rate lower in gifted and talented education courses compared to other diverse female groups. Latinas are less likely to take the SAT exam and earn lower scores compared to

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³ The term “push out” is a conscious effort to highlight the existing systematic oppression and the roles of institutions and schools (Ginorio & Huston, 2000).
other ethnic groups (Ginorio & Huston, 2000). Their lower rates in advanced placement courses may not extend similar opportunities as for those female students of different ethnic groups enrolling at higher rates (Campbell, 2003; Contreras, 2005; Ginorio & Huston, 2000). As their population continues to increase in the United States, their high school graduation rates and higher education degrees remain the lowest as compared to all other ethnic groups (NCES, 2010; Zambrana & Zoppi, 2002) resulting in a gross disproportion. Although an increasing number of Latinas are maintaining a higher education, their population rates are not represented. In turn, their economic and political power remains underrepresented and understudied (Vera & de los Santos, 2005). A lack of educational progress will continue to result in the underachievement of Xicana@s/Latina@s in the United States until all people may be drawn in the “mainstream of educational achievement” (Gándara, 1995). Currently, Xicana/ Latina students continue to struggle as they navigate through institutional barriers that do not provide access or information they need to attain their academic aspirations (Contreras, 2011). They often undergo painful experiences resulting in various forms of resistance that may or may not influence the likelihood of Xicana/Latina academic achievement.

According to the United States Census Bureau, in 2000, Hispanics\(^4\) became the largest ethnic minority in the United States, at 35.3 million (United States Census Bureau, 2000). In fact, the Hispanic population is currently the fastest growing and the largest

\(^4\)The researcher uses the term “Hispanic” and “Hispanas” only to refer to the United States Department of Education’s usage of the term in categorizing people who originate from Spanish-speaking countries.
ethnic minority population due mainly to Xicana@\textsuperscript{5}/Mexican populations comprising 67% of the total Hispanic population in the United States (Denner & Guzman, 2006; United States Census Bureau, 2000). Currently, the high school graduation rate for Hispanics is the lowest in the United States (Vera & de Los Santos, 2005; Zambrana & Zoppi, 2002). It is the lowest for girls in any ethnic or racial group (Ginorio & Huston, 2000; NCES, 2010).

Although, an increasing number of Hispanics are pursuing a higher education, there are still far too many not graduating high school (NCES, 2010). As of 2008, 16.7% of Hispanics were pushed out of high school in the country (NCES, 2010). Moreover, only 2% of Hispanics pursue Master degrees and only 1% pursue Doctoral degrees in the United States (NCES, 2010). As the Xican@/Latin@ population continues to increase, their academic performance also continues to suffer:

Briefly examining data on Latinas provides a profile of their educational, economic and family status. Overall, the Latina population increased by 52% during the 1990’s, compared with 17% for African American women and 7% for White women (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). Not unexpectedly, 54% of Latinas are poor or near poor and have the lowest percentage of high school graduates (57.5%) compared to all other racial and ethnic groups. (Zambrana & Zoppi, 2002, p. 36)

\textsuperscript{5} The term “Xican@” is used in the research as a preferred word of choice for participants born in the U.S. and with familial origins from Mexico.
As the population of Latinas continues to increase in the United States, their economic background hinders their abilities for social mobility (Dietrich, 1998; Zambrana & Zoppi, 2002). The growing population of Latinas entering the workforce will be over 40% over the next few decades (Zambrana & Zoppi, 2002). However, Latinas will continue to be greatly affected by the levels of education attained in their ability to hold higher-paying occupations. For instance, the largest groups of the 1999 labor force were Latinas with less education than a high school diploma (Zambrana & Zoppi, 2002). Working Latinas with a high school diploma and no college were 30% and 17% had some college units (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

The statistics provided reveal the devastating loss to Xicana/Latina educational attainment. Their educational attainment is no coincidence as their dispositions in public institutions have been strategically manipulated. The institutions we refer to as public schools today were founded by White Americans with a personal interest and conscious effort to maintain their racial group in power (Kozol, 2005). Hence, public schools, colleges, and universities have become the social norm maintaining their social order and making it increasingly difficult for those with differing ideologies (Kozol, 2005).

Furthermore, the White American dominant culture deems the White race as superior.

Given the nature of imperialist white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy as a system shaping culture and beliefs it is simply a fact that most white folks are rarely, if

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6 Term is used to describe persons of European descent living in the United States.
ever, in situations where they must listen to black women lecture to them. (hooks, 2003, p. 31)

The patriarchal system that shapes our country’s culture and values is exclusive to White American male experiences. Women of color are most significantly affected by the dominating patriarchal system, as are Xicana/Latina students who are coerced to adapt to Libertad High School’s structures, disregarding their background and rich cultures.

**Xicana/Latina Cultural Capital**

Xicanas/Latinas without the cultural capital\(^7\) or ways to combat institutionalized structures are challenged in navigating through their personal racial ethnic identities, families, and gender roles with school structures maintaining zero-tolerance disciplinary policies, deficit thinking, lack of resources for English language learners, and a lack of multicultural and multilingual his/herstory college-readiness courses in attaining educational aspirations. Those who do not possess the necessary skills to navigate through the mainstream culture setting the norm for students with different ideas, knowledge, and behavior and who attend public schools, colleges, and universities increasingly struggle to obtain their academic aspirations.

Xicanas/Latinas respond to oppressive school systems such as institutionalized racism and Eurocentric values embedded in the curriculum, deficit thinking, and a lack of

\(^{7}\)“Resources such as familiarity with educational terms and jargon, provision of reading materials in the home, and exposure to (European-based) cultural enrichment such as museums, literature, art, and music” (Ginorio & Huston, 2000, p. 19).
resources for English language learners in a variety of resistance strategies (Cammarota, 2004). In resisting marginalization, those affected by negative stereotypes may decide to leave school while others view their education as a ticket out of gender oppressive circumstances. These ideas of pursuing a higher education provide them with greater autonomy (Achor & Morales, 1990; Cammarota, 2004; Hurtado, 2003).

Critical Race theorists provide the need for sharing students’ voices and stories, including their multifaceted experiences, and developing strategies in which to intervene and construct proactive approaches in guaranteeing academic success for all students.

A significant number of Chicanas drop out of high school and a lower number achieve higher education. For this reason, it is crucial to hear the stories…It is through their stories researchers and educators may begin to further understand the challenges and barriers to Chicanas achieving higher education and develop proactive solutions. (Gonzáles & Mejorado, 2010)

The documentation of the educational experiences of Xicanas/Latinas found the tremendous need to learn their familia’s past struggles at an earlier stage in their lives. As educators, it is our responsibility to understand their needs to be better equipped with the tools to assist them in pursuing their aspirations. However, this cannot be achieved without examining their needs through their own voices, “The power of narratives allows them to have a voice within a social and cultural context” (Gonzáles & Mejorado, 2010, p. 56). Thus, one may develop a proactive approach in addressing this issue. In taking
proactive measures, the author studied high school Xicana/Latina influences of family, culture, gender roles, and racial ethnic identity.

The Research Questions

In an effort to present an examination of familial influences on Xicana/Latina educational aspirations, the following research questions were posed:

1. To what extent can the family’s home culture strongly mediate Xicana/Latina educational aspirations in grades 9-12?

2. Does gender socialization influence Xicana/Latina educational aspirations in grades 9-12?

3. Does Xicana/Latina high school students’ racial ethnic identities influence their educational aspirations?

Purpose of Study

This research examines Xicana/Latina racial ethnic identity, the familismo, and gender role influences on their educational aspirations while navigating through systemic school structures. This study focuses on Xicanas/Latinas born in the United States including those who have been residing in the United States throughout their high school years. The majority of participants are also first-generation high school students attending high school in the United States.

Although the author is examining the family’s home influences on student academic aspirations, it is important to note that judgmental stereotypes should not be created against the Xican@/Latin@ population by ignoring institutional structures and
perceiving Raza as culturally deficient. The Xicana@/Latin@ family unit is regarded as sacred, positive, and creative (Villenas & Deyhle, 1999) and this research is not conveying the idea of stagnant or faulted culture and practices. Some researchers consider the Xican@/Latin@ culture as deficit and oppressive, hindering women’s educational attainment (Valencia, 1997; Valenzuela, 1994). Instead, the information collected will be utilized to further understand the family culture and Xicana/Latina experiences in navigating through systemic school structures to create effective transitions for these students to pursue their educational aspirations from high school to higher education. The current educational system not conducive to their home culture and disengaging school policies that continue to marginalize students of color also continue to “push out” Xicanas/Latinas (Nieto, 2003). This research seeks to counter the endless racial microaggressions and examine the positive ways in which their identities, home culture, and gender roles serve as a reinforcement for their schooling.

Theoretical Framework

This research examines the home and family culture and the gender roles and development of Xicana/Latina racial ethnic identity through a Latin@ Critical (LatCrit) theory and Critical Race (CRT) theoretical perspective. These conceptual frameworks support the notion that students of color are “holders and carriers of knowledge” (Delgado-Bernal, 2002, p. 105). A variety of factors influence Xicana/Latina academic attainment and, therefore, an interdisciplinary approach may be a more accurate way of understanding their mediation of the home and educational experiences (Trueba, 1988).
The idea of cultural identity development becomes increasingly subjective in attempting to understand the struggles of the participants. Due to the difficulties in the interpretation of the experiences of Xicana/Latina students, the need for counter stories (Yosso, 2006, Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) and ethnographic epistemologies (Delgado-Bernal, 2002) is detrimental in conducting qualitative research. Too many of our students are being failed by our educational system and their voices must be heard to better understand the ways of making positive changes to meet students’ needs. LatCrit and CRT frameworks further explore the ways in which race and gender subordination are perpetuated through institutions and laws (Delgado-Bernal, 2002). Furthermore, these frameworks challenge the ideas of democracy, equality, and color blindness demonstrating how people of color are deliberately disadvantaged (Delgado-Bernal, 2002).

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race theorists suggest race is the major factor for the marginalization and castification (Villenas & Deyhle, 1999) of people of color in the United States. The current Xicana/Latina disproportionate educational attainment rates are not coincidental but a result of historic marginalization and oppression of Xican@/Latin@ people in the United States. Historically, the “founding fathers” (Zinn, 2001) of the United States exploited people of color positioning themselves as exclusive holders of political, economic, and social power (Acuña, 2004; Zinn, 2001). CRTs challenge existing Eurocentric views considered the “norm” on ideas of meritocracy and equity (Delgado-Bernal, 2002) acknowledging ethnically diverse populations’ experiences and knowledge.
For this reason, this research analyzes Xicana/Latina experiences in the home, which are also influenced by their experiences in the classroom in which they are often victims of racist views. Much of the experiences Xicana/Latina high school students experience are ignored and the home and family experiences are blamed when, in fact, such ideas of meritocracy and equity promote false generalizations and expectations that all people hold equal opportunities. CRTs counter these false generalizations holding educational institutions accountable for failing Xicana/Latina students. Furthermore, CRTs critically analyze issues of social justice and inequalities from the perspective of the marginalized populations.

Critical Race theorists explore the “relationship between race, racism and power” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 3). Included in their analysis are various socially constructed issues in the subjugation of people of color in the United States through systemic laws and institutionalized oppression. For instance, historically, people of color have been marginalized from the founding of the United States (Zinn, 2001), such as distributive justice and accumulation of wealth; discrimination in higher paying careers, environmental, and other health areas; institutionalized racism and oppression; racial profiling; and more (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). For these reasons, people of color remain economically, politically, and culturally oppressed.

Critical Race Theory is comprised of three main features: racism is difficult to cure and address, material determinism, and socially constructed (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Theorists contend it is challenging to put an end to racism as explicit forms of
color-blindness or insisting on treating everyone the same would only result in further forms of discrimination (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Some examples are mortgage redlining, hiring practices, educational policies, and differentiated treatment toward students of color. Another example is that of higher institutions graduating a far larger percentage of White students compared to any other group (Villalpando, 2004). Such practices are only utilized to continue the subjugation of people of color (Villalpando, 2004). The second feature is referred to as material determinism, which further advances an interest in material wealth for both elitists and those of a lower socioeconomic background. Therefore, due to an endless strive for materialistic wealth, there is little incentive to put an end to it (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). The third feature of CRT holds that race and racism is socially constructed and subject to manipulation to subjugate different groups of people of color when convenient (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). These patterns of marginalization and oppression are most evident in the history of the people of the United States, as different ethnic populations become targeted by White Americans in power.

Critical Race theorists strongly acknowledge epistemologies through the use of narratives, counter-stories and stories (Fernández, 2002). In doing so, individuals are able to name and reflect on acts of discrimination and thus counter those acts (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). For example, acts simultaneously affecting people of color such as race, sex, class, national origin, and sexual orientation are examined to critically analyze their effects on marginalized groups (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). In their dialogues,
students are able to share common experiences and realize the potential for transformation (Fernández, 2002). Furthermore, an individual’s experiences may be influenced by their race, sex, class, etc., presenting unique experiences from all individuals.

*LatCrit Theory*

Also similar to CRT, Latin@ Critical theorists explore various issues in the subjugation of people of color by contending race is the main force behind the systemic oppression. However, LatCrit theorists have not expanded as widely as Critical Race theorists in the educational field (Fernández, 2002). LatCrit theorists contend CRT fails to acknowledge the unique experiences of Xican@s/Latin@s in the United States and for that reason they have developed LatCrit from the CRT framework (Villalpando, 2004).

These theorists suggest the development or specific programs for Xican@/Latin@ students would not be considered a racist act toward other groups as these programs would be created to counter racist acts against Xican@s/Latin@s (Villalpando, 2004). Xican@s/Latin@s have been marginalized and, for that reason, the creation of such programs would be for students to reconcile and mediate through microaggressions and other forms of psychological violence.

LatCrit theorists highlight the unique experiences of Xican@s/Latin@s in the United States and the need for progressive transformation that CRT does not address (Solórzano & Yosso, 2000). LatCrit critically addresses Xican@s/Latin@s intersectionalities of race, class, gender, immigration status, and other forms of
oppression (Delgado-Bernal, 2002). In this study, Xicana/Latina Sacramento urban high school student experiences will be considered with regard to their home, gender roles, and racial ethnic identity. It should be noted that many of these intersectionalities converge, and participants in this study may also reveal influences from other forms of oppression. For some Xican@/Latin@ families, immigration experiences and socioeconomic status may further influence Xicana/Latina educational aspirations than those who are born in the United States and of a higher socioeconomic status. CRT addresses Xicana/Latina experiences in the United States making it an important lens for which to examine their epistemological perspectives (Delgado-Bernal, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2000).

Definition of Terms

Academic Aspirations

The level of variable educational goals students set to accomplish

Chicana

A woman either born in México or the United States and able to trace familial origins to México; critical and conscious about social, political, and economic issues

Cultural Capital

“Resources such as familiarity with educational terms and jargon, provision of reading materials in the home, and exposure to (European-based) cultural
enrichment such a museums, literature, art, and music” (Ginorio & Huston, 2000, p. 19)

Familismo

A strong identification and connection to the family demanding family members prioritize the family’s needs over their personal interests (Espinoza, 2010; Raffaeli & Ontai, 2004; Zambrana & Zoppi, 2002)

Hispanic

A term first introduced in the United States by families of Spanish descent to distinguish themselves from the Mexican population; later popularized in the 1970s by President Richard Nixon categorizing people of Spanish-speaking backgrounds

Latina

A woman from any Latin American country, or with at least one parent from any Latin American country, predominantly México, speaking Spanish as a first language and bound to other members of the group by a shared language

Mestiza

Refers to a historically based term including the mixing of cultures of African, European, and indigenous groups (Anzaldúa, 1987).

Mexicana

A woman identifying primarily with Mexican customs, traditions, ideas, attitude, and knowledge, usually born in México
Raza

Term represents people with family origins from México, Caribbean, Central and South America. This term reflects a self-determination and consciousness similar to those who identify as Xican@ while embracing indigenous roots throughout the regions mentioned above (Berta-Ávila, 2004; Vasconcelos, 1979).

Social Capital

The network of friends providing students with a strong sense of identity, support, and connection including academic skills and knowledge (Stanton-Salazar, 1995; Valenzuela, 1999b)

Social Identity or Racial-Ethnic Identity

An identity that connects a person to their culture and or racial or ethnic group from a racially conscious background (Gurin, Hurtado, & Peng, 1994)

Xican@

A woman able to trace her familial origins to México, Central America, the Caribbean and South American countries. During the 1960s, waves of immigrants from various Central American and South American countries migrated to the U.S. The X represents the unknown and/or intermixing of cultural experiences.

Organization of the Remainder of the Thesis

Chapter 1 contained the introduction and the background information of the current Xicana/Latina educational attainment crisis. Quantitative data demonstrate the
current failure of Xican@/Latina@ students. Included as well was a statement of the significance of the issue, definition of terms, limitations, and the organization of the thesis. Chapter 2 is a review of the related literature. Included in this section is a review of the first theme exploring the role of the family within the dominant Mexican culture. The second theme examines the influence of sexism and gender roles on Xicana/Latina educational aspirations. The third section explores racial ethnic identity (REI) and its influences on Xicana/Latina educational aspirations. Chapter 3 describes the methodology and data. Included is a brief description of the school site as well as the demographics of the school where this research was conducted. An interactive discussion of participants and survey data constitutes the mass of the data. Chapter 4 contains the analytical findings of the research. Chapter 5 contains the conclusions and recommendations of the project. Also included are the gains and what was learned from the research such as the impact on current practices. These conclusions were developed as a result of the findings the author gathered from the literature. The appendix contains samples of the interview questions and the survey questions including all letters of consent to collect research and data at Libertad High School.
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter represents an overview of the existing literature that helps expand the topic of Xicana/Latina influences of their racial ethnic identity, family culture, and gender roles on their academic aspirations. The review is divided into three sections. The first section sets the foundation by reviewing the development of Xicana/Latina racial ethnic identity and their individual attributes. As they begin to develop their own understanding of their personal realities while working toward their academic aspirations, their self-esteem may be adversely affected by their own perceptions of feeling neglected by their school structures. Also included in the first section is the experience of Xicana/Latina students being disconnected to their teachers whose primary focus is to enforce a Eurocentric curriculum created by the dominant White American culture. In addition, the process in which Xicana/Latina students are forced to negotiate their identities is also discussed. The last part of the first section discusses the potential in retaining and developing ethnic pride and self-confidence by learning our his/herstory. The personal development of a racial ethnic identity leads to the second section examining the family’s role in Xicana/Latina educational development such as the amount of support, the traditions, religion, and cultural capital\(^8\) (Bourdieu, 1986). Also

\(^8\) May exist in three forms: long lasting physical and mental ideas; cultural items such as books, pictures, dictionaries, instruments; and in an institutionalized form of academic qualifications (Bourdieu, 1986).
discussed is the concept of social capital as well as contributing factors to setting high aspirations and building self-confidence. As young Xicana women, the family traditions, expectations, religious faith, and financial needs begin to define their attitudes and behaviors about their personal educational aspirations. The author highlights some of the most influential factors influencing Xicanas are those pertaining to the family’s structural base. Within the family, Xicana/Latinas are socialized and taught the expected gender behavior, thus leading to the third section examining the differential treatment and expected familial duties within the home. Furthermore, the third section includes existing literature about the influences of gender roles on Xicana/Latina performance and their motivation to excel academically.

In the examination of racial ethnic identity, family, and gender role influences on Xicana/Latina educational aspirations, the author draws from Critical Race Theory and Latino Critical Race Theory frameworks. The idea of intersectionalities and convergence of themes is strongly valued as Xicana/Latina student experiences include issues of race, ethnicity, class, gender, and immigration status. However, for purposes of further researching each individual theme, the author has divided this research into three sections. For that reason, the author will be examining each theme separately while still considering the idea of intersectionalities.

I. Racial Ethnic Identity/Personal Attributes and Individual Differences: Growing up Xicana/Latina

The ongoing process of conscientization is essential because Xicanas/Xicanos can then become authors of their realities and self-determine their roles in society.
Documenting this demonstrates to the dominant culture, but mostly to Xicanas/Xicanos, that there is no need to be subordinate and that change can occur. (Berta-Ávila, 2003, p. 126)

Xicana/Latina women share a unique experience in the development of their identity that is different than that of White American women and other women of color (Vera & de los Santos, 2005). The existing literature is limited regarding Xicana/Latina identity and how their self-perceptions and treatment in schools influence their academic aspirations (Campbell, 2003; Torres, 2004). During their teenage years, both girls and boys struggle to develop their identities and many look to their peers and groups for guidance (Campbell, 2003). Xicanas and their sense of self are at odds in school environments that do not value ethnically diverse backgrounds (Ginorio & Huston, 2000). Instead, the United States public school system rewards White American hegemonic cultural traits and values. For this reason, Xicanas/Latinas endure a painful process to maintain their ethnic identity while maintaining a solid academic record (Ginorio & Huston, 2000).

A. Relevance of Identity to Academic Aspirations

Students’ perceptions of themselves and their self-esteem also determine academic success (Gloria, Castellanos, Lopez, & Rosales, 2005). This may be especially true if students feel isolated and become withdrawn from the school environment. Students with a low self-esteem and those insecure about their identities are less likely to pursue higher education and academic aspirations as they lack the motivation and
confidence in themselves. Those who have not mediated conflicting messages regarding their ethnic identity may experience a lack of academic success (Gloria et al., 2005). As a result, they become less motivated as they are unable to focus on their studies since they are struggling to survive in building their defense mechanisms. However, having a positive self-esteem or sense of self as well as resiliency results in Latina/o students being more likely be achieve their academic aspirations (Arellano & Padilla, 1996; González, 2009).

In her study, González surveyed 122 10th-grade Mexican American students at a northern California high school. The purpose of the study was to examine the ways in which ethnic identity influences academic achievement/engagement among Mexican American high school students. After collecting surveys, González selected 12 students to interview. In the process, González (2009) found students were able to feel a stronger connection to their ethnic selves when taking ownership in school events and, therefore, become increasingly motivated to perform at their academic ability levels. Students who participated in the development and organization of school events gained a sense of pride and belonging in their school. In fact, the academic engagement of ethnically diverse student populations is highly influenced by negative and positive racial ethnic encounters, “the majority of the interviewees (i.e., 4 of 7) who described positive encounters in high school had high academic achievement and/or engagement” (González, 2009, p. 24). Positive encounters were described as classroom interaction, multicultural events, clubs and organizations that value students’ ethnic identity where they are perceived “normal
and as equal in status” (González, 2009, p. 24). Identity development involves the reconciliation and mediation of conflicting messages for adolescents (González, 2009). That is, their ability to balance their home and school cultures and positively manage the oppressive schooling conditions.

B. Hegemonic Oppression

From our nation’s founding, elitists created institutions and a political process designating themselves and their successors in power (Acuña, 2004; West, 1994; Zinn, 2001). United States foundations “began by taking for granted the ugly conquest of Amerindians and Mexicans, the exclusion of women, the subordination of European working-class men, and the closeting of homosexuals” (West, 1994, p. 156). Evidently ignoring an ethnically diverse population and its dehumanizing structure, such a system remains racist and marginalizes students of ethnically diverse backgrounds (hooks, 2003). These institutions carried and spread cultural hegemony overpowering the less economically privileged. Xicanas/Latinas remain one of the most marginalized in public institutions.

A dominant culture is one that sets social standards considered to be the norm, and its ability to exercise power over a subordinate culture is known as hegemony (McLaren, 2009). Anything differing from what the dominant culture considers normative is deemed negatively and considered invalid, “the monster mechanism that holds most forms of oppression in place, works to ensure that we accept binary relationships and buy into the concept of sameness” (Rojas, 2009, p. 7). Some people are
aware of the hostile subordination and are able to name it. Others, however, often do not realize that by conforming to what is considered the norm, they are neglecting their own individuality and ability to think and develop their own social practices. Society becomes convinced the dominant culture's social practices are superior, entrenching in the endless materialistic cycle, trying to fit into the concept of “oneness” (Rojas, 2009).

Unfortunately, multiracial and multiethnic individuals trying desperately to be valued as equals may not realize they will never fully be accepted in the dominant culture because of their different backgrounds not coinciding with the dominant one. Those individuals made to feel inferior by hegemonic culture begin trying to assimilate and be legitimized by denying their cultural heritage:

At a young age, I succumbed to the messages posed at my schools, by the mass media, and in the community at large, which led me to believe that I had less value than my White counterparts. I was convinced that for me to succeed, I had to give up my identity. I was made to feel like a second-class citizen because of my socioeconomic status and my Spanish language and because I lived in a run-down community. I became ashamed of my mother’s Salvadorian cultural heritage and came to see it as inferior. I desperately attempted to assimilate and create an identity that rejected who I was as a Xicana in order to be accepted by the dominant White culture. I took on a new persona, a new reality that led to the silence of my authentic voice. (Berta-Ávila, 2003, p. 118)
Berta-Ávila’s example of marginalization exposes the experiences Xicanas/Latinas confront in navigating through public institutions. They hope to be successful, and due to the pressure to conform to the concept of “oneness,” they may engage in behavior detrimental to their sense of self. In doing so, students may experience lower levels of self-esteem and confidence (González, 2009). For that reason, it is imperative Xicanas/Latinas retain and embrace their roots:

Latino nationalists emphasize cultural pride, preservation of the Spanish language, and ties with México, Puerto Rico or other homelands. Both Latino and black nationalists deplore passing-the effort to deracinate oneself and present oneself as white. (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 61)

Researchers are aware of the impact of preserving one’s cultural pride and avoiding assimilation, which leads to becoming conformists and followers striving to achieve the norms and expectations of the dominant culture. People of color will gain the pride and confidence in their heritage and be on the right path to reaching liberation or conscientization by retaining their ethnic identity and culture (Berta-Ávila, 2003; de Anda, 1984). Non-white Nationalists are conscious the dominant culture based on white supremacist hegemony will continue to dehumanize non-white participants in society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). The dominant culture deems itself intellectually, physically, economically, and politically superior. For this reason, people of color often engage in resistance patterns to positively transform their realities in achieving their academic aspirations.
C. Negotiating Identities

Naming collective experiences is crucial in identifying main oppressive factors such as race, gender, and class (Rojas, 2009). For instance, “to gain autonomy, we often need to first identify struggles in our lives that are actually not about who we are as individuals, but about who we are assumed to be based on our race or class or our gender or sexuality” (Rojas, p. 5). Being able to identify the assumptions society creates against one is one of the first steps in being able to navigate through such oppressive factors to begin engaging in transformational practices. Xicanas/Latinas confront many challenges in developing a cultural identity in a hostile environment an oppressive hegemony creates. Empirical evidence suggests Xicanas/Latinas who successfully transition from high school to college do so by maintaining a strong racial ethnic identity (Barajas & Pierce, 2001). Xicanas/Latinas consciously surround themselves around other Xicana/Latina students who provide emotional support in navigating through their educational aspirations (Barajas & Pierce, 2001).

Xicanas/Latinas in the United States must constantly mask their identities to protect themselves against racist policies and hegemony at force (Anzaldúa, 1987, 1990; Rodriguez, 2006). A necessary survival skill is learning how to maintain their ethnic identities while learning to adapt to the dominant culture (Vera & de los Santos, 2005). The women who pursue higher education engage in a process of “Masking our inner selves serves as defenses against racist educational institutions in which we try to maneuver through” (Anzaldúa, 1990; Rodriguez, 2006). Women of color create dual
identities to hide the agony and fear of exposing their true identities around supremacists within the educational system (Rodriguez, 2006). Women resist institutional racism and mask their identities through factors such as language, religion, apparel, make-up, and others (Anzaldúa, 1990).

The ability for Xicanas/Latinas to mask their identities demonstrates their understanding and consciousness of a complex ethnic identity deriving from multiple colonizations, “the Spanish legacy, United States imperialism, Mexican nationalisms, and global patriarchy and heterosexism” (Delgado Bernal, Elenes, Godinez, & Villenas, 2010, p. 598). In doing so, they are able to achieve a “mestiza consciousness” building their resiliency, strength and self/collective power (Anzaldúa, 1987; Delgado Bernal et al., 2010). Xicanas/Latinas identify and embrace their indigenous roots providing a stronger foundation for their identity development. In doing so, they unmask their home identities around individuals they trust and only when they feel safe. This idea of creating masks supports the idea of the development of a racial ethnic identity.

Xicanas/Latinas navigate through educational institutions by retaining their culture and adapting to the dominant culture (Barajas & Pierce, 2001). Successful students strategically rely on “cultural translators” that help them share their experiences, provide ways to help them understand the norms and values of the dominant culture and bridge the demands of the dominant culture’s behavioral expectations without compromising their own ethnic values and norms (de Anda, 1984). Cultural translators play a key role in Xicana/Latina educational aspirations as these successful women do
not assimilate and instead remain bicultural (de Anda, 1984). Furthermore, in her study, Espinoza (2010) found successful Xicana/Latina doctorate students continued to struggle in navigating through educational institutions and retaining their ethnic identity. Some women were *integrators* who communicated with their family their educational demands and maintained communication about their duties to their family (Espinoza, 2010). The *integrators* continued to seek their *familia*’s advice and input about their educational decisions and needs. The other group of women were *separators* who did not integrate their family into their school duties and kept both their *familia* and school needs separate to lower the tension and conflict (Espinoza, 2010). “Both patterns demonstrate high levels of biculturalism and fluid *mestiza* identities that helped them juggle the contradictions of their two distinct social worlds as they pursued educational advancement” (Espinoza, 2010, p. 323). These successful Xicana/Latina doctorate students continued to wear different masks in retaining a sense of ethnic identity while simultaneously meeting educational demands. In developing a strong racial ethnic identity, knowing and understanding the practice of institutionalized racism in schools through curricula is foundational (Duncan-Andrade, 2005).

*D. Learning our Herstory/History to Develop REI*

Learning our history is critical in developing our strong cultural identities and sense of pride and confidence with respect to academic achievement (Acuña, 2004; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). By examining past events, one may connect their realities to those experiences and further understand the political, economic, and social structures
to not continue perpetuating their own oppression. For example, from the beginning of European arrival in “Pacha-Mama” or “Turtle Island” (Berta-Ávila, 2003), the Mayan, Aztec, and Inca books and stories were burned and destroyed by Spanish conquerors (Acuña, 2004; Villenas & Deyhle, 1999; Zinn, 2001). Language and religion was coerced and schools were created to enforce a hegemonic worldview and justify White American domination over all other ethnic groups (Villenas & Deyhle, 1999). Furthermore, White American schools purposely began to omit the advancements of indigenous civilizations in their written work as an attempt to erase indigenous exemplifying achievements (Zinn, 2001) by reproducing their ideas and then falsely claiming them as theirs. This is evident in Eurocentric textbooks highlighting their own achievements as a means to display a sense of superiority while excluding or minimizing indigenous and achievements. The ‘colonial status’ demands people conform to the ‘normative’ behavior and way of life (Acuña, 2004). In an effort to resist such dehumanizing institutionalized structures, society must gain consciousness and not perpetuate their own oppression; to do this, they must learn their his/herstory (Acuña, 2004; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

The United States historic government action toward Xican@s portrays an oppressive pattern in subordinating that population (Duncan-Andrade, 2005; Valenzuela, 1999). Today, this pattern is most evident in public schools:

Dubious intentions behind such U.S. policies and actions toward Mexicans can act as a framework for understanding the current dominant social portrayal and
treatment of Mexican immigrants and their descendants in the United States, particularly inside institutions such as schools…Traditional American history is the story of Mexicans as a conquered people, virtually devoid of historical, economic, or cultural significance. These notions of powerlessness and cultural deficiency, most powerfully transmitted through the schooling system, have been passed down to Chicanos. (Duncan-Andrade, 2005, pp. 577-582)

A Eurocentric curriculum omitting the experiences of Xican@s/Latin@s conveys the covert message to students that their ethnic group and Mexican heritage is not good enough for anyone to learn about it (Duncan-Andrade, 2005). Students become victims of an institutionalized racist curriculum transmitting the message that who they are, is not of value (Valenzuela, 1999), “the oppressed learns to continue following, not imagining his strength and ability to lead” (Freire, 1970, p. 63). Through the his/herstory coursework highlighting White American achievements, Xican@s internalize they are followers and the thought of leading becomes difficult to aspire (Duncan-Andrade, 2005). The most they learn about themselves is that of losing the war the United States created against México and the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (Duncan-Andrade, 2005). Critical Race theorists provide that these stories from the oppressor justify their privilege and power by constructing realities in the oppressed (Ladson-Billings & Tate 1995). There is no mention of Xican@/Latin@ contributions and achievements highlighting their strength, creativity, and abilities in math, science, arts, or literature (Duncan-Andrade, 2005). In measuring the positive effects of learning his/herstory, in
her study, Gándara (2002) observed the development of approximately 1,000 Puente high school students and 1,000 non-Puente high school students throughout 18 public high schools. Gándara found the Latin@/Chican@ academic literature utilized in Puente social science classes captured students’ attention and presented “the idea that Latinos and Chicanos of both genders can be important, even famous, writers” (Gándara, 2002, p. 13). Furthermore, Gándara found Puente students held higher academic aspirations than their peer non-Puente students.

In these events, Critical Race theorists would strongly advocate the use of counterstories for Xicana/Latina students learning about their achievements and contributions in order to be able to construct their own positive realities. Xican@s who have gone through public schools in the United States have been victims of “institutional disenfranchisement” (Duncan Andrade, 2005, p. 582). Xicanas/Latinas may empower themselves through the learning of their dignified his/herstory, “one aspect of empowerment as ‘the process of appreciating and loving oneself;’ empowerment is gained from knowledge and social relations that dignify one’ own history, language, and cultural traditions” (McLaren, 2009, p. 77). Knowing their stories is crucial in their process of liberation and conscientizacion.

For a Chicano student, such a change in curriculum whereby an act by the most powerful of Americans could be questioned and critiqued opens up a space for that student to feel empowered to challenge other aspects of his reality that he finds unjust. (Duncan-Andrade, 2005, p. 595)
Indeed, students become conscious of the authoritative structures becoming aware of their dispositions. In doing so, they are better equipped to transform their lives as success is measured by their ability to recognize the issues confronting them (Trueba & Spindler, 1988). Holding on to their cultural identity and their values system allows them to retain their dignity and not feel the need to replace their sense of self with that of the dominant culture’s. Educators must take the necessary measures to include the unique experiences of students in critical curriculum and thus assist in the transition of becoming a part of two cultures, but always retaining their own. In addition, achieving higher education does not imply replacing our identities with the dominant, rather learning to cope with the expectations of the dominating hegemonic culture.

Xicanas’/Latinas’ identity formation is an area that has not been served well by traditional theory (Vera & De Los Santos, 2005). Traditional theorists such as Erickson (1968) provide that in understanding identity formation, personal growth and communal change cannot be separated as both are relative to one another. However, the idea of intersectionalities, race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, and sexuality, is not critically examined in his work (Vera & De Los Santos, 2005). Xicana/Latina students develop their racial ethnic identities through their unique experiences both personally and through their environments. The closest communal factor in their lives is their familia/family. In further examining communal influences, the following section seeks to explore the influences of the familia/family on their academic aspirations.
II. Familismo

If culture is what sets one country apart from another, then educate women and you shall have a school in every home, for it is she who shapes the family and stamps upon society the seal of her culture. Ana Roque de Duprey, Puerto Rico, 1899 (Zambrana & Zoppi, 2002, p. 34)

A. Defining Familismo

A strong sense of family is highly valued throughout the Xican@/Latin@ culture. Indeed, the family is considered sacred. Familismo is defined as a strong identification and connection to the family, which demands family members prioritize the family’s needs over their personal interests (Espinoza, 2010; Raffaeli & Ontai, 2004). Existing research has shown that people of Mexican origin are more family-oriented than White Americans (Rodriguez, Bingham-Mira, Paez, & Myers, 2007). While some research has shown that as families become increasingly acculturated, certain familial characteristics decrease (Marin, 1993; Rodriguez et al., 2007), other research showing acculturation increases familism (Rodriguez & Kosloski, 1998). Prioritizing the family’s needs over individual needs may involve taking part in the nuclear and extended family’s events. Familismo may present a double-edged sword providing emotional stability yet straining Xicanas/Latinas to meet the familia’s needs while attaining academic goals. For many Xicana/Latina families who practice strong familismo cultural values centered on traditional Mexican culture, “success” is defined by the family’s relationship between the parents and children (Villenas & Deyhle, 1999).
Another common judgment about Xicanas/Latinas is that they may not leave the home unless they are ready to marry. The argument is that this expectation may lead to conflict for those women who aspire to pursue a higher education away from home (Denner & Dunbar, 2004; Sy & Romero 2008). Xicanas/Latinas who aspire to attend college away from home may not raise the thought to her family and parents. They may fear and often hold fatalistic views about her parents condemning the idea to leave the home for school. As a result, “Latinas find themselves caught in a cultural bind between meeting the demands of their individualistic-oriented school culture and their collectivist-oriented family culture” (Espinoza, 2010, p. 319).

For insiders in the Xican@/Latin@ culture, familismo presents a double-edged sword but for outside cultures, the concept of familismo is difficult to grasp since they remain outsiders and unfamiliar with the norms and expectations. As a result, outsiders may often engage in stereotyping and deficit thinking by blaming the families for their struggles. For example, in her qualitative research, Hidalgo (1998) analyzes authentic forms of Latino knowledge in an attempt to search for ways to promote transformative action within the Latino community. In her study, Hidalgo attempts to understand and validate Latino experiences and knowledge. In doing so, she provides the importance of recognizing the construction of knowledge and intersectionalities of race, gender, ethnicity, and other pertinent factors influencing the perception of one’s knowledge. She discussed her findings in a previous research project in which she interviewed Puerto Rican parents and their influences on their children’s academic performance. Due to a
lack of understanding from the mainstream White American families, she discussed the stereotypes on Latin@ families, including on the extended families, and provided that White-nuclear families blame the Latino extended family structures for their struggles.

Indeed, the Latino family unit includes the extended family unlike the White American “Leave it to Beaver” family making it more challenging to meet the needs and support their extended family’s needs as well (Hidalgo, 1998). Moreover, values, traditions, and respect for elders are often undermined when compared to White American families due to a lack of understanding and validity of the Latino culture (Hidalgo 1998). The author highlights the importance of honoring the Latino family structures and culture, but also in assisting Latin@ individuals in sorting out the many contradictions within the family structure. Indeed, the familia plays a dominant role in the lives of Xicanas as their sense of identity is based on the familia’s perception of them. The needs from a larger nuclear family and extended family may often be overwhelming for Xicanas.

In her study, Espinoza (2010) interviewed a group of doctoral Xicana/Latina students to examine their strategies in balancing their academic demands while maintaining the “good daughter” status with their families. Espinoza found the majority of doctoral students reported a difficulty in balancing their family roles and academic roles, “Unlike dominant American culture that values independence and self-sufficiency, familismo emphasizes cooperation and interdependence” (p. 318). In a similar study, Achor and Morales (1990) interviewed 100 Chicanas who had earned doctoral degrees.
They found the Chicana participants considered their families as their main force behind their doctoral attainment since it was their families that encouraged them to pursue their independent academic aspirations especially those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. In further understanding the influences of familismo, the following section will guide the reader to further examine the positive influences of la familia and how the family support may provide a strong foundation for Xicana/Latina academic aspirations.

B. Resistance and “Pedagogies of the Family”

Family support and Xicana/Latina involvement in the familia’s obligations may provide a strong sense of resistance to institutionalized and systematic oppression “by negotiating, struggling, or embracing their bilingualism, biculturalism, commitment to communities, and spiritualities” (Delgado-Bernal, 2001, p. 625). These strategies of resistance may be considered coping skills to survive in oppressive school settings, and, therefore positively influence student performance (Achor & Morales, 1990). For instance, when a Xicana/Latina student is harassed or discriminated against in school, she will be able to embrace her bilingualism and biculturalism by recalling the cultural knowledge shared from her positive role models who have taught them to love themselves (Achor & Morales, 1990; Delgado-Bernal, 2001).

The family may teach Xicana/Latina students about the validity of their experiences and honoring the positive aspects of their unique ethnicity, gender, and race (Solorzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005). When students are equipped with such cultural knowledge, they may utilize their knowledge and not allow these acts of
psychological violence (hooks, 2002) against them to defeat their academic goals by giving up on them. For instance, if students are aware of their teachers’ deficit-thinking attitudes toward them, including their peers’ negative perceptions of them; Xicanas/Latinas may begin to accept such ways of thinking (Freire, 1970). As a result, Xicanas/Latinas may begin to set lower standards for themselves and experience a lack of motivation as they begin to internalize oppression (Watson, 2011).

The ability to embrace their cultural knowledge is important to consider since researchers have found that various forms of violent microaggressions toward Xicana/Latina students accumulate stress and can negatively affect their academics. Indeed, culture has the potential to determine students’ success or failure as it may provide the necessary motivation for students to excel in school (Trueba, 1988). To demonstrate the benefits of embracing their cultural knowledge, Delgado-Bernal (2001) collected student data using a Xicana feminist epistemology and methodology by conducting interviews and focus groups in a California university. The purpose of her study was to examine the ways in which Xicana/Latina students navigate their ways through educational obstacles and into college and the ways in which they “negotiate their resistance, identities and culture” (p. 623). In the data collected, the author found that some students resisted the oppressive school structure by perpetuating their own failure in using self-defeating forms of resistance such as dropping out of school. Furthermore, the author found Xicana/Latina students learned to develop their own tools
and strategies to defend themselves for survival and success in a college environment not accessible or friendly to them.

Their ability to access their cultural knowledge as a means of resistance allowed them to maintain their academic drive and motivation. Xicanas rely on “pedagogies of the home” in that they use their sense of community and cultural knowledge as their base to resist the sexism, racism and “classist microaggressions” (Delgado-Bernal, 2001, p. 624; Plunkett & Bámaca-Gómez, 2003). Xicana students are confronted with such microaggression acts (Ek, Quijada-Cerecer, Alanís, & Rodríguez, 2010) of psychological violence, such as institutionalized racism and deficit-thinking, from their teachers, professors, and peers (Valencia, 1997). The family’s respaldo/support provides defense mechanisms for Xicana/Latina students adjusting to a different school culture (Delgado-Bernal et al., 2010). Adjustment to the higher educational institutional environments is foundational in the development of Xicana/Latina educational aspirations. The authors further proposed to rethink educational structures and begin to focus on how Xicana/Latina students’ cultural knowledge contributes to their educational success. Most educational policy today focuses on the failures of Xican@ students rather than on the positive cultural influences (Delgado-Bernal et al., 2010).

In motivating the younger Latin@ generation, the family’s narratives about their past struggles may inspire Latin@s to “undertake their own struggles for personal transformation” (Cammarota, 2004, p. 71). Xican@/Latin@ youth may become increasingly motivated to resist society’s negative expectations of them failing by
learning about their family’s previous struggles. The idea is for the younger Latin@
generation to learn about the older generations’ struggles in achieving higher education
including their stories about their experiences in being “pushed out” of high school. In
turn, the younger generation may “endure the pressures within and beyond schools that
hinder their academic success” (p. 71). In her study, Gándara (1995) interviewed 50 men
and women who had achieved the highest level of education in accredited American
universities by earning a Ph.D., M.D., or J.D. degrees and held professional positions.
The purpose of Gándara’s study was to explore the outcomes of professional
Xican@/Latin@s who had utilized education as a vehicle for socioeconomic mobility.
After asked to describe the reasons their families migrated to the United States, the
participants provided family stories about their parents’ struggles and challenges in
leaving behind their homelands. The participants recalled these stories that served a
special function when they were under “diminished or demeaning circumstances”
(Gándara, 1995, p. 51). Critical Race theorists consider parables, chronicles, stories,
counterstories, poetry, fiction, and revisionist histories as a powerful tool to catalyze the
necessary self-conflict to block out dysconscious racism (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).
Xicana/Latina students may utilize their families’ stories and counterstories as a means to
name their own realities, thus providing them with a sense of belonging and self-worth.

Today, there is more research and evidence on both the positive and negative
effects the family obligations have on students’ academic performance (Valenzuela &
Dornbusch, 1994). These obligations may be both beneficial and yet hinder Latina
adolescent academics as they may feel overwhelmed and stressed in balancing their home and school obligations. For instance, in their recent study, Sy and Romero (2008) interviewed 20 Xicana/Latina adolescents from a California arts college to examine different types of family obligations and how their obligations influenced their academics. Three themes emerged from their findings: the advocacy of self-sufficiency, voluntary financial contributions, and role as “surrogate” parent (Sy & Romero, 2008). In advocating self-sufficiency, Xicanas/Latinas are encouraged to become increasingly independent to help the family: “I know I had to…don’t ask my mom for money, don’t ask her for clothes, don’t ask her for allowance, nothing like that. You know, and that would be a help to her” (p. 218). In addition, Latinas reported they did not feel obligated to help the familia financially, but they did express a voluntary desire to do so (Sy & Romero, 2008). Other women described their roles as “surrogate” parent as:

Just like taking care of your own children…I’m the oldest, and my mom’s a single mother, I have like the father’s role. So I am there for them financially and emotionally and I try to install [sic] all regulations and just basically just raise them. (p. 221)

Xicanas/Latinas also reported more family obligations than White American adolescents and Asian American adolescents (Sy & Romero, 2008; Valenzuela & Dornbusch, 1994). Some studies (Valenzuela & Dornbusch, 1994; Zambrana & Zoppi, 2001) found Latina students who were more involved in family obligations performed better than those who were not. Existing research and literature on Latinas’ higher
educational experiences suggest they perform better in school when they have a stronger connection to their family (Solorzano & Yosso, 2000; Zambrana & Zoppi, 2002).

This is especially true in single parent homes with a high demand to support the family in sibling caretaking (Sy & Romero, 2008). For example, in their case study, Galindo and Escamilla (1995) interviewed two Xicano students they identified as educationally successful to provide biographical information on sociopolitical factors influencing their academic aspirations. In doing so, they found students learn to develop a strong work ethic and assume responsibility for their duties in helping care for younger siblings as well as assisting with their homework and other college-oriented advice. In a related study, Plunkett and Gomez (2003) surveyed Mexican-origin students from three different high schools in the Los Angeles area examining the influence of gender, acculturation, parenting, and academic aspirations on students’ academic performance. In their study, the researchers found parental involvement and monitoring over their children’s involvement in familial duties and academics were perceived by their children positively. The children appreciated their parents monitoring their progress as it demonstrated their parents’ interest in their academics. Such monitoring, such as checking on their children’s attendance and grades and meeting with their counselors and teachers provided students with a higher level of self-esteem and self-efficacy that further motivated them to excel in academics (Gándara, 1995; Plunkett & Gomez, 2003).

The familia’s values provide cultural capital equipped with strong community relationships, solidarity, dependence, and spirituality. Strong bonds are created since
family members are expected to support one another. These family bonds and community networks provide such capital. Social capital may further support families in developing their social consciousness and positive engagement in their communities through the continuous interaction with members of their family and community. Latino families may utilize social capital for upward mobility (Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995). For instance, teachers and principals in schools strongly influence families’ development of human capital as both the school and home environments shape their social structure. The authors provided an example of bilingual schools using Latino cultural values incorporating family stories to create a positive and rich learning environment for students. Such learning environments value and appreciate Latino culture. These environments are receptive to Xican@/Latin@ students and create a safe haven where they do not feel constantly attacked or the need to stay on the defensive. According to Gándara (1995), “family stories were examples of cultural capital that helped students achieve academically” (pp. 45-46). In her groundbreaking research for her book, Gándara conducted survey-type interviews on 50 Xican@/Latin@ professionals who had earned the following degrees – Ph.D., M.D. or J.D. – from prestigious universities throughout the United States. She found the professionals she had interviewed were further motivated via family stories, factors positively serving their academic performance and part of cultural and social capital. Furthermore, having a solid network of friends and family provides a backbone for encouraging and motivating students to excel in their academics.
La familia’s support or respaldo provides emotional support as provided by Castellanos, Lopez, and Rosales (2005). La familia’s respaldo equips Latinas with a powerful sense of identity and emotional stability. Such positive reinforcement from the family may further motivate students to excel academically. Furthermore, the amount of familial support heavily determines student motivation and success (Arellano & Padilla, 1996). Students consider their parents’ interest in their academics to be of high importance. Latinos with a stronger sense of family obligations are more likely to continue to postsecondary education since they feel a stronger connection to family maintains their focus on their academic achievement (Gándara, 1995). A strong family connection is important for academic achievement as well as for students to adjust to the college and university culture (Gándara, 1995). Xicanas/Latinas who identify as successful women in academics and who have fulfilled their educational aspirations identify emotional support as a major factor contributing to their attainment of goals (Ek et al., 2010). Indeed, these students receive emotional support from friends and family, “many of us espouse cultural and moral values, such as our beliefs in community uplift and the primacy of family that have been undermined and questioned by mainstream academic culture” (Ek et al., 2010, p. 546).

Considering the family structure and support system in the home, the following section further examines the family’s gender role socialization influences on Xicana/Latina high school academics. This section examines the historic origins of gender roles and sexism within the Xican@/Latin@ culture. Specifically, the following
section examines the stereotypical images of both men and women and how their roles have evolved. Such stereotypes and generalizations of Xican@/Latin@s are inaccurate as behavior patterns vary from different communities (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994). Stereotypes and generalizations often lead to deficit-thinking models perpetuating racial microaggressions and drawing fatalistic attitudes toward Xicana/Latina students. For this reason, the following section examines these roles to begin developing effective policies that will provide Xicana/Latina students with access they need to attain their academic aspirations.

III. Gender Roles and Sexism

The culture and the church insist that women are subservient to males. If a woman rebels she is mujer mala. If a woman doesn't renounce herself in favor of the male, she is selfish. (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 39)

Sexism permeates throughout the world and throughout ethnically diverse populations. Sexism is not exclusive in the Xican@/Latin@ culture or amongst high school students. For example, sexism is evident throughout popular civil rights movements throughout the world in which the majority of participating women risk their lives by marching with the people but are usually not involved in leading the decision-making (Abalos, 2002). Some of the most renowned civil rights leaders such as Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr., Gandhi, and Cesar Chavez championed oppressive conditions for people of color, but personally, they did not treat the women in their lives as their equals (Abalos, 2002). In the United States, women have been excluded from the
economic and political founding of the nation (Rojas, 2009; West, 1994). Women are well aware of the United States hegemonic patriarchal culture and its demands (hooks, 2002). As a result, their obsessions about love begin not with the first crush or the first fall. They begin with that first recognition that females matter less than males, that no matter how good we are, in the eyes of a patriarchal universe we are never quite good enough. (p. xi)

For this reason, women may become submissive to a patriarchal society that does not value the intellect and ability of women as it does with men. hooks’s ideas on love and sexism are pervasive throughout the Xican@/Latin@ culture as well. However, Xican@/Latin@ family cultures are not static, nor characterized by uniform practices of extreme patriarchy (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994). To continue the examination of gender roles, the following section examines gender role socialization of Mexican familial origins.

A. Gender Role Socialization Influences on Academia

Educated or not, the onus is still on woman to be a wife/mother-only the nun can escape motherhood. Women are made to feel total failures if they don’t marry and have children. (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 39)

Early socialization of gender roles may influence students’ academic aspirations and achievement, especially if students are marginalized in school and face other institutionalized barriers (Valenzuela, 1999). The related literature demonstrates
evidence of differential treatment between boys and girls in the United States (Anzaldúa, 1987; hooks, 2000). More recently, the existing literature provides that gender is a major factor in academic achievement, “The literature on the sociology of gender suggests that gender matters a great deal in the achievement of school success” (Barajas & Pierce, 2001, p. 862). Furthermore, the lack of school performance may continue to adversely affect women in professional work environments (Sherman, Beaty, Crum, & Peters, 2010). Indeed, gender roles and sexism are pervasive at all educational levels (Sherman et al., 2010). In their study, the authors applied biographical narrative inquiry to expose professional women’s experiences and challenges in academia. Their purpose was to examine sexism and distribution of labor at the university level among professors. As professionals, their work involves the studies of other women, but in this study, the women described their struggles of being respected and valued in a male-dominated work environment. The unequal division of labor discourages women from achieving higher education and continuing as professionals in academia (Sherman et al., 2010). For Xicana/Latinas to pursue higher education already presents challenges. For those who do reach higher education and professional degrees, many are also finding an enduring struggle for equality and respect (hooks, 2002).

*Gender roles: Navigation between the “ideal woman” and achieving personal interests in academia.* Xicanas/Latinas often struggle in pursuing personal interests in academics while meeting the gender role expectation of becoming the “ideal mujer/woman.” They are often confined to the cultura’s norms in which they prioritize
the needs of the men in their lives before their own needs and aspirations (Cammarota, 2004). Xicana/Latina students are confronted with challenges in their efforts to meet the gender-related expectations of the “ideal woman” and simultaneously pursue their academic aspirations. They are conflicted with mixed messages from their parents encouraging higher education while meeting their cultural demands in the home (Cammarota, 2004). As a result, gender oppression may obstruct academic success among Latinas (Villenas & Moreno, 2001).

Existing research provides that gender-related socialization influences Xicana/Latina educational aspirations (Cammarota, 2004; Raffaeli & Ontai, 2004). In their first study, Raffaeli and Ontai (2004) interviewed 22 adult Latinas (ages 20-45), and in their second study, they surveyed 166 Latino/a college students to explore gender-related socialization within Latin@ families. In both studies, the authors found differential treatment in the ways Latin@ parents treated their boys and girls. For instance, boys had much more freedom and privilege and boys did not have to help around the house (p. 290). In addition, girls were expected to act in feminine ways including their selection of clothes/attire, shoes, and accessories (p. 290). The articulate Rosita testified regarding her father’s attitude about his expectations and demands about being an ideal woman:

He wanted the best for us, he wants the best education for us and everything and the best opportunities, but women still need to have their traditional roles of being able to cook, being able to clean, being able to look nice, ah, nicely dressed, ah,
and yet not going out with boyfriends before they’re married or bringing a man home before, you know, this whole, this whole socialization process is going in my home (Rosita, age 26). (Raffaeli & Ontai, p. 291)

Rosita’s testimony is evidence of existing “traditional” expectations within the dominant Xican@/Latin@ culture. In both studies, the authors’ results and findings “suggest that many children growing up in Latino/a families in the United States experience gender socialization that is marked by traditional expectations and messages” (p. 291). The authors’ studies were limited and it would be inaccurate to generalize all Xican@/Latin@ groups into one narrow category. However, there is significant evidence of “traditional” gender-socialization within the Xican@/Latin@ culture (Raffaeli & Ontai, 2004). In a similar study, Torres (2004) conducted interviews with 83 Latin@ students from seven colleges and universities. The purpose of her study was to examine familial influences on first-year Latin@ college and university students. The following testimony of a first-year college Latina describes her father’s attitude of her academia:

Well, I don’t know. I think he is between the [cultures] because sometimes he is kind of hypocritical, I guess. Sometimes he is like, “Yeah—you should go to college and do this,” but then he [says], “You are a girl, you know.” So I think he is like debating himself. He should get over it. (Torres, 2004, p. 463)

The conflict Alejandra described is clearly connected to gender-related socialization within her culture. However, she also acknowledged the conflict between the need for her education and the traditional roles she is expected to meet in her culture
 Torres, 2004). Most significantly, the authors’ findings illustrate the need for Xicanas/Latinas to negotiate cultural conflict and their relationship with their parents (Torres, 2004). Indeed, parents advocate a higher education for Xicanas/Latinas. However, they also expect their daughters to meet the “traditional” gender roles within their cultures. The main challenge becomes in the women’s ability to navigate and mediate the contradictions between gender role expectations and academic aspirations (Cammarota, 2004; Gándara, 1995; Villenas & Moreno, 2001). Xicana/Latinas’ self perceptions are also reinforced by the mass media, educators, and their own families as being “submissive, underachievers and caretakers” providing for their families. These stereotypes adversely affect Xicanas/Latinas who may often perpetuate their own failure by living up to those expectations or engage in transformational resistance further pursuing a higher education (Cammarota, 2004).

*Effects of pursuing personal academic aspirations on Xicanas/Latinas.*

Xicana/Latina students who become increasingly independent and pursue personal educational aspirations may break away from la familia’s cultural norms causing them verguenza/shame as they feel they are not meeting their family’s expectations (Anzaldúa, 1987). As a result, they isolate themselves from la familia (Anzaldúa, 1987; Marsiglia & Holleran, 1999). Furthermore, Xicanas who deviate or break away from la familia feel rejected by the family and may avoid confronting them:

Fear of going home. And of not being taken in. We’re afraid of being abandoned by the mother, the culture, *la Raza*, for being unacceptable, faulty, damaged…to
avoid rejection, some of us conform to the values of the culture, push the
unacceptable parts into the shadows. (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 42)

Such fear of being rejected by the family may result in isolation. Negative
feelings of the self may also have a negative impact on their academics, which challenges
them to adopt hegemonic values to be successful. For Xicanas/Latinas, the need to be
accepted in their families’ circles and communities is crucial for their well-being (Efthim,
Kenny, & Mahalik, 2001). Furthermore, community is strongly based on the acceptance
and respeto/respect of la familia, “Deviance is condemned by the community. Most
societies try to get rid of their deviants” (p. 40). In most societies, deviating from cultural
norms is not tolerated (Anzaldúa, 1987; Efthim et al., 2001).

The mujer/woman that does resist oppression and liberates herself from society’s
norms is often deemed inadequate and faulty as she is not meeting her culture’s ideal
gender role expectations. Overcoming this tradition of silence and self-actualizing may
often be a painful process for Xicanas/Latinas (Ginorio & Huston, 2000) as they
experience a level of stress. “Stress related to living up to gender role prescriptions was
associated with shame-proneness and externalization for both men and women,
supporting theoretical and clinical assertions regarding gender role stress” (Efthim et al.,
2001). Following the expected gender roles may be overwhelming for Xicanas/Latinas.

Shared gender oppression: The mother-to-daughter bond. Gender role
socialization greatly influences mothers and daughters who have a stronger relationship
due to shared gender oppression than sons and fathers (Cammarota, 2004). Mothers and
sons may share a strong bond but, “the shared experience of gender oppression seemed to create stronger relationships between mothers and their daughters” (Cammarota, 2004, p. 64). Mothers sympathize more with their daughters as they understand the struggles their daughters are experiencing (Gándara, 1995). Furthermore, researchers have found these messages and la experiencia/experiences told from a woman’s perspective to another woman is powerful since it is based on the women’s “culturally specific knowledge and practices” (Delgado-Bernal et al., 2010, p. 597). Mothers often provide explicit messages to their daughters to pursue their academic aspirations due to a lack of their own perseverance or unhappy marriages. In her study, Gándara found the female participants reported similar thoughts from their mothers to follow their educational aspirations and “not have to depend on a man” (p. 95). In fact, one professor of social work responded to her mother’s idea of being successful as:

Her idea of being successful in life is to be totally independent of a male in life and she would hope I would fulfill all her dreams, which are to remain single, to be financially independent, and to have a profession. (p. 95)

The continuous motherly support maintained strong-willed daughters and encouraged them to follow their educational aspirations, especially during difficult moments for their daughters. Hence, a mother’s consejos/advice from an early age prepares young Xicanas to build their strength and resistance to overcome institutional barriers such as institutionalized racism (Delgado-Bernal et al., 2010). Interestingly, the
shared experiences of Xicana/Latina women expected to follow cultural norms derive from Mexico’s distinctive history and evolving political and economic systems.

B. Origins of “Marianismo” and “Machismo”

Although sexism is pervasive throughout world cultures (Abalos, 2002), it is distinctive within ethnic subgroups. Within the Mexican culture, two frequently cited parallels of cultural dimensions are machismo and marianismo (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994; Villegas, Lemanski, & Valdés, 2010). These gender roles vary greatly in meaning across families of Mexican origin.

México’s distinctive history and cultural experiences have shaped gender roles stemming from sexist ideals. The origins of marianismo and machismo have been largely influenced by the history of México’s past and present colonization. México’s unique and complex history will also be examined through the analysis of various scholarly works, as the country’s history is the fundamental base of those of Mexican ancestry, including that of Xican@s living in the U.S.

The origins of machismo and marianismo vary from scholar to scholar. Some argue the origins began with the Spanish influence in México (Neff, 2001) while others argue sexism was highly influenced by Christianity, Judaism, and Islam (Paz, 1961). More recent literature contends economic exploitation has been a major contributing factor to sexism (Peña, 1991). While most scholars agree México’s unique history has been influenced by various civilizations:
Greece laid the foundations of Western or European civilization; the white civilization that, upon expanding, reached the forgotten shores of the American continent in order to consummate the task of re-civilization and re-population. Thus we have four stages and the four racial trunks: the Black, the Indian, the Mongol, and the White. (Vasconcelos, 1979, p. 9)

The aforementioned influences have played a major role in shaping the Mexican ideas and expectations of gender role socialization. Paz (1961) illustrates México’s unique and complex culture and history and contends the Xicano young men’s cultural identity has been influenced by the Pachuco\(^9\) culture shaping their knowledge, attitudes, and ideas. Indeed, the Mexican customs, traditions, celebrations, religion, and language are a complex myriad of cultures heavily influenced by the Spanish arrival. The Mexican’s Spanish and Arabic influences provide an explanation for the attitude Mexican men have toward women:

The Spanish attitude toward women is very simple. It is expressed quite brutally and concisely in these two sayings: A woman’s place is in the home, with a broken leg and Between a female saint and a male saint, a wall of mortared stone. (Paz, 1961, p. 36)

The Spaniards’ act of rape toward the indigenous Latin American women was a form of psychological castration and humiliation for the indigenous males who were helpless (Abalos, 2002). As a result, the males avoided the women due to a loss of

\(^{9}\)Pachucos were boys and men who resisted United States racist hegemony. They were identified by their distinctive clothing style that explicitly went against United States dominant clothing style (Dietrich, 1998).
honor, family, and community. When the men became angry, they began to take out their anger on their women who they viewed as the ones who cost them their honor (Abalos, 2002).

It is important to note that Xican@/Latin@ scholars conflict in their analysis of the origins of sexism throughout México. Contrary to Paz’s (1961) analysis, Peña (1991) asserted machismo has not stemmed from the Spanish arrival, and instead, machismo is a global phenomenon influenced by various factors such as socioeconomic status and level of education of individual men and women. In his study, Peña met with a group of 25 Mexican farmworkers in Fresno, California recording their conversations and examining their biases toward women. Peña described the men as underprivileged working class Mexican men whose primary language was Spanish. He asserted the Mexican form of machismo holds its unique characteristics as the male Mexican men in the United States have been economically exploited. In his article, Peña provided:

Paz (1961), Ramos (1962), and other scholars have analyzed Mexican machismo generally as the psycho-historical product of a traumatic Spanish conquest. I agree with Paredes that machismo is a universal phenomenon and not the result of conquest trauma... but from the specific conditions that have historically shaped Mexican culture - extreme economic exploitation and its attendant deprivation and alienation. (p. 31)

In his study, Peña found the men he interviewed had shaped their ideas of machismo and marianismo as a result of their economic conditions in México and the United States. For
instance, the Mexican farmworkers had distinctive judgments toward Mexican and Mexican-American or Xicana women. In fact, with respect to gender roles and the relationship that should be obtained between men and women, the men expressed their preference and superiority of Mexican women over Mexican-American women. The men considered Mexican-American women as lazy, too liberal, resistant, and unfaithful (Peña, 1991). Furthermore, one of the workers Peña interviewed complained Mexican-American women, or Xicanas, were muy libertinas- “too unrestrained or licentious” (p. 33). The workers were negatively referring to their perception of Xicana women’s sense of independence. They also displayed a sense of the pelado influenced by the Mexican movie legend, Cantinflas. This character was renowned throughout Latin America for his sense of humor, boldness, humility, and attitude toward women (Peña, 1991). To some extent, it is apparent Mexican men display a sense of respeto toward Mexican women perhaps relating them to their own mothers, grandmothers, sisters, or significant others (Peña, 1991). In addition, the Mexican male will idealize women as long as his male supremacy is not challenged.

In an attempt to identify the origins of machismo, Peña (1991) emphasized the importance of considering the relationship between class, gender, and culture in their influences over the development of Mexican machismo. Sexism is pervasive, but in México, its roots do not stem from European arrival. As a result of México’s distinctive

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10Cantinflas remains a popular Mexican icon in the entertainment industry.
history, Mexican men are confronted with the idea of their “deeply rooted inferiority complex” (p. 38).

The Stereotypical Mexican Male or “Machismo.” Xican@s with familial origins in México have been plagued with stereotypes of the Mexican male macho contrasted with the passive and submissive Mexican female (Dietrich, 1998). The Xicano/Latino male is often judged and perceived as aggressive, possessive, and promiscuous (Dietrich, 1998) toward his female partner. He is supposed to be “indulgent, aggressive, and demonstrate sexual prowess” (Eisler, Skidmore, & Ward, 1988, p. 134). Men are also coerced into following society’s norms and expectations (Sy & Romero, 2008). In supporting their families, strong men are expected to work with their hands. Those who do otherwise are deemed “soft” or sometimes even considered “lazy” (Paz, 1961) in more traditional households.

Latino men serve as dominators over every aspect of life including the political, economic, social, and psychological (Abalos, 2002; Villegas et al., 2010). Machismo results in Latino men engaging in negative behavior such as risk-taking, aggressiveness, a demand for respect, and sexual conquest to prove their manhood (Neff, 2001; Villegas et al., 2010). Machismo sets the standard expecting Xicano/Latino men to test their manhood and in most cases that is more important to them (González, 1974).

There are also positive aspects of machismo, especially around familism (Neff, 2001). For instance, men are held to the expectation of being dedicated fathers, brave, independent, and protectors of their families (Abalos, 2002; Neff, 2001; Villegas et al.,
In México, families are taught a real man is devoted to his family and especially his children (Villegas et al., 2010). The stereotypical roles of the Xicano/Latino male examined above are indeed inaccurate as their behavior varies from region and community (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994). The same holds true for Xicanas/Latinas, as culture is constantly changing and is not static (Dietrich, 1998).

The stereotypical Mexican female or “Marianismo.” Women are raised to have a collective identity and be community-oriented whereas boys are raised to be community-oriented but have an individual identity. Xicanas/Latinas are held to the belief that, “women should be family oriented also is reflected in mainstream U.S. society” (Sy & Romero, 2008, p. 216). Women are increasingly expected to prioritize their children’s needs over their own. According to gender role stereotypes, women are expected to be, “submissive, dependent and anxious about appearances” (Eisler et al., 1988, p. 134). In this traditional culture, if a woman desires to be with her partner, she must remain subservient to his demands. In some cases, involving exaggerating hypermasculinity (Neff, 2001), women learn early on the men in their lives may define their own self-love (hooks, 2002). In doing so, it is this attitude forcing Xicanas/Latinas to become subservient because not doing so would deem them as faulty.

The gender roles serve as a marker for women to conform to such expectations: “Culture forms our beliefs…Dominant paradigms, predefined concepts that exist as unquestionable, unchallengeable, are transmitted to us through the culture…Culture is made by those in power-men” (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 38). Culture sets the norm for
romanticizing the ideal dependent and considerate woman putting her personal interests aside for those of her husband and family (Villegas et al., 2010; Villenas et al., 1999). Moreover, *marianismo* promotes passivity and collectivism in Xicana/Latina women (Villegas et al., 2010). Women learn to obey the *familia’s* needs and demands and are often blamed for *la familia’s* faults under *marianismo*.

Women are also expected to confront all consequences at whatever cost for the *familia*. In a related study, Espinoza affirmed the idea of *marianismo* accepting faulty consequences and enduring agony and suffering. Traditional folk stories about La Virgen de Guadalupe, La Malinche and La Llorona promote the idea of the ideal woman (Dietrich, 1998). The three women provide “a dual concept of women: the virginal and virtuous good woman contrasted with the sexually promiscuous bad woman. Good women are chaste, altruistic, and maternal. Bad women are sexual and selfish” (Dietrich, 1998, p. 37). Understanding the role of religion in Mexican culture is fundamental in understanding a woman’s role in the home. Of the world’s major religions, Christianity, Judaism, and Islam all teach it was Eve (Dietrich, 1998) who first disobeyed the creator and tempted Adam. For this reason, in Mexican traditional folklore, there is a general sense women are often deemed untrustworthy and faulty. The contradicting messages of women’s roles and often their lack of self-worth is further perpetuated by the mass media. The commercials, reality shows, and soap operas reinforce messages to viewers about the roles they are expected to follow.
Gender roles and sexism perpetuated by mass media. Traditional gender roles are further perpetuated by the mass media (hooks, 2000; Villegas et al., 2010). In an effort to further understand contemporary gender roles in México, the authors Villegas et al., (2010) analyzed television commercials from México’s most popular and highest rating Televisa, Channel 2. Their sample of 783 commercials consisted of a week’s recording of the channel from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. The authors hired three highly trained female undergraduate coders to analyze all commercials. In implementing McArthur and Resko’s (1975) method of analysis, the authors found that men and women were both depicted in largely traditional roles. However, they also found a distinction between the roles of socially dependent and independent women. For instance, dependent and traditional women displaying marianismo characteristics were more favorable and preferred by the family. However, the more independent women were considered more as sex objects and other forms of unfavorable sexualization were exhibited (Villegas et al., 2010).

C. Transformational Resistance

Xicanas/Latinas are confronted with different types of gender discrimination in the home and society at large (Cammarota, 2004). The existing literature presents different ways they respond to gender oppression as males and females tend to react differently to instances of gender norm deviation (Barajas & Pierce, 2001; Delgado-Bernal, 2001). Latinas may be utilizing higher education as a strategy to resist gender-related socialization and their subordination to men (Cammarota, 2004), “educational
achievement for Latinas can be understood as resistance to gender oppression” (p. 70). In turn, they may feel their education attainment provides them with a sense of power they would otherwise not have. This is especially true for women who are the first to graduate high school and earn a high school diploma. Their achievement earns them a sense of power in attaining higher status (Cammarota, 2004). Latinas are translating their educational attainment into a strategy to regain further control of their lives (Cammarota, 2004). In their study, Barajas and Pierce (2001) interviewed 45 college student mentors and 27 high school mentees mostly of Mexican descent. The purpose of their study was to examine how race and gender shaped Latinas’/os’ college paths. They found Xicanas/Latinas navigated through their schooling by maintaining positive images of themselves (Barajas & Pierce, 2001). In a similar study, Denner and Dunbar (2004) interviewed eight low-income Mexican American middle and high schools students using open-ended survey questions and interviews. The purpose of their study was to further explore the ways in which young adolescent girls navigated through their roles in academics and the home. Furthermore, it was the authors’ intent to dismiss stereotypes and negative generalizations toward the Latin@ culture since it is believed young Xicanas/Latinas experience a loss of voice and power (Denner & Dunbar, 2004). The authors found that “being a girl” presented various contradictions for the participants and they all expressed an interest in the attainment of power in some aspects of their lives (Denner & Dunbar, 2004).
Xicanas/Latinas engage in various forms of resistance (Campbell, 2003). Educators have identified these ways as either conforming or resisting to institutional marginalization (Solórzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001). Such forms of resistance have been referred to as “conformist resistance,” suggesting students both accept and reject cultural norms (Solórzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001). Students who use “conformist resistance” utilize education and persevere in their academia to counter societal inequities. However, these students conform to institutional practices without challenging systemic forms of oppression (Solórzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999). In her work, Valenzuela (1999) refers to the term positive resistance to acknowledge students’ academic performance to resist marginalization. Students conform to educational oppressive structures to escape and counter the oppression at home and school but they do not confront the oppressive institutions themselves (Valenzuela, 1999). Students use education as a means to get autonomy and power. So to achieve this power, they accept the school’s cultural norms:

They perceive the credentials conferred by schools as tickets to a higher status that challenges male domination and offers greater autonomy. Ethnographers who have identified this positive perspective of schooling among female students focus on the possibility that males and females, for reasons of gender, hold different perceptions toward and patterns of engagement with school (Holland and Eisenhart 1990). (Cammarota, 2004, p. 55)
Summary of the Literature Review

The development of Xicana/Latina racial ethnic identity strongly influences their educational aspirations. As they begin to understand their realities and become aware of their dispositions, they begin to reach self-actualization. In that process, they begin to build their self-esteem and confidence and especially when being coerced in adopting hegemonic cultural values. The existing literature demonstrated Xicana/Latina self-perception and self-esteem also determines their academic attainment (Castellanos & Lopez, 2005). The Eurocentric curriculum often deems the White American culture as superior leaving Xicana/Latina students with the need to mask themselves to protect themselves against such racist and sexist institutional structures. Xicans/Latinas often find themselves negotiating identities, maintaining their ethnic identities while learning to adapt to the dominant culture. The young women’s racial ethnic identity development is foundational in their ability to navigate through oppressive school structures as they utilize differential movidas\textsuperscript{11}. These strategies resist microaggressions from institutional marginalization such as discrimination, racism, and classism.

The familia plays an integral role in the attainment of Xicana/Latina educational aspirations. Familismo may present a double-edged sword providing emotional stability for Xicana/Latinas struggling to meet the demands of a hegemonic school structure yet straining as they are expected to meet the family’s needs. The demands in meeting the needs of the family while simultaneously meeting their educational demands presents a

\textsuperscript{11}Moves or strategies.
complex relationship. Although the familia’s needs may often lead to stress, the existing literature demonstrated the strong and complex relationships supporting Xicanas/Latinas in achievement of their educational aspirations. In fact, the familial responsibilities bring Xicanas/Latinas closer to their familias. Such obligations serve as a strong support system in resisting institutionalized and systemic oppression (Delgado-Bernal, 2001). These “pedagogies of the family” teach Xicanas/Latinas about the validity in their experiences and honoring the positive aspects of their ethnic identities.

The last section examined the influence of gender role socialization and sexism within the Xican@ culture, specifically, of Mexican origin. It is a widely accepted and inaccurate fallacy to blame the Xican@ culture for students’ lagging educational attainment compared to other ethnic groups. The gender roles stemming from sexist ideals, marianismo and machismo, continue to play a role within Xican@/Latin@ culture to a certain degree. The origins of marianismo and machismo remain uncertain. Scholars provide the origins stem from the effects of European conquest to contemporary and evolving economic exploitation of Mexican families. However, considering the challenges for Xicana/Latina high school students in balancing their home duties with their academic duties, the existing literature suggested an increasing number of Xicanas/Latinas are pursuing higher education. Scholars provide an emerging theory in supporting the reasons for an increasing number of Xicanas/Latinas pursuing higher education. One of these theories is that of transformational resistance. In such a process, Xicanas/Latinas seek control over their lives and to an extent, a degree of power to resist
gender oppression. Many Xicanas/Latinas are utilizing higher education as a strategy in attaining power over their lives and resisting their subordination to men (Cammarota, 2004).

Overview of Following Chapter

The following chapter seeks to contribute to the existing literature and explore the family’s influences on Xicana/Latina educational aspirations by describing a study conducted at a Sacramento inner-city public high school. The author surveyed 50 Xicana/Latina students from a small learning community and then held individual discussions with five different students from those surveyed. The dialogues were centered on their development of their racial ethnic identity, family, and the gender roles and/or sexism. The purpose of the dialogues was to open a window into the ignored realities of young Xicana/Latina students. Thus, these students would gain awareness and validity in their experiences while members of the mainstream culture further understand their realities through storytelling and narratives. Xicana/Latina stories may be powerful tools to call attention to ignored historic events changing our ideologies and sharing a common humanity (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction and Overview

It is often generalized that Xican@s/Latin@s do not value their education when comparing their academic performance to other ethnic groups (Ginorio & Huston, 2000). Due to various marginalizing factors affecting Xicana/Latina academic performance, they engage in various forms of resistance and refuse to consciously follow the steps of a failed school system (Solórzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001). However, such behavior may be interpreted and blamed on a student’s individual failure or lack of motivation and family culture, including gender roles. The most accurate way to further investigate the ineffective educational practices is to speak directly to the students. For that reason, the researcher conducted an ethnographic study to capture student experiences based on their personal racial ethnic identities, family cultures, and gender roles.

Methodology

Ethnographic work provides the space for participants to share experiences of the social contexts that have shaped their lives (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). To further understand the challenges and factors influencing students, it is imperative to acknowledge their stories providing another critical reality of the Xicana/Latina experience (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Indeed, their realities are supported in the theoretical frameworks of Critical Race Theory and Latin@ Critical Theory contained in this research. The researcher examined current home factors influencing
Xicana/Latina educational aspirations drawing from the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) and exploring the role of public schools and the subjugation of people of color in the United States:

Ideological battles rage is the distribution of material benefits in society. This controversy shades off into the much-debated question of whether race or class is the dominant factor in the subjugation of people of color. Is racism a means by which whites secure material advantages as Derrick Bell proposes? Or is it a 'culture of poverty,' including broken families, crime intermittent employment, and a high educational dropout rate, what causes minorities to lag behind? (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 107)

The aforementioned theoretical frameworks provide students with the ability to name and validate their experiences and realities. As a result, students are able to name the forms of oppression (Freire, 1970) they are experiencing. “Although students of color are holders and creators of knowledge, they often feel as if their histories, experiences, cultures, and languages are devalued, misinterpreted, or omitted within formal educational settings” (Delgado-Bernal, 2002, p. 106). Students are often not provided a space to share their knowledge and experiences. Furthermore, they are constantly expected to conform to the hegemonic cultural values often contradicting their own values and beliefs. For instance, students may be taught to act a certain way in the home, but once in school or work, they are required to switch to the dominant culture’s cultural expectations.
To demonstrate how critical raced-gendered epistemologies recognize students of color as holders and creators of knowledge, I first discuss how CRT and LatCrit provide an appropriate lens for qualitative research in the field of education. I then look to how different epistemological perspectives view students of color. More specifically, I compare and contrast how a Eurocentric perspective and a specific raced-gendered perspective offer very different interpretations of the educational experiences of Chicana/Chicano students…a critical raced-gendered epistemology recognizes students of color as holders and creators of knowledge who have much to offer in transforming educational research and practice. Indeed, I argue that students of color represent what Castillo (1995) describes as holders of knowledge who can transform the world into a more just place. (Delgado-Bernal, 2002, pp. 107-108)

*Critical Ethnography*

A qualitative approach was employed in this research to provide ethnographic accounts from Xicana/Latina students. The main reason for this was for Xicanas/Latinas, as students of color, to realize their experiences are valid and real (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). As a researcher, this study was an attempt to provide “a form of social or cultural criticism” awareness that realities are often products of capitalism (Carspecken, 1996, pp. 139-140). Far too often, they are challenged within the mainstream, or dominant, White American culture implying deficit, potentially resulting in their own acceptance in society as natural. In these instances, whether individuals are conscious or not of privileged
positions throughout society, oppression is increasingly reproduced when individuals accept their “social status as natural” (Carspecken, 1996, pp. 139-140). To further examine such experiences and Xicana/Latina students’ abilities to resist such microaggressions, the space for dialogue will also provide a space in which to share individual student experiences. In doing so, they will be one step further in naming their realities and identifying oppressive circumstances, “the oppressed…Only as they discover themselves to be hosts of the oppressor can they contribute to the midwifery of their liberating pedagogy” (Freire, 1970, p. 48). Once becoming aware of binding situations, students will be able to work to transform those realities.

Through this qualitative study, the researcher conducted various interactive dialogues applying ethnographic methodologies to record student voices. Indeed, such information will further lead to an understanding of Xicana/Latina educational aspirations and challenges in an urban Sacramento public high school. It is through student voices that researchers may further understand the needs of students instead of exclusive structured quantitative findings. For this reason, the author decided to conduct an examination of Xicana/Latina high school students of similar cultural backgrounds who struggle to develop their cultural identities while simultaneously achieving educational aspirations. Until Xicana/Latina women continue to reach their academic potential, the cycle will continue to leave them behind in achieving higher education. This ethnographic examination included 50 Xicana/Latina student surveys and a focus group of five students for dialogue. The study was conducted at a Sacramento high school with
the majority of students being of Mexican descent. Many of the students were born in Mexico and had lived in the United States for some time. Others were born in the U.S. and had lived here their entire lives, only visiting their parents’ native lands sporadically. The majority of participants identified as Mexican, Mexican American, Latina, and/or Chicana/Xicana. For purposes of outlining unique experiences shared by young women of Mexican heritage but born in the United States or having lived in the country for over 10 years, the author uses the terms Xicana/Latina interchangeably. These students share distinctive experiences as they have been immersed and raised bi-culturally.

This chapter includes the setting as well as the criteria for selecting student participation. Furthermore, these young participants continue to reach a closer level of conscientization\textsuperscript{12}, becoming increasingly aware of political, economic, social, and cultural inequities in their lives. The author affirms the responsibility to “defend the rights of the community at all levels…We have a responsibility to change it [the injustices]” (Berta-Ávila, 2004, p. 73). Furthermore, the participant dialogues all showed strong beliefs in their efforts to further serve their communities and help bring positive change in advocating for their Raza to achieve their potential.

Description of the Setting

Libertad High School was constructed in 1969 and is part of a Sacramento school district. This school district is the 11\textsuperscript{th} largest in California, serving over 47,900 students. It is the district’s goal to prepare the student populations with the academic skills needed

\textsuperscript{12} Individual critical living involving the following: naming their realities, reflection and transformation (Freire, 1970).
for achievement, create lifelong learners, and “put children first” (Sacramento City Unified School District [SCUSD], 2012).

In an effort to promote student involvement and leadership skills, the school offers various leadership programs and other student organizations. The leadership courses were offered after school and funded through the school’s after-school program. However, many programs and courses not considered of high priority were eliminated due to budget constraints. Such programs are critical for supporting and guiding students of ethnically diverse backgrounds (Villalpando, 2004). In cutting these programs and courses, students of color remained the most affected. A few of the remaining courses offered after school were as follows: Hmong Leadership, New Age Latinas, Emerge (African American Male Leadership), and an African American female Leadership course. In addition, the school’s Associated Student Body group was recently elected and participants received elective credits as well. Other extracurricular clubs and organizations not school funded and advised voluntarily by certificated teachers were: Black Student Union (BSU), Do Something (DOS), Project Sunday, California Scholarship Federation (CSF), Visions Unlimited, Hmong History, Miktlantekuhtli Aztec Dance, Latin@sUnid@s, Polynesian Club, Pre-Med Club, Digital Media, Key Club, AVID, CAHSEE Tutoring, Brown Issues, Monsters Inc., New Age Latinas, and others.

Although the school does not offer an Advanced Placement program, it does offer the renowned International Baccalaureate Diploma Program, the Advanced Diploma, and IB Honors Certificates. Such programs are intended to meet the needs of advanced
students seeking to enter college as second-year sophomore students. Furthermore, Libertad offers an extended program for English Language Learners as part of the Multilingual department, which is committed to matriculating all ELLs into a college, university, or vocational program (SCUSD, 2012). Other programs offered were as follows: Peer Tutor Program; NJROTC centering on building personal pride, integrity, and responsibility; and Parent University. The school’s parent council had minimal parent involvement but the school’s Parent University program saw a considerable increase in parent participation mainly from those with Chican@/Latina@ backgrounds.

Small Learning Communities

In an effort to promote teacher-student relationships and a sense of community and belonging, the school created six small learning communities (SLC) or houses. These small learning communities provide students with an opportunity to build relationships with peers and their teachers. Students who reported a close relationship with their teachers and peers were increasingly motivated as their teachers closely monitored their progress (Duncan-Andrade, 2005). Students are required to remain in their SLC for the course of their four years at the school with the same population of peers and teachers. However, depending on career interest and scheduling conflicts, students are able to switch houses under special circumstances. Each small learning community offers career concentrations in areas such as Medical and Health Sciences, Law and Social Justice, International and Environmental Studies, Information Technology, Arts and Communication, and Construction and Design. In most instances,
students are able to choose their SLC of choice, but conflicts in scheduling result in their placement to balance the student populations in all houses. In such cases, these placements do not serve students’ interests. Every small learning community offers courses for college preparatory and career pathways. Furthermore, every small learning community offers student-centered events promoting student involvement and “leadership opportunities.”

Faculty Population

The diversity of Libertad High School’s faculty population does not reflect the student population. The faculty breakdown based on ethnicity included seven Asian females, 10 Latinas, four African American or Black women, and 31 White women. On the other hand, male faculty included two American Indians or Alaska Natives, nine Asians, three Latinos, four African Americans or Blacks, and 49 White males. Overall, the faculty consisted of 43.7% female and 56% Male. Ethnically, faculty consisted of 1.7% American Indian or Alaska Native, 13.4% Asian, 10.9% Latin@, 6.7% African American and or Black, and 67.2% White. Libertad’s administrative breakdown by ethnicity was as follows: 10% Asian, 90% White, consisting of one Asian female and three White male administrators. The breakdown of administrators based on gender included one female and three males.

Student Population

The student population at Libertad school is highly segregated around students of color. The ethnic breakdown of female students consisted of 0.4% (four) American
Indians or Alaska Natives, 42.1% (418) Asians, 3.4 % (34) Pacific Islanders, 0.5% (five) Filipinos, 31.0% (308) Latinas, 19.1% (190) African Americans, 3.1% (31) Whites, and 0.4% four with no response. On the other hand, the male ethnic breakdown consisted of 0.9% (10) American Indians or Alaska Natives, 42.8% (458) Asians, 2.8% (30) Pacific Islanders, 1.1% (12) Filipinos, 26.2% (280) Latinos, 21.3% (228) African Americans or Blacks, 4.8% (51) Whites, and one of multiple or no response. Lastly, the socioeconomic status of the student population at LBHS based on free and reduced lunch was 100% enrollment.

Data Collection

All meetings conducted for surveys and dialogues were held at Libertad High School. Prearranged times and meetings for the surveys and dialogues were set for a half hour and an hour and a half, respectively. The data for this study came from two sources. The first was a survey of 50 9th-12th-grade high school Xicanas/Latinas, and the second source consisted of individual dialogues conducted at the same school in various classrooms including the researcher’s classroom. The researcher’s classroom was familiar and a safe environment for participants to share their stories and experiences.

The criteria for participants surveyed was that they be born in the United States and have at least one parent of familial origins from Mexico. Some of the survey questions were generated following Gándara’s (1995) model in conducting qualitative research. The survey questionnaire is found in the Appendix A. The dialogue questions
were taken from the survey questions located in Appendix B. These were used as

guiding questions for each participant.

The researcher provided questions to guide the research at every dialogue meeting.

The discussions were conducted as a way to dialogue with participants such that

information was simultaneously shared and reflected. The dialogues asked participants to

respond to questions about themselves and their family members. Considering LatCrit

theoretical framework, the researcher provided a space for ethnographic testimonies by

guiding the questions and allowing all participants to share their stories, experiences,

struggles, and achievements. In the process, participants and the researcher were able to

capture commonalities based on shared experiences and reflect on ways to transform their

hardships to continue their educational aspirations.

Entry into the Community

As a fifth-year teacher at Libertad High School, the researcher has had a

continuous relationship with the majority of Xicana/Latina students who were members

of the Medical and Health Sciences Small Learning Community. Furthermore, the

researcher has served as advisor to the following student organizations: Latin@sUnid@s,

Do Something, New Age Latinas, and MiktlantekuhtliDanza Azteca. As their teacher,

advisor, and mentor, the researcher had the opportunity to work closely with these

students and further understand the challenges influencing their educational aspirations

by listening to their stories and personal experiences.
The Participants

Invitation to Participate

The criteria for selecting the participants was based on students’ racial ethnic background, whether they were born in the United States, if they were from two-parent and single-parent households, various family dynamics (e.g., biological parents, step-parents, siblings, and gender), varying grade point averages, differing socioeconomic status, and those identifying familial origins from Mexico. In addition, participants were to be enrolled at Libertad High School and in grades 9-12. The researcher taught three 11th-grade classes and two ninth-grade classes. During the first five minutes of each class, the researcher personally asked the Xicana/Latina students for their interest in completing the survey. Upon agreement, an assent form was provided describing the research study as they were all under the age of 18. They agreed to attend a lunch meeting later that week to complete the survey and were asked to return the signed forms on the day the survey was administered. The remaining participants surveyed were approached during the lunch hour in the researcher’s classroom. Many Xicana/Latina students regularly ate their lunches in the researcher’s classroom so they were called in a group and provided with the assent form and consent form for those who were 18 years old (see Appendix C).

Upon completion of all 50 surveys, five 9-12th-grade Xicana/Latina students had been pre-selected by the researcher. Since the majority of students and the researcher had already been in the same small learning community, the researcher was familiar with the
five Xicana/Latina students’ backgrounds. The participants were able and willing to participate as they met the criteria mentioned above. The five participants were individually approached by the researcher and asked for their interest in participating in individual dialogues.

*Description of the Participants Surveyed*

The following are brief life histories of the five Xicana/Latina high school participants in this research enrolled at Libertad High School at the time of the study. They were all born in the United States and had at least one parent with origins from Mexico. Their primary language was Spanish and they spoke English as their second language. Most importantly, these five histories provide only a brief insight into the lives of the students as they held unique experiences with regard to gender, race, and class. Table 1 lists the participant demographics.
Table 1

Demographics of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Identity</th>
<th>GPA</th>
<th>Academic Aspirations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Magdalena</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Mexican American</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>High School Diploma, Probation Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neftali</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100% Mexicana</td>
<td>2.0-2.7</td>
<td>Whittier College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuca</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>2.7-3.0</td>
<td>UCLA, Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dianne</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Mexican/Mexican American</td>
<td>3.7-3.83</td>
<td>CSU, San Jose, Medicine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mia Estrella</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Latina or Chicana</td>
<td>3.1-3.83</td>
<td>CSU, Northridge, Medicine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following describes the background of each participant including their personal traits and characteristics, places of birth, current home situations, and relationships with their families. Also included are their current grade levels, personal interests, hobbies, goals, and aspirations.

Description of the Participants (Dialogues)

*Estudiante/Student 1 – Magdalena (9th).* Magdalena is a bright, charismatic and very strong-willed young woman. At first sight, she may appear tired or even depressed but when asked how she is doing, she usually responds, “I’ve just got lots going on.” She was born in Sacramento and has lived here all her life. She lives with her mother, three sisters, and stepfather. Her biological father lives in Los Angeles with his family. In her free time, she mentioned she “likes to kick it” and “hang out with friends.” She was
constantly expressing her frustration and level of stress regarding her current *novio* whom she recently started dating without her mother’s approval. She expected to let her mom know soon but was afraid, as her mother has told her she will only have a Quinceañera celebration if she does not have a boyfriend. Since she and her sister are the elder siblings, she also commented about the daily chores and cleaning she did in the home her parents rent. She and her sister divided the cleaning while their mother did most of the cooking. Magdalena described her relationship with her mother as “so-so” but does not have a positive relationship with her stepfather and, in the home, avoided being in the same room when he was around. Both her biological parents attended high school in Los Angeles. Her mother graduated high school, and her father did not graduate. Currently, Magdalena is in the ninth grade and Libertad High School is the sixth school she has attended in her lifetime. Magdalena aspires to attend college and become a probation officer.

*Estudiante 2 – Neftali (10th).* Neftali is rather reserved and may appear shy at first. She is very soft spoken and prefers to keep to herself unless spoken to. In the conversations, she often referred to her family, as she is very family-oriented. Neftali is the elder in the family and maintained a high level of responsibility in caring for all younger siblings. In fact, she added the diminutive “*ito*” (little one) at the end of all her younger siblings’ names when asked about them, which demonstrated her perception of them. Neftali was born in Los Angeles but has lived in Sacramento for over 10 years. She expressed a sense of sadness in describing her neighborhood as she lives in a two-
bedroom apartment sharing a room with her siblings. She also mentioned she did not feel safe going outside to play, as it is a common place for violent crime. However, she maintained a very close relationship with both biological parents who she said support her efforts in school. Neftali’s transition to high school her 9th-grade year was most difficult, but since then, she has been able to adjust to the course load. Neftali is now a sophomore at Libertad High School. She maintained high aspirations to continue to college/university but remains uncertain about a career.

Estudiante 3 – Cuca (11th). Cuca’s bright smile may be seen from afar, as I have noticed she is one of the most optimistic. During class, however, she seems withdrawn and does not engage in class discussions unless called on. She has a small group of close friends she is with every lunch hour at school. Cuca was born and raised in Sacramento. Cuca lives with both parents, an older brother, and four younger siblings. She described the irony behind her father’s ability to help her with academic assignments when he only completed the sixth grade in Mexico, while her mother graduated from high school in Los Angeles. For years now, she has been helping her parents’ family business and has worked every day including weekends. Her parents sold blankets at local “pulgas” (flea markets) as she called them, but her father drove to Los Angeles weekly to bring merchandise Cuca must help unload and re-load into different vans during the week. Although Cuca maintains high academic aspirations, she often expressed her frustration in balancing her home duties with her school duties. In addition to helping with the family business, Cuca is also expected to care for her younger siblings as well as prepare
their meals during the week when her parents are not home. Academically, she is a great student but felt she was not performing to the best of her ability because she did not have time to complete most homework assignments. She was also unable to participate in school events including clubs, organizations, and sports due to her home duties and especially because she was not allowed to stay out late for safety concerns. She would consider attending after-school tutoring but again, she was unable to commit to staying after school. Cuca aspires to attend college and then law school to follow a career as a lawyer defending immigrant rights.

*Estudiante 4 – Dianne (12th).* Although she may be perceived by some as reserved and shy, she is quite the opposite. Dianne is very outspoken and will generally share her ideas, comments, or thoughts. She mentioned most of her confidence comes from a solid identification as a Xicana/Mexicana who embraces her cultural roots and remains independent and unique in her sense of style. Dianne is a senior at Libertad High School. She is actively involved in extracurricular activities. She was one of the first students in her senior class to volunteer to present her research from a previous classroom assignment on gang intervention to younger students at the school district’s annual Xican@/Latin@ conference at a local university. In fact, she is actively involved in a variety of activities such as community service, peer mentoring and tutoring, volunteering for fundraising events, and leading and organizing other school-related events. Dianne lives with both biological parents, a sibling, and her nephew. Her parents completed the second grade in their hometowns in Mexico. She described her
relationship with her parents as “good” since they trusted her and allowed her to “hang out with friends.” Her response is, “they already know I won’t do nothing,” and due to a strong mutual relationship, she was able to stay after school for most activities she desired. Dianne’s current academic goals were to transfer to a four-year university and earn her Bachelor’s. Her aspiration is to become a medical provider.

*Estudiante 5 – Mia Estrella (12th).* Mia Estrella’s confidence, determination, and independence is highly recognized, as she has always been a strong leader in her small learning community. She is highly articulate and admired by her peers for her intellectual abilities and critical awareness. In addition, she is highly influential as her unique personality sets her apart from others. She often described herself as strong-willed and “won’t let anyone bring her down.” At an early age, she was influenced by gangs as her extended family was highly involved in gang violence. Last year, she lead a student presentation for younger students at the school district’s annual Xican@/Latin@ conference on gang violence and gang intervention. She was born in the San Fernando Valley and has been living in Sacramento for over eight years. Mia Estrella is a senior and is finishing her last year at Libertad High School. She lives with both biological parents, a twin sister, and a younger brother. She described being able to relate most to her father who completed a university education in Mexico. Her mother completed up to the sixth grade in Mexico. She is a few minutes older than her twin sister but has an older brother who lives on his own and has been attending City College off and on. She
remained adamant about attending California State University, Northridge and eventually pursuing a career in medicine.

Review of Research Questions

In an effort to present an examination of racial ethnic identity, family, and gender role influences on Xicana/Latina educational aspirations, the following research questions were posed:

4. Do Xicana/Latina high school students’ racial ethnic identities influence their educational aspirations?

5. To what extent can the family’s home culture strongly mediate Xicana/Latina educational aspirations in grades 9-12?

6. Does gender socialization influence Xicana/Latina educational aspirations in grades 9-12?

Explanation of Survey Data

In obtaining the survey data, the researcher utilized the methodology of critical ethnography modeled after Gandara’s (1995) study on the successes of Xicana/Latina professionals working in higher education. This study consisted of a two-data source design of 50 participants surveyed and individual dialogues with five participants. The study was conducted over a three-week period in October following approval of the university’s Human Subjects department. The purpose of the survey data source was to collect information regarding the family, gender roles, and racial ethnic identity with a broad range of Xicana/Latina participants. The purpose of the dialogues was to engage in
critical ethnography with a group of five participants and explore the intersectionalities of race, gender, and identity. The dialogues followed Critical Race and Latin@ Critical frameworks providing a space for Xicana/Latina counter stories in their sharing of their personal life experiences and realities.

Research Design

Surveys

The surveys were administered during a lunch meeting in the researcher’s classroom. Only students with assent forms were allowed access. Those who did not have their signed survey were asked to return the following day at lunch to complete the survey. The researcher remained in the classroom with the subjects and clarified any/all questions pertaining to the survey before the survey was administered. All participants were instructed to not write their names on the survey as they to be used as a resource to gather confidential data. Participants completed the survey within 10 minutes or less. Upon participants’ completion, the researcher checked each one to verify they were completed. No one other than the participants was allowed entry in the classroom during the time participants were surveyed.

Dialogues

Individual dialogues were conducted in different locations throughout the school campus with the majority occurring in the researcher’s classroom during lunch or after school hours. The dialogues were conducted within a two-week period at Libertad High School. Two dialog meetings were held over a weekend and the other three during lunch
or after-school hours when participants were able to attend. All participants were accustomed to, comfortable, and described the researcher’s classroom as friendly. The researcher took a recorder and a cell phone as backup to record, a journal, copies of the survey, and assent forms for reference. The seating arrangement was set with two desks facing one another and the audio recorder was placed in the middle. All dialogues were recorded and transcribed.

The researcher dialogued with each participant on an individual basis for an hour and a half. Upon arrival and seating of participants, the researcher observed some participants’ body language, facial expressions, and gestures displaying a sense of nervousness and anxiety. For instance, participants would be suddenly fidgeting with their hands and kicking their desk unconsciously. To ease the anxiety and tension, all meetings began with an informal check-in with all participants, which worked well and brought down the anxiety. Participants were reminded of their right to pass on any question they felt uncomfortable answering. They were also informed when the recording began. All dialogues were audio recorded; each one with all five participants lasted about an hour and a half. After each dialogue, the researcher and participants engaged in brief conversations about questions they had including participant reflection. Upon each participant’s exit from the researcher’s classroom, the researcher kept a journal and entered methodological and analytical reflections.

A few days following the scheduled dialogue sessions, participants received a transcript of the dialogue for their review. The researcher asked participants to verify all
information was correct. Participants agreed and did make some corrections as needed. They also shared their reflections and commented on some of their feelings following the dialogue.

A second dialogue was conducted for each individual participant to follow up on the previous discussion. The second dialogues were approximately 10-15 minutes long. The researcher began with a brief check-in with all participants. Participants were informed of the purpose of the second dialogue; to clarify any questions they had regarding the initial dialogue and to provide further clarification for the researcher. Both the researcher and participants had a copy of the reviewed transcripts. Once again, participants were asked to verify all information from the transcripts was correct.

Data Analysis

Upon analysis of surveys and individual dialogues, the researcher looked for ways in which the familia, gender roles, and racial ethnic identity influenced Xicana/Latina educational aspirations. The researcher reviewed the survey results by entering all responses in a spreadsheet and reporting the mode, the most common participant responses. Due to incomplete surveys returned to the researcher, the total completed surveys collected were 42. After reviewing the survey results and transcriptions of all dialogues including notes and the researcher’s journal entries, the researcher looked for emergent themes.

All surveys, survey results, transcribed dialogues, and notes were read once to refresh the topics without consideration of any other purpose. The researcher conducted
a second read highlighting and annotating each individual transcribed dialogue. The researcher wrote emergent themes in the margins of the transcribed dialogue. This was done in an effort to begin to bridge all emerging themes with all five participants’ transcriptions. After the researcher reviewed and wrote possible themes, the researcher shared the information with each participant individually allowing participants to provide feedback.

The second dialogue followed a similar procedure in reading and searching for emergent themes. However, the purpose of the second dialogue was to continue collecting information to verify the first emerging themes were accurate. This procedure assisted the researcher in developing a list of themes, which are further discussed in the following chapter.

Limitations

Although it would be a generalization to imply that Xicanas/Latinas across the city, state, or country share similar experiences, the stories from the five participants and data collected from 50 Xicana/Latina students at Libertad High School are profound. Considering their testimonies in finding common ground between institutional challenges in school and the influences of their racial ethnic identities, family culture, and gender roles, it should be of high priority to continue making efforts to eliminate barriers. Such barriers as deficit thinking and Eurocentric curriculum continue to lash out racial microaggressions that may have devastating effects on Xicana/Latina high school students. Their personal racial ethnic identities should be considered for educators
developing curriculum as students are further able to relate and respond to their learning. Furthermore, instead of blaming the Xican@/Latin@ families for students’ academic levels, educators should consider the ways in which the familia provides a solid foundation and continuous support for their hijas/daughters. Also widespread is gender socialization, which determines the roles for Xicana/Latina students. However, in an effort to further promote the advancement and achievement of Xicana/Latina educational aspirations, it is crucial to also consider their responsibilities in the home and how those expectations transcribe in school. Xicana/Latina students have high hopes and academic aspirations but education must be made accessible (Figueroa & Berta-Ávila, 2011).

Protection of Human Subjects

The researcher completed and submitted an application for the protection of Human Subjects to the California State University, Sacramento. All participants signed a consent letter approving their participation. Furthermore, the consent letter informed participants of their privacy and choice to withdraw as they felt necessary (see Appendix C). All participants and their high school were assigned pseudonyms.

Organization of Chapters 4 and 5

This study consisted of dialogues and surveys as a means to understand the influences of high school Xicana/Latina racial ethnic identity development and their ability to navigate between their home and school structures. This study also examined Xicana/Latina influences of the familia and the ways in which their family structure served as a foundation for their academic perseverance. Lastly, this study examined
Xicana/Latina gender roles and the ways in which gender role socialization influenced their academic aspirations.

Selected survey questions approved by the Human Subjects department at Sacramento State were used as guiding questions for each individual dialogue. In examining the emerging themes from each dialogue, Chapter 4 includes the emergent themes and sub themes. Chapter 5 details the findings as well as summarizes and concludes the study.
Chapter 4

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

The main purpose of the data analysis was to examine the ways in which Xicana/Latina racial ethnic identities, family, gender roles, and high school experiences influenced participants’ academic aspirations. In doing so, this research will provide further insight into the ways in which educators and public institutions may provide access to all students rather than a continued practice of neglect, stereotyping and discriminating against a culture. The basis of the content of this chapter is formed through thematic interpretation of data from the collection of a survey instrument and five extensive individual participant dialogues. After conducting the individual dialogues with the five Xicana/Latina participants, three main themes and subthemes emerged from the data collected. The three emerging themes were ethnic identities, parental support, and school experiences. Theoretical research through the lens of Critical Race Theory and Latin@ Critical Theory provided additional insights into the academic aspirations of Xicana/Latina students from Libertad High School.

Contrary to popular beliefs that Xican@/Latin@ parents hold back their daughters’ academic aspirations, the participants in this research provided the opposite information, being strongly supported by their family in their academic endeavors. Participants’ responses present a slightly different lens from their own distinctive experiences from which to examine how their racial ethnic identities, family, gender
roles, and school experiences influence their academic aspirations. Specific research questions used to guide the inquiry of this examination are as follows:

1. Does Xicana/Latina high school students’ racial ethnic identity influence their educational aspirations?

2. To what extent can the family’s home culture strongly mediate Xicana/Latina educational aspirations in grades 9-12?

3. Does gender socialization influence Xicana/Latina educational aspirations in grades 9-12?

For clarity and transparency, this chapter is organized into three sections following each emerging theme. The first theme entitled Ethnic Identities describes participants’ development of their personal identities, as they all emphasized the importance of maintaining their ethnic roots and not becoming completely assimilated into the dominant school culture. Xicana/Latina students’ individual racial ethnic identity strongly influences their motivation, as it is their personal drive and *ganas*\(^{13}\) that they must come to terms with in order to be able to create their own academic aspirations.

Within the home, it is the family that creates a strong support system, which leads to the second theme. All participants provided a sense of having parental support in achieving their academic aspirations. However, they did express a level of frustration with their parents’ lack of understanding of academic expectations. The distinction of their mothers’ and fathers’ support and different forms of support is also provided. All

\(^{13}\) Strong-willed
participants considered both parents supportive but referred to one being increasingly influential. Once leaving the home to attend school, the third and final section entails Xicana/Latina school experiences in gender socialization and the challenges they endure at school. This section details the personal accounts of the participants noting the effects of marginalization and cultural deficit theories on Xicana/Latina educational aspirations and academic attainment.

Quantitative Findings

In addition to the results examined after the focus group dialogues, survey responses were examined to determine general trends among 50 Xicana/Latina high school students at Libertad High School. A mixed method was used in data collection and analysis to gain a broader perspective on Xicana/Latina students’ experiences. Fifty surveys were administered to Xicana/Latina students in grades 9-12. Forty-six surveys were collected since four students asked their surveys not be counted. From the surveyed participants, 26 self-reported their grade point average while 19 did not report it. Overall, the survey results were consistent with individual participant dialogues (see Table 2).
Table 2
*Participant Language, Identity, and GPA*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>First Language</th>
<th>Identity</th>
<th>G.P.A.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1= 9th</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5 Spanish 1 English</td>
<td>1 Chicana/Xicana 2 Mexicana 0 Mexican American 2 Latina 1 Hispanic</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2= 10th</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6 Spanish 2 English</td>
<td>0 Chicana/Xicana 7 Mexicana 2 Mexican American 0 Latina 0 Hispanic</td>
<td>3.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3= 11th</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18 Spanish 1 English</td>
<td>1 Chicana/Xicana 6 Mexicana 5 Mexican American 3 Latina 1 Hispanic *1 Chicana/Xicana &amp; Mexican American</td>
<td>3.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4= 12th</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8 Spanish 1 English</td>
<td>1 Chicana/Xicana 7 Mexicana 1 Mexican American 0 Latina 0 Hispanic</td>
<td>3.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=Mean</td>
<td>N=43</td>
<td>N=37 Spanish 5 English 3 No Response</td>
<td>N=3 Chicana/Xicana 22 Mexicana 8 Mexican American 5 Latina 2 Hispanic 5 No Response</td>
<td>N=3.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=Mean</td>
<td>N=43</td>
<td>N=37 Spanish 5 English 3 No Response</td>
<td>N=3 Chicana/Xicana 22 Mexicana 8 Mexican American 5 Latina 2 Hispanic 5 No Response</td>
<td>N=3.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A correlational analysis was conducted of the survey data. Survey responses regarding Xicana/Latina racial ethnic identities revealed the majority of participants (m=1.68) do not experience feeling racially inferior to White American mainstream
culture. However, when asked how many of them had experienced racism and/or
discrimination in their lives, a significant number indicated they did (m=2.05).
Xicana/Latina student experiences at Libertad High School are exclusive, as the White
American student population is 3.1%, significantly low compared to the total student
population. However, it is possible survey participants experience racism and/or
discrimination around their communities. Participants do not feel their experiences of
race and discrimination adversely affect their academic performance (m=1.79). When
asked how much education they planned to earn, the majority of participants revealed
their aspirations to obtain a university degree (m=5.09).

Following Spearman’s rho correlation coefficient, several variables were
measured to assess the relationship between them. Survey responses indicated the
majority of Xicana/Latina high school students at Libertad High School believe both their
mothers and fathers strongly value their education. For example, more than 90% of
respondents reported both their mother’s and father’s value for their education
(r=.523**)\(^{14}\). Respondents also reported both parents motivate them to do well in school.
Students reported their mothers contributed to their academic motivation at (r=.414**)
while their fathers contributed to their academic motivation at (r=.616**). However,
participants reported mixed feelings over parental level of understanding of their school
experiences and especially regarding their father’s value for education but lack of
understanding (r=.357*). In fact, participants reported feeling they put their family’s

\(^{14}\) Note: Correlation coefficients marked with one asterisk are all statistically significant at the \(p < .05\) level.
Correlation coefficients marked with two asterisks are all statistically significant at the \(p < .01\) level.
needs before their academic needs at \(r=.355^*\). Furthermore, participants reported they often feel their family does not understand their educational needs, which results in them prioritizing the home needs before their academic needs \(r=.355^*\).

Other participants reported feeling their home duties interfered with their participation in extracurricular activities \(r=.452^{**}\). The findings suggest a correlation between identity reported and their mother’s attitude toward participants following expected gender roles \(r=.332^*\). There was a correlation between participants’ fathers’ value for their education and their fathers’ value for expectations of participants being good daughters \(r=.398^*\). There was a significant correlation between participants’ reports on putting their families’ needs before their educational needs and feeling their home duties interfere with their school work and, as a result, earning lower grades than what they are capable of \(r=.407^{**}\). Furthermore, there was a strong correlation between participants feeling their home duties interfered with their ability to participate in extracurricular activities and earning higher grades than what they were earning \(r=.463^{**}\). Other correlations were as follows: GPA and education planned on earning \(r=.430^*\), their mothers’ value on their education and not feeling racist experiences have damaged their academic performance \(r=-.454^{**}\), their mothers’ contribution to their motivation and the frequency of their experiences with racism \(r=.330^*\) and feeling they prioritize their family’s needs before their academic needs with the frequency of their experiences with racism \(r=.336^*\). Several questions regarding their fathers were not answered, as those students did not have contact with their fathers.
Qualitative Findings

I. Ethnic Identities: Quien Soy Yo?/Who Am I?

The focus group dialogue data begins with this research examining the influences on Xicana/Latina personal identities, which consist of the intersectionalities of being a mujer/woman, being Xicana or Latina, and being Raza\textsuperscript{15}. Their self-perceptions and self-esteem strongly influence their academic performance (Campbell, 2003; Gloria et al., 2005). Participants acknowledged they were bicultural as they felt a part of two “worlds” but more deeply connected to their Mexican heritage. This “Mestiza Consciousness” (Delgado-Bernal, 2001) allows participants to embrace their cultural values and wear different masks in the home, in the classroom, and with friends. The idea of biculturalism allows one to become a part of two worlds and, in doing so, they are able to mediate between the marginalization they experience in school and maintain a sense of ethnic identity by not feeling the need to give up who they are in order to be academically successful (Contreras, 2011). Coincidentally, all participants in the dialogues were born in the United States yet all used the terms Xicana and/or Mexicana as part of their identities. Their upbringing rooted in cultural traditions, pride and awareness resulted in their strong connection to their ethnic roots.

In recalling her ethnic identity, Neftali’s tone in stating how she identified demonstrated she was confident and aware of her background as she stated, “Cien por

\textsuperscript{15}Term represents people with family origins from México, Caribbean, Central and South America. (Berta-Avila, 2004, Vasconcelos, 1979).
In fact, throughout our dialogue, she made various references to her ethnicity, language, customs, and traditions. Parallel to Neftali’s response, Cuca did not take time to answer quickly stating she identified as, “Mexican.” Dianne, also emphasized the pride she felt in telling people she was from Zacatecas, México. She reiterated that she loved everything about being Mexican given the fact she was born in the United States:

you know how I’m not from México, I’m from here? …I’m really proud of being from Zacatecas…I like to say I’m from Zacatecas [because] I say I’m from South Sac., I was born here, but my family’s from Zacatecas... I love going there. I’m proud of it, like where I’m from…I always consider myself Mexican.

Dianne’s self-perception of her identity and her pride and love for her familial roots appeared to be a positive one as she regarded those who did assimilate as being ashamed of their culture. She was conscious about retaining one’s ethnic roots while becoming a part of two cultures. She identified as being bicultural; she visited her parents’ homeland as often as possible maintaining her Mexican values, yet acknowledging her American values, being born in South Sacramento. Mia Estrella’s responses were similar, “It does not really matter but I really don’t like the term ‘Hispanic’ cuz it’s always identified as, um, like it comes from Spain and we’re not from Spain.” Mia Estrella’s ability to reject terms she deems as oppressive or disconnected reveals her effort to retain her ethnic roots. Moreover, the four participants consciously

16One hundred percent Mexicana.
surrounded themselves with other Xicana/Latina peers with whom they connected, as they felt safe exposing their true *cara*\textsuperscript{17}. For instance, they were not ashamed or even hesitated to expose their realities such as what they ate, how they ate, how they spoke, how they celebrated. Some brought their families to school and cheerfully introduced family members to their teachers and friends.

*Language as identity marker.* “That’s just the way I talk” (Magdalena). Participants acknowledged feeling more like themselves in their home than at school where they are institutionalized and required to speak Standard English as well as where they felt controlled in terms of what is considered acceptable writing and other assignments. When coerced into speaking, reading, or writing Standard English and being told to speak “proper English,” Magdalena would shut down as a form of resisting hegemonic oppression. She did not accept being told by any teachers that her native language was restricted or unacceptable in the classroom:

they make me feel stupid. Like if I don’t know how to talk. But that’s how I talk…I was like, “Oh, um, I’m gonna go to the bathroom.” [sic] I say it like that and they’re like, “You mean you’re going to go to the bathroom?” [sic] Or they say it properly [and I just] repeat it how I say it and they just give me the pass and I just leave.

Magdalena was often conscious of the school climate pushing for Standard English. She took offense to her teachers correcting her language and insisted on

\textsuperscript{17} Face
maintaining her identity by continuing to speak the way she normally would. She seemed to understand she would need to negotiate at some point and learn to code switch, but had not figured out when to do that. Similar to Magdalena, the other participants described feeling limited in their way of communicating in the classroom both written and oral. As a result, some participants resisted by not completing assignments and not interacting with some teachers they deemed as oppressive.

Neftali was the only participant who preferred to speak Spanish during the dialogue and also predominantly spoke Spanish in the home. Furthermore, there were a few occasions within the conversation she asked for clarification as she struggled to comprehend a few words in English and required translation in Spanish, “At school, they have to speak a certain way, using ‘Standard English or proper, how you say it?’” Or they have to speak very softly in class and often they do not speak at all as they feel uncomfortable with the risk of constantly being corrected and reminded to speak Standard English. Students expressed they were unable to “be themselves” since they were required to abide all school rules including restricting their language and feeling the need to speak English only.

Participants retained their individual identities and selected their peers, as they felt they could most relate to them. For example, Dianne and Mia Estrella were often together during their lunch hour in the researcher’s classroom with a few other Xicana/Latina students. Together, they carried continuous conversations mainly mixing Spanish and English. Their distinctive language was evidence of their connection and
even exclusiveness from other students joining their conversations, as they could not speak the same way to just any student in the classroom. Their language variations demonstrated their own sense of identifying with other students who spoke the same way. In their efforts to find other students and social capital, these students remained actively involved in extracurricular activities. In advocating cultural and historic awareness to mediate Xicana@/Latina@ student ethnic identity, extracurricular activities such as Latin@s Unid@s, New Age Latinas, and Brown Issues critically provide strategic opportunities for identity development, thus leading to increased \textit{ganas}.

\textit{Extracurricular activities to embrace ethnic pride}: “You learn how to talk to people, basically you find yourself.” –Mia Estrella. Neftali, Dianne, and Mia Estrella were the most involved in extracurricular activities, such as Do Something, Brown Issues, New Age Latinas, Burbank Urban Garden, Titan Cruisers, and Latin@sUnid@s. In an effort to increase student participation, motivate students to pursue academic aspirations, and promote leadership skills, these clubs and organizations met during the lunch hour but most events were held after school hours. These clubs and organizations provide a safe space for students to reconcile their bicultural worlds and become further inspired and motivated to pursue their academic aspirations.

Two months into the school year, the youngest of all participants Magdalena was struggling to transition to the high school environment and culture. The lack of social capital, female role models pursuing higher education in their lives, and her friendships with peers involved in gang violence affected her the most. Coincidentally, she
maintained the lowest grade point average and almost failed all her classes. When asked if she was involved in any extracurricular activities, she replied to her parents,

They tell me, “Oh, you want to help at school and this and that” I have to get everything done early and then go. But sometimes, I don’t even go cuz it’s late and my mom doesn’t want us to be out late. And then about participation at school, not really. But I still have that thing in my head that I have to go home and do my, the whole thing I have to do at home.

Magdalena’s situation reflects the realities of many other Xicana/Latina students whose parents worry about their safety when staying after school. For this reason, Magdalena did not see it meaningful to become involved in school activities and organizations. She felt overwhelmed with the courses and expectations and utilized her free lunch time to connect with her peers. The researcher encouraged Magdalena to attend club and organization meetings during lunch to build new relationships with other peers.

Age was a determining factor in participation in extracurricular activities, as the most actively involved were Mia Estrella and Dianne, both seniors. The other three participants were unable to stay after school and instead had limited roles in their involvement in extracurricular activities offered during lunch. When asked if they believed all clubs and organizations at Libertad High School were the same to them, Mia Estrella replied,
No. Not really. It's very different because in Do Something all we're doing is to get a better environment and how to learn to cook healthier or stuff like that. And Latinos Unidos and Brown Issues is more about our race. We learn different things, organize different events...we learn about our culture and issues affecting our community like drugs and gangs...when you're growing up you really don't know who you are. And when you join clubs and other organizations you find who you are by doing projects, workshops and other things...I probably wouldn't be doing anything if I wasn't in a club or other organizations...I would just focus on just passing my classes which wouldn't be right because I wouldn't really learn anything and since I did join clubs, I see myself differently. I do a lot of things around school and if it wasn't for that, I probably wouldn't see myself who I am right now.

Mia Estrella’s remarks were invaluable and necessary to continue motivating and providing the space for student empowerment. Mia Estrella is able to stay after school and attend meetings during lunch but many students are unable to stay after school, and therefore, do not have access to the social or cultural capital available through extracurricular activities. As Mia Estrella explained, clubs and organizations provided the space evidently not provided in their required classes.

Dianne also described her involvement in Brown Issues, and the result of having a better understanding of issues having a direct influence on her, “They try to help you understand what is out there in the world so you’re not surprised. They broaden your
horizons and show you that there are so many other paths you can take to have a successful life.” She felt comfortable to “speak her mind” which allowed her to express her thoughts and feelings which she was unable to do in other classes. She felt her involvement in Brown Issues contributed to her academic growth. Dianne particularly enjoyed the opportunity to openly discuss issues directly affecting her developing a sense of autonomy as she was able to begin to define her own goals. In becoming aware of their self-perceptions of their identities, as well as their self-esteem, participants also described a sense of independence and autonomy in setting their own goals.

*Independence and autonomy.* Throughout the dialogues, the researcher noted several of the participants revealed a sense of autonomy and independence in their pursuit of academic aspirations and future career goals. For example, Magdalena explicitly stated her idea of independence in making her own decisions,

They don’t—like my mom she don’t really help me cuz like she’s always out and she don’t really don’t have time and then, I don’t really get no help. Like, I do what I do by myself. I don’t have no one’s help but mine [sic]. So… that’s—that’s it. And then…it’s hard…sometimes I need help on what I’m doing and then I need stuff to get my homework and projects I need and nobody’s there to do it. So sometimes, I just-- I just don’t even do it. And I tell my mom, “Oh can you take me to go buy my stuff.” Or something but she says that she can’t cuz she’s tired cuz she always comes from work like tired and hecka late and everything.
Magdalena’s mother’s busy schedule and stressful job required her to be at work more leaving more responsibilities for Magdalena around the home.

She expects—she tells me you need to do good in school [sic]. But then, she wants me todo the house. I don’t see how I’m gonna do good in school, if I’m still doing my stuff at home [sic].

Latin@ Critical theorists highlight the unique experiences of Xicana/Latina students acknowledging the intersectionalities of race, class, gender, and others. As in Magdalena’s situation, her mother’s inability to spend more time with Magdalena and her siblings due to the financial distress leads to Magdalena’s emotional instability and affects her adversely in school. In addition, Magdalena seemed to not have access to cultural and social capital, not having the social networks or the resources such as familiarity with terms and educational language in the home that would provide the support for her academic needs. Magdalena was aware of her situation and felt isolated but did make an effort to reach out to the researcher regularly.

The following two participants embraced their individualism and were the only two freely describing their sense of libertad/freedom to follow their individual goals and focus on their needs. Mia Estrella felt she had achieved a level of independence in pursuing her academic aspirations. She felt she had gained her parents’ trust and, as a result, she felt they believed she would make the right choices. Mia Estrella joyfully described her decision to become actively involved in her school as long as she simply verified it with her mother.
Back then we wouldn’t be able to go out as much as we do now...we wouldn’t go to a friend’s house...they wouldn’t believe us if we were doing something for school [sic]...now, we’re always doing something. [sic] Like on Tuesdays we stay for Do Something and on Thursdays we stay for Brown Issues. And it’s like, “Are you sure you’re going to be at school?” And we’re like, “Yeah, we got nothing else to do. [sic]

Her satisfaction in knowing both parents trusted her and fully supported her in completing school assignments while working in groups with other students or participating in school events provided her with peace of mind. Furthermore, her reconciliation in the home further motivated her to become completely engaged, involved and focused on her academic aspirations.

Only one participant had an older sibling or immediate family member who had earned a bachelor’s degree, and, for that reason, Dianne admired and respected her sister. Dianne was determined and convinced she would also earn her bachelor’s degree and continue to a graduate to accomplish her mother’s wishes for her to become independent, “You know, I’m not going to be around forever.”

Dianne understood her mother’s consejos,

And I need to learn how to do it...And like, I get it. I need to learn. [sic]

Unlike Dianne, the majority of participants lacked older female role models in their immediate families and often turned to their teachers and counselors for
support to not feel isolated. They mentioned the majority of their primas\textsuperscript{18} had dropped out of high school or college and pregnant or with one or two small children. It was evident there was a desire for Xicana/Latina mentors who shared similar experiences as they did providing someone to look up to.

In the beginning I did, but now not really.

Dianne felt a sense of independence in making her own decisions regarding her participation in school organizations and choosing her own friends. Through participants’ dialogues and surveys, the data revealed family as the strongest support system. Although participants such as Dianne appreciated her autonomy in making her academic and career decisions, she identified a variety of home responsibilities.

\textit{II. La Familia: Support, Chores, and Responsibilities}

Cultural deficit theories (De Anda, 1984; Delpit, 1992) inaccurately assume the Xican@/Latin@ family does not value education. While participants’ parents and home structures often conflicted with their academic needs, there were many other factors influencing their academic achievement. For instance, when participants were assigned group projects and culminating presentations, it became difficult for some to visit their peers’ homes as their parents did not approve of them visiting unfamiliar homes. Other participants were unable to stay after school to participate in other extracurricular activities or receive after-school tutoring as they were obligated to rush home and attend home responsibilities.

\textsuperscript{18} Female cousins
Participants were expected to behave a certain way in the home, which often pressured them to find common ground to meet both the demands of school and the home. The younger participants, Magdalena, Neftali, and Cuca were yet unable to reconcile their differences with their parents as it seemed they had fewer resources and access to social and cultural capital. They also maintained lower grade point averages and less school involvement than the older participants. Their parents were overly protective, as they were into their first years in high school, which limited their activity after school due to safety concerns. The older participants’ relationship with their parents appeared to be increasingly mediated as their parents trusted them, granting more opportunities for enrichment in school and the home compared to the younger three participants who did not feel they had much of a voice in the home. The two senior participants described a positive relationship with their parents in which they felt their parents understood their experiences and needs in school compared to when they were in their first years of high school and they struggled to reconcile their roles in the home and at school. All participants’ parents, except for Magdalena’s mother, had not attended public schools in the United States; therefore they lacked the knowledge and understanding of their hijas'/daughters’ needs.

[sic] Like, she [mom] tells me, “I want you to have a career. I don’t want you to be dependent on like a man or something…When you go to college, you know, get your career, your major.” And then if we go to the store or the pharmacy, she’ll tell me, “Look, you can be a Pharmacist. Would you like that type of
career?” With Parent University, it’s helped her understand the high school graduation requirements and then college requirements to help me get my career and she tries harder to help me get to where I want to be.

As their parents gained access to programs such as Parent University, specifically designed for ethnically diverse populations, Dianne’s and Mia Estrella’s parents had gained the information and knowledge needed to further support their hijas. Such information and knowledge provided further parental support.

Respaldo/parental support. Parental support was described as parents supporting participants’ present educational needs as described above, as well as inspiring them to achieve their future aspirations. All participant dialogues and the majority of survey data confirmed various forms of parental support was received. Although some parents were more involved in their education by attending school events and requesting parent-teacher conferences than others, participants demonstrated a level of understanding the circumstances in which their parents were unable to do more outside of the home. The participants had varying positions regarding how the family influenced their academic motivation. Neftali mentioned her parents had a primary level education in México and for that reason, they did not understand her school experiences or needs as they would sometimes question or doubt her academic performance.
Neftali struggled in some classes and stated she made a real effort to work at the best of her ability. Her feelings over occasional instances of lack of understanding from her parents did not appear to have any effect on her academic aspirations.

Cuca also expressed a level of frustration as she was obligated to help with the family’s business. Cuca explained she desired a healthy relationship with her mother in which she would be able to talk to her and receive the support she needed. Cuca also explained she despised it when her mother would not listen and instead make assumptions.

I hate when she assumes things and she doesn’t even ask me. She doesn’t even be like [sic], “Oh what are you doing?” She just assumes things.

Cuca’s response to the above quote delivered in the tone, inflection, and facial gestures revealed a sense of pain and anger due to her inability to bridge her differences with her mother. Within our dialogue, she continuously made reference to her mother’s lack of understanding and willingness to listen to her needs, which Cuca believed was due to her mother’s high level of stress with the family’s business and long working hours. Such conflict appeared to be taking a toll on her academic performance but not on her academic aspirations.

19 Sometimes like, I explain to them and they say so what…other things that have happened but they, they don’t feel that I am now…As if, when I really try they think that I’m not trying hard.
As a homemaker, and a mother with a low educational attainment, Dianne’s mother was highly understanding of Dianne’s educational needs as she remained the main force of motivation. Her mother had become increasingly involved at her school.

My mom’s always been involved. My mom’s a homemaker, like housewife or whatever, she’s really into like, checking all-- like she’ll take us to school—she’ll check all our stuff-- and I want to do that too. Like, to be there. [sic]

Furthermore, Dianne heavily relied on her parents for emotional support and inspiration, “I’ll talk to my mom or dad. They give me inspiration to go there.” Dianne continued to seek support from her parents in making decisions about her academic aspirations to attend a four-year institution following high school. She trusted her parents’ consejos20 and it had influenced her academic motivation throughout her high school education.

The survey data and participant dialogues also reflected a major influence in parent involvement in school activities and events with their daughters’ academic aspirations.

*Parent involvement in school progress, activities and events.* The following analysis of parental involvement is from the perspective of the participants and not the parents themselves. Neftali’s father, Dianne’s mother, and Mia Estrella’s parents were the most actively involved at Libertad High School. The other parents rarely attended events in which they were not personally invited, as participants’ parents were Spanish-speakers relying on translators and bilingual educators to be able to communicate. For instance, Cuca’s parents’ main challenge in communicating with her teachers was their

20 Advice
language barrier. Cuca mentioned her parents were not comfortable going to Libertad High School as they were unable to communicate with her teachers since the majority was not bilingual. In fact, her parents share a similar fate to that of those parents who hesitate to call the school due to a fear of humiliation, as the school rarely provides translators if not scheduled ahead of time. Neftali explained her mother avoided any form of direct communication with her teachers and, in fact, avoided even setting foot at Libertad High School.

My mom…le da miedo hablar. She’s scared. Actually, she’s not scared but she’s shy. You know how she didn’t graduate from high school, y luego, cuando esta con mis hermanitos le hablan sus maestros, pero como que no les puede decir nada. She gets scared. She sends me to talk to people…she doesn’t want to talk.

Similar to Cuca’s parents, Libertad’s school structure intimidated her as she was unfamiliar with the school’s policies; where to check in upon arrival, who to speak to or who to ask for, how to find Neftali’s classrooms, not knowing the answer to a teacher’s question and pronouncing her teacher’s names were among some of her concerns. Neftali also stated her mother would only go to Libertad High School when personally invited by a Spanish-speaking teacher or when guaranteed a translator. These instances were rare so she resisted being humiliated by not attending the school. Parents deeply valued their daughters’ educational progress, but most parents did not attend Libertad High School’s annual events such as Open House and Back-to-School night unless they

21 And then, when she’s with my younger siblings, their teachers call her but it’s like she can’t say anything to them.
were personally invited. Dianne’s father rarely attended school events and activities but her mother had recently taken an active role in attending the Parent University workshops as well as the English language development and computer classes offered free of cost exclusively for parents. Dianne reiterated her mother had not been as involved as she currently was due to caretaking her younger siblings and other conflicting schedules.

You know how I joined the Parent College University? She’s gonna come to the financial…she’s gonna come to the meeting. [sic]

Dianne’s mother attended Parent University, a program providing ethnically diverse groups of parents the knowledge and resources to understand Libertad High School’s structure and graduation requirements (A-G), resources for scholarships and financial aid, community colleges versus universities, and much more. This program, as well as Parent computer and English language development workshops, guaranteed interpreters and Spanish-speaking staff.

Both Neftali and Mia Estrella described their parents as being actively involved in school events throughout their education. Their parents were highly supportive of teachers’ needs and requirements but were not intimidated or afraid to question them as they felt needed. Neftali and Mia Estrella described instances of their parents attending all major school events such as Open House and Back-to-School Night as well as a variety of Xican@/Latin@ events. Neftali’s father has also called her teachers and scheduled parent conferences to verify she was working hard in all her classes. Her father made the effort to develop relationships with her teachers he felt were increasingly
supportive and often checked on Neftali’s progress including attendance reports. He explained to Neftali the importance of developing good relationships with her teachers to identify the areas for improvement and for her own growth. Neftali admitted her father’s active role, or attempt to become involved in her schooling, reinforced his consejos/advice and encouragement.

*Parent’s consejos and verbal encouragement.* “That’s why I love my dad the way he is” (Cuca). All participants expressed a level of verbal encouragement from their parents but some more specific than others was provided. For example, some parents encouraged their hijas by suggesting specific careers and recommending certain universities while others gave them general encouragement to continue working hard to achieve their personal goals.

Verbal encouragement with specific goals consisted of pursuing specific careers, encouraging completion of homework assignments and other coursework, enrolling in particular courses/subjects, pursuing higher education and participating in extracurricular activities. These forms of encouragement and parental support highly motivated participants. Contrary to common stereotypes against Mexican fathers being sexist and restricting their daughters’ academic aspirations, some participants maintained their father was the main force in continuously motivating and inspiring them to work toward their academic aspirations. From all participant dialogues, it was Neftalí’s and Cuca’s fathers who were the most encouraging and supportive in their household. Neftali described her father’s verbal encouragement, “A él [father] le importa mucho. Le importa
mis grados, todo le importa. Siempre está aquí, me trai a la escuela, le pregunta a mis maestros como voy y todo.\textsuperscript{22}

Neftali’s father’s actions for her demonstrated his support for her academic goals. Although he did not provide encouragement with specific goals, he did provide general encouragement in supporting her educational endeavors. Neftali mentioned both parents have always prioritized her education over the family’s needs since she first began attending school. When asked to describe the ways in which her mother supported her, Neftali stated her mother was unable to leave the house to attend school events as she stayed home caring for her younger siblings. However, her mother constantly provided \textit{respaldo/emotional support} by giving her \textit{consejos/advice} to work hard and never give up in reaching her academic aspirations. Neftali also mentioned her mother advises her to prioritize her school work instead of looking for boyfriends. Such \textit{consejos} are evidence of Neftali’s mother encouraging her to achieve her academic aspirations and become a strong independent woman instead of giving up working toward her education and settling with a boyfriend or partner. Furthermore, her mother asked to see her homework assignments almost daily. She described her mother’s constant encouragement as:

\begin{quote}
Si, me dice que le heche yo ganas a la escuela. Que nunca me de por vencida. Que siempre este al pendiente en vez de que este buscando novio o lo que sea. Que siempre este allí en mi trabajo y todo.\textsuperscript{23}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{22}He cares very much. He cares about my grades, he cares about everything. He is always here, like, he brings me to school, he asks my teachers about my progress and everything.
Neftali’s parental involvement was the highest of all participants as both parents seemed actively involved in her learning by checking her homework and assignments and attending her school as often as possible.

Cuca’s father remained a positive and strong force in motivating and inspiring her to attend law school. However, her father also expected her to assist the family in their family business often working until midnight during the school week. Her father was aware of her lack of homework completion and bad study habits, but she maintained she and her siblings were obligated to assist la familia’s needs. She was adamant about following her father’s consejos/advice that hard work would pay off and if she would set her mind to achieving anything, she could do it. It was her positive relationship with her father that seemed to be the backbone in maintaining her strength and inspiration in attaining her academic aspirations. His consejos and verbal encouragement inspired her to remain optimistic about attending University of California, Los Angeles.

While Dianne’s father maintained he wanted her to pursue her academic aspirations, he also conveyed ambivalent messages by expecting her to do more around the home. Her father rarely asked about her progress in school or what she was aspiring to be, but Dianne’s tone and inflection conveyed he was supportive in what she decided to pursue. Listening to participants’ voices (Gándara, 1995) was foundational in analyzing the data as their tone and inflection conveyed further in-depth messages regarding their parents’ roles in their educational aspirations. Dianne considered her

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Yes, she tells me to try in school. To never give up. To always be focused instead of looking for boyfriends or whatever. To always be on my work and everything.
father’s role was to work outside the home and provide for the family but regarded her mother as the primary encourager. Dianne felt her father cared for her education but rarely “talks to me” about her progress. Instead, her mother remained her backbone in her educational aspirations. “She tells me everyday like, ‘Oh, how was your day? What’d you learn today at school? How are your teachers? Do you have any homework?’” Her mother’s daily check-ins after school strongly motivated Dianne to work hard. This consistency inspired Dianne to begin to plan which career to pursue as Dianne indicated,

> Well we went to Kaiser to pick up some medicines and we were in the pharmacy and she’s like, “Yeah, you can be in the pharmacy like with pharmaceuticals like if that’s what you’re interested. It’s a 9-5 job you know.” And she’s like, “But if you want to be handling little kids or you know, something, be a surgeon.”

Indeed, Dianne’s mother was most supportive and encouraging in setting specific goals.

Over the course of the dialogue, it was most notable that Mia Estrella’s mother remained the force behind her constant encouragement to work hard in school and follow her academic aspirations. While her mother’s consejos provided specific goals, other participants’ parents provided general forms of encouragement.

Magdalena reiterated that she did not have regular contact with her biological father and when she did, there was no mention in their conversations of her academic aspirations. The main force behind her educational aspirations was her mother whose
verbal encouragement motivated her to continue working hard in all her classes. Her mother’s encouragement remained her sole motivational force for her academic success. She encourages me, tells me, “Oh, go do this. Go to high school finish your school and everything so you won’t end up like me working every day and staying late… go to college, do what you got to do… so won’t end up pregnant at 17 like your mom.

Magdalena appreciated her mother’s consejos, which provided her the freedom to develop her own academic goals. Her mother’s strong encouragement was her main force behind her inspiration to achieve her goals.

Cuca’s mother provided general verbal encouragement, but for Cuca, it was not enough to motivate her.

She tells us, “Well, if you want a better, life, then you have to stay in school.” But from there on she doesn’t motivate us, like, she doesn’t tell us, “Oh, um, work hard.” Or none of that. She just, it’s like she pushes us but it’s like, she demands it but she doesn’t motivate it… I need somebody to motivate me. Somebody to tell me, you know, um, “I want you to be someone in life.” But she—she just shuts herself, you know, she just tells me, “Oh, I want you to stay in school. I want you to be somebody.”

Cuca’s response signaled her mother’s lack of information and knowledge about the high school experience and college pre-requisites, which made it difficult for her to give the encouragement Cuca needed.
Family stories to inspire: Me cuentan historias/they tell me stories. Storytelling, or narrative, serves an important methodological purpose in countering racial microaggressions for students of color (Fernández, 2002). Most participants mentioned their parents tell them stories about their hardships and sacrifices, as well as their achievements, which help participants appreciate their parents’ hard work. Both Cuca and Dianne introduced the theme of their family’s stories in which they listen to their parents’ stories to further learn about their struggles and achievements. In learning about their families’ struggles, Cuca and Dianne described their increase in inspiration to overcome their own struggles and achieve their goals. Cuca described the powerful way in which her father motivated her.

When we come from work, we always sit in the car and he’ll just tell me about his life and what happened and how he was exploited from his own brother and his own family and he tells me, never to trust anybody…just worry about the things you’re doing and…when he tells me all this, it motivates me to be able to stay in school. And sometimes, I sit and think and when—I get frustrated, I just think about my dad and his—he’s life and I just sit there and just wonder the life I can give him—I just want to help him out. That’s all. He’s my motivation.

Cuca’s father empowered her and especially during her most challenging moments. She discussed the ways in which their father’s hardships helped her realize the advantages and privileges she has that her parents never had. In doing so, her family stories inspired her to work hard. Gándara provided,
Folklorists have long understood the power of stories to transmit group and family beliefs, attitudes, aspirations, and self-images. Family stories, in particular, often serve to ‘provide the family with esteem because they often show family members in an attractive light or define the family in a flattering way. (p. 51)

Cuca and Dianne’s family stories helped them see their families in a positive way, appreciating their past histories and providing them with esteem for themselves and where they come from, their familia. Indeed, Dianne expressed her enjoyment in listening to her parent’s stories as she remained curious to learn more about their past and the experiences her parents went through before she was born. Dianne’s tone displayed a sense of excitement:

I always tell my mom, “How is it in México?” I like when they tell me stories and if I start with one, they’ll tell me another one. I get all excited about it like I just sit there en la noche24, she tells when they were little…and tell me stories like that they used to hear. I like hearing the stories, they’re fun to hear. And I know they get excited cuz I know my parents they talked with each other for years so they like to tell the stories again.

Dianne’s excitement and enjoyment demonstrates her love for her family; her passion for keeping her family’s spirit alive by continuing the struggle to achieve her goals.

As parents supported the participants, they also felt a voluntary obligation to reciprocate their parents’ support. Participants felt a sense of responsibility in assisting

24night
their parents with household chores. All participants’ parents were either both employed or at least one was, which meant they were not home as often. Participants were either assigned duties or took on *quehaceres*/*chores* to do their share around the home.

**Quehaceres/Chores**

Their form of honoring the *familia* was through the responsibilities the *familia* needed. If their family needed a favor, the participants accepted these duties, and the idea of not complying was not considered. The five participants interviewed were all aware of their responsibilities in the home and how, as young women, they were expected to behave both in and outside the home. These responsibilities included meeting the expectations of their gender roles, managing chores around the home, and often acting as surrogate parents. Four of the five students interviewed described specific family responsibilities that took much of their time after school but in which they found great satisfaction engaging. Their parents’ expectations guided their way of life both in and out of their home. For instance, all participants explained they were not allowed to go anywhere alone, and if they did go out with other friends, they were expected to be home early. All participants generated a list of responsibilities in the home immediately upon arrival from school. Some participants were required to do more around the home than others. Chores described most frequently by the five participants are as follows: sweeping and mopping the house, doing laundry, folding clothes, preparing meals, washing dishes, taking out the garbage, fixing all the beds in every room, and other indoor duties.
Only Magdalena and Cuca expressed frustration and concern over the amount of chores expected of them often preventing them from completing any homework. For example, Magdalena described her daily chores impeding her ability to complete any homework assignments:

\begin{quote}
when I get out of school—y luego\textsuperscript{25} I have homework, I have to rush back home and I have to take care of my sisters, help my sisters do their homework and clean the house and everything…By then, I’m tired and then I don’t really do my work…because, it’s already late, and then, [when] my mom comes home, she expects the house to be clean. If not, we get in trouble. And then she comes home in a bad mood. That’s why, I just be like, “Oh, whatever.” And then, I just go lay down and I fall asleep.
\end{quote}

As a result of her continuous familial duties, this student admitted she did not complete her homework, which adversely affected her grades. Magdalena’s grade point average was about a 2.0, perhaps lower. After conducting the dialogue with Magdalena, it was evident the pressure to maintain her home clean on a daily basis affected her physically, mentally, and emotionally. She described being tired and disturbed by her mother’s “bad mood” so she admitted going to bed to avoid confrontations.

Cuca expressed a similar frustration in attempting to balance her home duties and academics. When asked if her home duties were prioritized, she responded, “All the

\textsuperscript{25} and then
time…That’s why, like, I don’t do my homework or anything. I go to sleep sometimes at 12 a.m. [sic].” A similar conversation was revealed when asked about her current grades. They’re pretty bad…they’re pretty much D’s and F’s…I mean, I try, it’s just—it’s confusing…I think it’s very stressful sometimes…[sigh] Sometimes it’s just a lot of work—it’s a lot of work. And sometimes people are like, “Wow, how do you guys do it?” And they just don’t see the—how much stress it is.

Magdalena and Cuca felt the pressure and demand from their parents to complete the home chores was adversely affecting their academic performance, but there was no direct mention of that influencing their academic aspirations. The level of work did not seem to influence Cuca’s aspirations to attend law school at UCLA and become a lawyer. Magdalena maintained her academic aspirations were to finish high school and become a probation officer.

Neftali described her chores and responsibilities in the home but stated her chores during the school week were minimal.

Mi mama no me dice, pero yo le limpio la cocina, barro el baño, acomodo los dos cuartos, y a veces cocino. Que disque me estoy enseñando a cocinar. 26

Neftali was not obligated to do chores around her home and instead, she volunteered to assist her familia. She was aware her mother did not demand her assistance instead expecting her to complete her schoolwork before anything else. However, Neftali voluntarily and happily took on any chores she felt needed attention.

26 My mom does not tell me but I clean the kitchen, sweep the bathroom, fix the rooms and sometimes cook. Supposedly, I am learning how to cook.
The survey and interview data show the majority of participants felt they often prioritized their chores and responsibilities in the home, yet they also declared these responsibilities did not have a negative impact on their education. Neftali’s grades appeared to be lower than what she was capable of due to a lower level of skills needed to complete in-class assignments as required by teachers inflexible in providing extended time. Neftali was unable to attend after-school tutoring since she was enrolled in an after-school Latina Leadership course. For this reason, when she was in need of further support, she maintained she did experience a level of stress:

   Bueno, en la escuela si cuando me dan mucho trabajo y tengo que terminar ese mismo dia. Allí me siento estresada y en la casa cuando llego me siento deprimida por lo que le paso a mi papa. Se lastimo en el trabajo y ya tiene dos años que no trabaja.  

   Neftali felt she is unable to obtain further support at school due to her full-day schedule with seven-period days. While at home, she felt a sense of responsibility in helping her father, as he is suffering from a work-related injury and currently unemployed. Neftali maintained she feels overwhelmingly sad and often depressed to see her father unable to provide for her family as she believes he strongly desires to. As provided above, she feels his condition has affected her academic performance but not her academic aspirations.

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27 Well, at school I do when they give me a lot of work and I have to finish it the same day. There I do feel stressed and when I get home I feel depressed for what happened to my father. He was injured on the job and it has been two years he has not worked.
Similar to Neftali’s parents’ level of understanding, when Dianne’s mother sees her reading or doing homework, she will not ask her to do anything around the house and will give her time to finish her schoolwork, thus demonstrating her mother’s priority and value in her education. Her father is the same way in prioritizing her educational needs before home chores and responsibilities, but Dianne admitted her father had socialized her and her sisters to perform almost all household chores inside the house while he took care of maintaining the yard and working outside.

I know he’s playing around but he’s like, “Yeah when you have your kids, you’re gonna take care of them” and he’ll tell us, “Tuve y—” my dad doesn’t do nothing right, he’s like, “Yeah, that’s why I had all girls.”…My dad does not pick up his plate, he does not pick up his clothes. He’s like, “Son mis cachifas. Pa eso las mando.” [smiling]

Dianne was aware she had a responsibility to complete certain duties, but that did not seem to influence her aspirations. When asked if she had any chores around the house during the school week, she explained her chores were minimal, “No, except to keep my room clean.” She was aware of her limitations in and out of the home but she seemed to come to terms with these limitations as she understood her parents’ concerns for her safety and well-being. Although some research conveys culturally deficit theory values regarding Xicana/Latina women as passive, submissive, and dominated in traditional

\[28\text{You’re my servants. That’s why I boss you around.}\]
Mexican culture, participants’ survey data conveyed both parents equally as being the prominent forces behind their aspirations.

A notable factor common with Dianne and Mia Estrella is that both students were seniors and were working on college applications including financial aid and scholarship applications, further motivating them to remain focused on their academic goals. In addition, both participants were the most actively involved in school activities and organizations in which they enjoyed building relationships with other students and developing their leadership skills. Their home structures remained strong pillars of the family, further motivating them in building their strength to resist institutional microaggressions.

*Surrogate parents.* All participants interviewed had younger siblings and, therefore, some responsibility to care for them. Some duties described by all five included watching them (siblings) while they played, watching a movie with them because they would not watch it without them, feeding them, warming their meals and sometimes cooking for them, helping them with their homework, taking them to the park to play, bathing them, changing their diapers, going with their parents to meetings and attending medical appointments to translate as needed, and other duties as assigned.

Low-income Latino families regulating familial duties such as caring for younger siblings (Valenzuela, 1999), economic contributions, and household chores result in less time and less emphasis on academic aspirations (Gándara, 1995). Magdalena and Cuca were the only participants to articulate concern over their responsibilities in caring for their
younger siblings and, therefore, not being able to complete schoolwork performing at the best of their abilities. Magdalena cared for her younger siblings stating, “she’s only 5, so I have to take care of her and then, I have to help her with her homework.” These needs kept Magdalena busy assisting her younger siblings as her parents both worked long hours. Her family was struggling to make ends meet. For that reason, her mother and father, both employed full-time, depended on her for caretaking support of her younger siblings. However, Magdalena was the only participant who admitted her doubt in her possibility of earning straight A’s,

I wouldn’t get straight A’s, but I think I would improve on my grades and focus on school if I didn’t have to do everything after school and have to stay home and everything…Because, I don’t believe anyone can get straight-straight A’s from what I see. Like, I don’t think I can get straight A’s cuz, like—homework, sometimes I don’t understand it. And if I don’t understand it, I just do my best and do it and then what if I get it wrong…but I try my best and do it. And not everything’s gonna come out correct like my test scores and everything that depends on my grade too. So yeah, ok. I get B’s and C’s straight, but not A’s. A’s once in a while.

Magdalena’s home structure lacked the social capital to access educational resources in the home. She described her mother as making an attempt to support her, but felt her mother did not “know how…she just tells me to do good in school.” In fact, her mother and older sister were the only two in her family who made an effort to
motivate and encourage her to do well in school. The challenge in supporting their daughter’s academic performance and aspirations while simultaneously fulfilling the family’s caretaking role (Raffaeli & Ontai, 2004; Sy & Romero, 2008) was most evident in her home. Magdalena’s academic performance was also significantly lower than that of the other participants. From the data collected, it would be inaccurate to assume family responsibilities, such as chores and caretaking, were the main factors adversely affecting Xicana/Latina educational aspirations. Although her current struggles were challenging, there were other factors to consider, such as a lower socioeconomic status requiring her mother to work long hours and an unstable relationship with her stepfather.

The other four participants were also responsible to serve as “Surrogate Parents” (Sy & Romero, 2008) but mentioned they only watched their younger siblings for a few hours, which was not overwhelming. Instead, they expressed a sense of satisfaction and cheerfully felt privileged in their role in the upbringing of their younger siblings. These students’ home structures and strong family ties further developed their inspiration to pursue their academic goals as they mentioned they wanted to remain positive role models for their younger siblings, “I know my hermanitos²⁹ look up to me so I try to get good grades but then some days I miss and then I fall… like CAHSEE for example, tuve que estudiar día y noche para ver si se me quedaba algo³⁰.” Neftali discussed her responsibilities in caretaking for her younger siblings and especially when her parents attended medical appointments and daily errands, “Durante la semana nada más ayudó

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²⁹ Younger siblings
³⁰ I had to study day and night to see if something would stay
Neftali considered herself an influential role model for her younger siblings and felt a sense of responsibility in caring for them and showing them that through her hard work you can earn good grades and achieve your goals.

Although Mia Estrella did care for her two-year-old brother as needed, there was no expectation for her to care of him during the week. Mia Estrella voluntarily cared for her young brother as she felt a sense of obligation to assist the familia. The minimal duties Mia Estrella and her twin sister had facilitated their ability to participate in school events and continue being actively involved leading and organizing with various clubs and organizations at Libertad High School. She continued to be one of the most actively involved from the five participants interviewed. The survey data and participant dialogues provided revealing data portraying Xicana/Latina experiences in school due to their involvement in extracurricular activities.

III. La Escuela/School

Participants described feeling overwhelmed by the amount of homework assignments and overloads of schoolwork they were expected to complete on a day-to-day basis. Participants with failing grades were frustrated with their teachers who they felt did not make the effort during class time to explain assignments with which participants needed assistance. They felt their teachers did not recognize the fact they were obligated to often rush home to meet their family and home responsibilities. For that reason, teachers were failing them when participants felt it was unfair due to the

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31 During the week I only help with caring for my younger siblings…
many responsibilities they held out of school. They expected more flexibility with their teachers. Participants described different instances of feeling oppressed and marginalized in some classes with certain teachers who made degrading comments toward them. In most instances, they described specific incidents and memories of conditions restricting or correcting their native language, not appreciating or valuing their ideas and opinions in class, or not recognizing their cultural experiences.

*Cultural deficiencies.* Magdalena, Dianne, and Mia Estrella described instances of feeling victimized by discriminatory and racist teachers and school structures. For instance, when asked about her feelings about the school culture at Libertad High School, Magdalena was aware of the marginalization.

[sic] It’s hard because I have to like act a different person. And I don’t like doing that but…when I don’t come to school, class, whatever, I act a different person. I’m like, like when I don’t come to school, I act like much more my own person. But when I come to school…I have to be nice and have to do what the teachers want me to do—say or whatever and I have to respect them right? …I do it. But it’s not hard for me. It’s hard for me, kinda but not a lot. [sic]

Magdalena realized she must act a certain way in school and behave a certain way to not be perceived as being disrespectful. From our dialogue, it appeared she was struggling to conform to the school structure in being told how to act, how to talk, and how to be compliant. Most notably, she mentioned she felt she was more herself outside of school, as she was able to express herself freely without having to speak a certain way
or wait to be called on by a teacher. Magdalena was conscious of the school’s structure in setting rules requiring all students to act a certain way. However, in resisting the school structure, she tended to act out and had engaged in several verbal altercations with other students due to the anger and frustration of not being able to cope with the school structure. Magdalena was struggling to maintain a bicultural identity adapting to the White American school structure.

Well…yeah. I have to act the same way but to reject that I’m my culture and everything no because--I’m proud of what I am. I don’t have, like the little kids on the T.V., they didn’t like their own skin color…My culture is who I am and no one is gonna do nothing about it. But, about me acting like I have to act a different way, like, reject everything I have to do at home—yeah but reject my culture, no. Never that.

Magdalena was aware of the requirements in school that obligated her to obey the “White culture”\(^32\) and behavior expectations but only conformed when she felt it was necessary like Mia Estrella. Mia Estrella described feeling limited as well, but took a different approach by recognizing when she needed to code switch to Standard English and then switch to her language at every given opportunity both during their classes and after. For example, Mia Estrella discussed a specific situation in one of her classes:

When we were talking about the White Man’s Burden, and he would ask us for our opinion, but, when he asked us our opinion, our opinion was wrong. Our

\(^{32}\)Students’ definition of it.
opinion didn’t matter because we were talking about the white man’s burden…our opinion didn’t really matter at all…it wasn’t right what he wanted us to say because he was looking for the White perspective.

Mia Estrella further explained that in these classrooms, the majority of students “know how the teacher is” so they just sit quietly and figure when they “have to” speak or write “proper.” In these instances, students who shared Mia Estrella’s experiences dismissed the majority of the content or lost interest. Both Dianne and Mia Estrella were aware of oppressive school conditions but coped with them differently. Mia Estrella was especially infuriated when recounting her loss in learning his/herstory at an earlier age in school. She explained she had learned about her culture and his/herstory in the researcher’s class her ninth-grade year, as well as in another Xican@ Studies course eliminated, about which she was also upset.

Both participants had gained consciousness and awareness in being critical of teachers who retain biases and implement a Eurocentric curriculum by constantly correcting who students are. They also described feeling judged and made to feel inferior to a few White American teachers but their defense mechanisms, such as their knowledge, awareness, and familial support, allowed them to maintain their pride, confidence, and resiliency. For instance, in her responses, Mia Estrella revealed a sense of anger and resistance as she discovered a way to cope with the ‘microaggressions’ by joining Latin@s Unid@s and Brown Issues, as well as other Xican@/Latin@ clubs and

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33 Term used to acknowledge the histories of both men and women.
organizations. At one point in the dialogue, she described a single moment through her four years of high school in which she felt deeply impacted and empowered by presenting to other high school and junior high students at a local university on gang intervention and awareness. She specifically stated:

I was shocked. I couldn’t believe I did it cuz there was so many kids. I presented to people I didn’t even know and I’m shy to talk in a class with people I even know. If it wasn’t for that, I wouldn’t see myself the way I do now. Like now I’m more confident and I feel I can do more than before. [sic]

That opportunity was exclusively provided in one club of which she had been a representative for three years. She was adamant these opportunities for empowerment and growth be made available for all students. Mia Estrella and Dianne had found a positive way to mediate their feelings of unworthiness and deal with the constant microaggressions through a racist curriculum as well as a few teachers who did not appreciate or acknowledge their realities. However, these participants also described their close relationships with various teachers at Libertad High School who sincerely cared for them and their learning.

*Teachers as positive role models and mentors.* “I believe they [teachers] understand where we come from and the problems that surround us” (Dianne).

Participants mentioned their appreciation for the teachers they felt made the effort to understand them and especially those who taught about issues directly relating to them. Participants felt most of their teachers were supportive in understanding their different
experiences by “checking-in” with them to verify everything was alright in their personal lives whenever they noticed a change in their mood or behavior. The majority of participants respected their teachers and maintained a positive relationship with them. In fact, some participants such as Neftali identified specific teachers as allies seeking advice and mentoring.

I feel my teachers see that I put effort in my work. For example, Mr. Temo has always been there when I need him. When it comes time for a test, he always tutors me and helps me until I get it. He stays late until I get it. It makes me feel happy. It makes me feel that he cares for my effort and success.

Neftali maintained a close relationship with selective teachers who demonstrated their support as Mr. Temo did. These participants felt the majority of their teachers meant well and encouraged them to be successful, but they identified a few with whom they had a closer relationship. They described instances in which they felt their teachers cared about their progress and pursuance of academic aspirations.

Summary

The process the researcher witnessed among the participants regarding the influences over their academic aspirations demonstrated their families remained the primary force in their inspiration and motivation. As the participants became increasingly aware of teachers and school policies that degraded them, they looked for positive ways to resist such microaggressions. The five participants made a conscious effort to remain bicultural by learning to code switch while in academic settings and
switching back to their identities at every opportunity. Participants also made an effort to communicate with their parents and teachers about their experiences and needs. Overall, some participants often became overwhelmed with their home and school duties, but their home duties did not seem to have a negative effect on their studies. Their parents’ *consejos* or verbal encouragement motivated them. The older participants had learned to access assistance from trusted teachers and other students as allies for support and guidance. All participants held high aspirations to achieve their academic and career goals. Participants’ personal identity development strongly influences their own perceptions of their own potential and abilities. Participants strongly accentuated their parents’ support/respaldo in the home, which further inspired them to achieve their aspirations. Indeed, there was a correlation between participants’ home influences to their academic performance but not to their aspirations. Participants held academic aspirations in spite of home and school conflict.

The following chapter summarizes and concludes the research by offering recommendations for future Xicana/Latina outreach.
Chapter 5
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the influences of Xicana/Latina racial ethnic identity, home culture, gender roles, and high school experiences on their academic aspirations. This research is significant to further understand their experiences in navigating through their home and school cultures. Currently, public schools are not meeting the needs of our Xicana/Latina students (Sy & Romero, 2008; Trueba & Spindler, 1988) and instead, statistical data continues to show the numbers of students lagging behind in academic achievement. For this reason, the goal of this study was to examine the influences of Xicana/Latina efforts in bridging their unique experiences in developing their racial ethnic identities, families, and gender roles along with their challenges in navigating through systemic school structures.

The highlight of this study explored the home structures, which participants reported provided significant support from both their mothers and fathers. Although participants did present various challenges in balancing their home and educational needs, the majority of participants believed their parents did not have the knowledge and information to understand their experiences as they had only reached elementary grades in their native Mexico and had never gone through the public school system in the United States. This study offered insight regarding parental education and their children’s schooling. Participants reported that once their parents were provided with the
information and knowledge regarding high school structures such as curriculum, graduation requirements, standardized testing, rigid disciplinary policies, and scholarship information, their parents found ways to continue providing the necessary support for them.

This study utilized the methodology of critical ethnography for the individual dialogues and data analyses. The 50 surveys were administered to Xicana/Latina students in grades 9-12, and small individual dialogue sessions were conducted with five Xicana/Latina students. Five participants engaged in an individual dialogue with the researcher that were approximately two hours in length. The dialogues were all recorded, transcribed, and coded using Critical Race Theory and LatCrit Theory. After each transcription, the researcher conducted a preliminary reading and analysis for emerging themes. A second reading and analysis of the transcriptions was conducted and the following three themes emerged from the data: ethnic identities: quién soy yo/who am I, la familia: support, chores and responsibilities, and la escuela/school experiences. The next section restates each research question and explains the implications of the data derived from the study.

Conclusions

The results of this mixed-method research raised a number of questions regarding the Xican@/Latin@’s racial ethnic identities, family, gender socialization, and school experiences discussed in the following sections.
Research Question 1

Does Xicana/Latina high school students’ racial ethnic identity influence their educational aspirations?

Three aspects of racial-ethnic identity (REI)- feeling connected to one’s racial-ethnic group (Connectedness), being aware that others may not value the in-group (Awareness of Racism), and feeling that one’s in-group is characterized by academic attainment (Embedded Achievement)- were hypothesized to promote academic achievement. (Oyserman & Bybee, 2006, p. 1155)

Racial-ethnic identity (REI) is fluid throughout one’s life and students’ success or failure has consequences throughout one’s life (Oyserman & Bybee, 2006). Participants’ racial ethnic identities were most influenced in the home and through their school experiences. Participants reported feeling challenged by their mainstream classes as the classroom and school culture was “different” (Magdalena) than that in their home. The majority of participants reported feeling their classes were not relevant to their personal lives and experiences. Their traditional his/herstory courses often demeaned the role of Xican@/Latin@ contributions in the development and shaping of this country by hardly mentioning their stories (Duncan-Andrade, 2005). As a result, they reported feeling disconnected from the material and issues pertaining to their own lives. Furthermore, participants identified a few teachers they believed were ignorant about their home experiences and culture. Although the majority of their teachers were well liked, participants described biased comments these teachers would often make. Teachers’
comments were followed by lessons lacking culturally relevant curriculum in the majority of their classes. Participants felt they were unable to contribute to the classroom learning environment since they were expected to conform or adopt White American values. They described a sense of feeling their ideas and knowledge were not valued by their teachers, resulting in fatalistic attitudes toward active participation and involvement in their learning in those classes.

The majority of students agreed they felt the need to navigate through their school environment as most teachers did not understand their realities. The mainstream classes offered at Libertad High School do not offer a multicultural and multilingual student- and parent-centered curriculum. Our students feel excluded from their learning experiences. The older or more actively involved students were increasingly aware of a lack of culturally relevant curriculum in which they felt they did not learn as much as in Latin@s Unid@s and Brown Issues clubs and organizations. These clubs and organizations allowed them to gain critical consciousness of their world and realities, “If students simply go to school and pass their classes, they will not learn anything,” (Mia Estrella). In building Xicana/Latina racial ethnic identities, the home forms the base of their identity development, which leads to the next research question.

Research Question 2

To what extent can the family’s home culture strongly mediate Xicana/Latina educational aspirations in grades 9-12?
The study indicates a substantial level of parental support and most significantly from their mothers. Although the majority of participants surveyed and interviewed affirmed parental support and motivation to excel in their academics, the findings also revealed the principal conflict was that of feeling misunderstood by their parents. The majority of the participants’ parents had not attended high school in the United States; therefore, participants felt their parents often did not understand the mental challenges and stress proceeding long days of studying or preparing for exams, projects, and presentations in six, one-hour classes (Magdalena, Neftali, Cuca, Dianne).

Participants felt they were constantly challenged in the sense of reminding their parents of the reasons they were required to maintain after-school hours for tutoring or extracurricular activities. The younger participants in dialogues reported having less freedom to stay after school, as their parents were concerned about their safety. However, participants reported that after they explained to their parents the reasons they were required to stay after school or the reason why they put off chores was because they were working on homework assignments or studying for exams, their parents encouraged them to prioritize their academic needs.

*Research Question 3*

Does gender socialization influence Xicana/Latina educational aspirations in grades 9-12?

This study indicated the major issue influencing Xicana/Latina educational aspirations regarded their safety. The majority of dialogue participants reported their
parents worried about their safety, and for that reason, they were limited in attending after-school tutoring, extracurricular activities, and events. Moreover, the majority of survey analyses indicated their parents’ desires in their daughters following expected norms and being *buenas hijas*/good daughters. There was no indication of students being adversely affected by their parents’ desires. In fact, participants such as Cuca, Neftali, and Mia Estrella expressed a strong connection and relationship with their fathers who they felt understood them and remained the main forces behind their motivation to attain their academic aspirations.

Contrary to stereotypical notions of sexist Xicano/Latino fathers who held their daughters’ abilities back, it was their fathers who encouraged them to pursue their aspirations by encouraging them to complete all coursework and graduation requirements to attend college/university. Furthermore, Cuca and Mia Estrella indicated their fathers were supportive in their desires to leave northern California to move to southern California to attend UCLA and CSU, Northridge. Magdalena had limited contact with her father who lived in southern California and therefore, was limited in her responses. Dianne made a personal choice to maintain proximity to her family whom she indicated she was very close to. However, she made it clear to the researcher it was her personal choice and not her parents’ pressure or choice to remain nearby.
Recommendations

Safe Space for Identity Development

An important need for Xicana/Latina high school students is a safe space to be heard and to share their stories with other students and educators to whom they felt they could relate. Safe spaces change their way of thinking and their self-perceptions, further developing their ethnic identity. For example, these spaces would be found most significantly in classrooms offering institutionalized and required multicultural courses. The goal would be for all classes to harbor friendly relationships and community in their classrooms but the reality is that in schools such as Libertad High School, a realistic approach would be to begin implementing critical lessons in social science courses. Over time, other disciplines should also be provided with the resources to implement a multicultural curriculum that would also provide safe spaces for all ethnically diverse students. In doing so, Xicana/Latina students learn they are valuable human beings that do matter.

As a result of their ability to apply themselves in ways they may feel they are contributing to society, they become greatly empowered believing they are capable of achieving greater goals than before (Barajas & Pierce, 2001). Other spaces include access to extracurricular activities. It would be wise to further explore the positive influences of extracurricular activities such as those offered at Libertad High School. The responses of the older participants who had been actively involved over the year before the dialogues with the researcher revealed the endless possibilities in providing a
space for students to “find themselves” and perform at their potential. The participants involved in extracurricular activities with other Xican@/Latin@ students and teachers were provided the space for them to unmask their identities, feel comfortable, and build community with other students. Participants felt they “actually learned” and some even held the belief that these clubs and organizations had made them who they are today. These are strong influences in the development of their identities. Unfortunately, the resources offered in such clubs and organizations are limited to a few students in public schools, as not all students have access to the networks of teachers who advise these clubs.

Parental Support Programs

Due to the fact that the majority of Xican@/Latin@ parents at Libertad High School did not attend school in the United States, there is a strong need for the development of parental programs regarding high school experiences. For instance, Libertad High currently offers a program, Parent University, in which parents are provided with the information and knowledge regarding graduation requirements, standardized testing and placement tests, scholarship opportunities, senior project, encouragement for extracurricular activities, and much more. Xican@/Latin@ parents would continue to benefit tremendously with such programs as they gain insight into their daughters’ experiences. Another benefit from the program is the networking among parents including the accessibility of bilingual staff, such as teachers, counselors, support staff, and administrators. For example, Dianne and Mia Estrella’s parents had been
regular attendees and had met other parents who shared similar stories and whose experiences compared to theirs. Participants’ parents had gained human resources to ask questions regarding high school and college.

At this point, the program has been quite successful with almost 100 parent attendees every month. In fact, it has been increasingly successful that it was introduced at various school sites within the district. Xican@/Latin@ parents filled the seats with their attendance demonstrating their desire in, interest in, and valuation of their children’s academics. In her dialogue, Dianne had mentioned her mother attended Parent University to speak to other parents about questions she had regarding college attainment. It would be increasingly beneficial for Xican@/Latin@ parents to have further abilities to network with other parents and professionals. They seem to enjoy student and parent panels; the continuance of these presentations are fundamental.

To sustain the program and further outreach to parents, funding is a major factor. To date, the coordinator of the program is compensated for her long hours during and after school, dedicated to her commitment to personally invite as many parents as possible by calling homes. Furthermore, parents are invited to attend UC Davis with their sons/daughters attending Libertad High School upon completion of the program, thus serving as an opportunity for parents and students to become exposed to the university life. Recently, the program’s sustainability has been threatened due to budget cuts and “lack of funding,” which may result in the elimination of the only highly successful program offered for parents at Libertad High. Parent University is not
considered to be of significant importance, as funding for programs supporting
standardized testing or those pertaining to the status quo remain intact. Funding through
special grants has placed Parent University in a temporary position, but funding is not
designated nor guaranteed to sustain the program.

*Critical Professional Development for Educators*

One of the major observations gleaned from this research was that of students
being aware of teachers and administrators expecting them to change or alter something
about themselves to be considered “valid.” They felt their ideas and opinions often were
dismissed or corrected as they were expected to agree with the ideas and opinions of their
teachers. There were a few teachers participants identified as being racist and
discriminatory, as participants felt their cultural and ethnic identities were inferior
especially when they conversed with the “racist teachers” (Dianne, Mia Estrella) they
identified.

To begin to challenge deficit-thinking (Villalpando, 2004) ideas, opportunities for
further professional development for the staff at Libertad High School in regard to their
cultural awareness and sensitivity to ethnically diverse student populations is in dire
need. Teaching Xicana/Latinas to become critical thinkers and aware of oppressive
conditions facilitates their abilities to become conscious. Thus, they feel included and
valued gaining ownership in their schooling. These practices would build on the
experiential knowledge of Xicana@/Latin@ student population acknowledging and
understanding these students experience racial microaggressions (Sue, Lin, Torino,
Capodilupo, & Rivera, 2009), discrimination, and other forms of oppression (Villalpando, 2004). If these practices were implemented and institutionalized, offering ethnic studies and Xican@ Studies courses, students would be better equipped to further develop their ethnic identities, thus becoming increasingly empowered and working harder toward their academic aspirations. For such support to be implemented, administrators would be strongly recommended to begin developing trainings lead by educators and Xican@/Latin@ students themselves either from Libertad High School, within the school district, or from the community to develop curriculum for departments to implement. The idea of relevant curriculum leads to the next section.

*Culturally Relevant Curriculum*

Over the course of this learning process, the need for Xican@ and Ethnic Studies required courses is critical in the development of our students’ ethnic and cultural identity development. Institutionalized oppression and Eurocentric hegemonic structures perceive Xicana/Latina students as deficient (Solórzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001). Students are often well aware of this marginalization and engage in various forms of resistance (Cammarota, 2004; Solórzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001), which may not always be the most effective way for students to resist. As a result, Xicana/Latina students seek ways to escape the oppression, which may lead to adverse effects on their academic achievement. Many refuse to attend their classes; others engage in verbal altercations with students, teachers, and administrators; and others turn to gangs seeking the love and acceptance they do not receive in their classroom or in the home.
Furthermore, the two Xicana/Latina senior participants in the dialogues were infuriated that throughout their entire schooling, they were not taught to embrace their cultural and ethnic roots as they were excluded from the curriculum and expected to conform or assimilate to White American values. Xican@ and Ethnic studies courses would prepare our students by providing the tools for their self-empowerment as they also gain the confidence to take more control of their futures (Acuña, 2004; Campbell, 2003; Duncan-Andrade, 2005).

Extended Research Period

It appeared that for some participants, the day(s) we conversed, their mood and life circumstances affected their responses. For instance, the participants having a family crisis or a demanding week appeared to be overwhelmed by attending to their home and school responsibilities. One participant had engaged in a verbal altercation with another student in one of her classes the day prior to the scheduled dialogue, which may have influenced her responses. The two senior participants remained calm and seemed relaxed, but subconsciously they continued to think about the senior project and meeting deadlines, which may have influenced their responses. Future research should provide a more adequate period to meet with the participants on a regular basis for an extended period of time. Meeting over an extended period of time would allow the researcher to identify patterns in their moods that may influence their responses but are also considered part of the research. In conducting qualitative research, both the positive and negative life circumstances of participants should be considered. These are the unique realities of
Xicana/Latina high school students, which should be noted. By doing so, the researcher would be able to reach more precise findings. In collecting survey data for future research, it is recommended to also inquire of Xicana/Latina students’ time living in the United States for those who are immigrants. Students born and schooled in the United States have different experiences than those schooled in México and living in the country for shorter periods of time.

My Reflection of the Research

It is my belief the participants with whom I dialogued and surveyed greatly enjoyed the experience, especially the participants I had the privilege of conversing with, as they all thanked me repeatedly. I noted all participants eagerly accepted the invitation to participate in this research, and I felt others who were not approached felt left out and perhaps disappointed and saddened they were not able to participate. After our initial and follow-up dialogues, I realized our conversations had left them thinking critically and reflecting on their own consciousness. At some point in the dialogues, most participants confided they had never thought about some of my inquiries about which they went home thinking. Their comments and questions to me within the conversations also challenged me in reflecting on my own thinking and attitude toward their experiences.

In reflecting on my research, I am unable to determine how realistic participants’ aspirations were with respect to their current academic performance. For instance, Cuca had aspirations to transfer to UCLA and eventually attend law school, but she was failing all classes at the moment. Although she remained hopeful, she would most likely need to
repeat all required courses she was failing which would set her back. Cuca was also obligated to assist both parents in their family business during the school week, but that did not seem to adversely affect her aspirations. In fact, her father further motivated her by encouraging her to follow her dreams. Her father did so by acknowledging she had to assist the family’s needs in their business but continue working hard. Although her father was the main force behind her academic motivation, he also expected her to meet the physical demands of their work and with the combined responsibilities in school, and Cuca felt overwhelmed. She was experiencing a mental and emotional downfall. Dianne also maintained high academic and career aspirations to attend medical school and become a general practitioner. However, in one of our dialogues, she discussed feeling unmotivated and contemplating taking time off from school immediately following high school. These responses from both participants worried me as I questioned what intervention these students were receiving as they experienced a motivational decline in pursuing their academic aspirations. More recently, the researcher followed up with Cuca who stated she was “feeling better” regarding her coursework and home obligations with the family business. In fact, she expressed to the researcher an interest in visiting a university about 45 minutes from her home.

As a Xicana/Latina, the researcher found she related to all participant stories in also being raised in a bicultural world and often feeling trapped somewhere between the home and educational structures. The researcher continues to be challenged feeling similar experiences, being misunderstood by family members and colleagues. The
researcher was deeply touched by participants’ unquestioned willingness to allow the researcher into their personal lives and experiences. Their stories revealed a side of them of which the researcher was unaware; their passion, their fears, their tragedies, and resiliency to move forward and achieve their goals. As educators, it is too easy to forget the purpose and reasons we step into the field of education. Standardized testing and educational school policies forced upon teachers challenge day-to-day critical practices.

Epilogue

Currently, the five participants continue to navigate through their home and school responsibilities. I often converse with them as they regularly come into my classroom before school, during lunch, or after school. Magdalena continues to struggle with building relationships and community with her peers. Although never physical, she has continued to engage in verbal altercations with other students and has even been identified as a possible “gang member” by Libertad High School’s Gang Task Force. The researcher continues to meet with her, communicating her struggles with her teachers, so she can be as successful academically as she has much potential. Neftali has developed stronger relationships with her network of Xicana/Latina students and continues to meet with them on a daily basis, specifically during lunch. She also remains close to her family and especially her younger siblings. Although Cuca indicates she is doing “good” when the researcher checks in with her, through the researcher’s observations, it is clear something more is affecting her academic performance. She continues to struggle in some classes earning low C’s and D’s. Mia Estrella and Dianne
just completed their senior projects and remain excited about their near futures. Mia Estrella decided to attend Sacramento State University, as it would be more cost-effective while Dianne plans to attend community college also due to financial burdens.

Latin@s Unidos experienced a decline in its membership as the advisors continue to change. The current advisor is making an effort to promote and recruit potential Xican@/Latin@ student leaders to begin a new movement at Libertad High School that would be combined with MEChA\textsuperscript{34} ideals. Recently, there has been a solid group involved in planning cultural events around their experiences, such as Mexican Independence Day, Dia de los Muertos/Day of the Dead, and cinco de mayo. The advisor is contemplating to instead begin advising a MEChA chapter at Libertad High School and eventually merge with Latin@s Unidos. These are clubs and organizations serving unique cultural identities and providing the safe space for Xicana@/Latin@ students to be a part. The researcher remains hopeful to continue the movement and the presence of both organizations at Libertad High School.

\textsuperscript{34} Movimiento Estudiantial Chicano de Aztlan
APPENDIX A

Participant Survey

Survey Protocol Questions
Your Educational Aspirations

| Your Grade_____ | 1st Language at Home____ | Overall G.P.A._____ | Your Identity________________ |

1. Family

1.) What is your mother’s attitude toward the value of your education?
   - No Support
   - Highly Supportive

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

2.) What is your father’s attitude toward the value of your education?
   - No Support
   - Highly Supportive

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

3.) If you have sisters, how often do they make you feel proud and motivate you to do your best in school?
   - Never
   - Yearly
   - Monthly
   - Weekly
   - Everyday

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

4.) How often does your mother/female guardian make you feel proud and motivate you to do your best in school?
   - Never
   - Yearly
   - Monthly
   - Weekly
   - Everyday

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

5.) If you have brothers, how often do they make you feel proud and motivate you to do your best in school?
   - Never
   - Yearly
   - Monthly
   - Weekly
   - Everyday

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

6.) How often does your father/male guardian make you feel proud and motivate you to do your best in school?
   - Never
   - Yearly
   - Monthly
   - Weekly
   - Everyday

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
7.) How often do you feel your family does not understand your school experiences?

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8.) How often do you put your family’s needs (e.g. chores, babysitting, working to help your family, etc.) before your educational needs?

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9.) How often do you feel your home duties interfere with your participation in school events, activities and organizations?

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10.) How often do you feel your home duties interfere with your schoolwork and therefore you earn lower grades than what you are capable?

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II. Sexism/Gender Roles

11.) What is your mother’s attitude toward the value of you being a good daughter?

| Lowest | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Highest | 5 |

12.) What is your mother’s attitude toward you starting your own family and being a good housewife?

| Lowest | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Highest | 5 |

13.) What is your father’s attitude toward the value of you being a good daughter?

| Lowest | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Highest | 5 |

14.) What is your father’s attitude toward you starting your own family and being a good housewife?

| Lowest | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Highest | 5 |

15.) Do your parents push you to excel in high school, yet, are discouraging you to continue your college/university aspirations?

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<th>Yearly</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
<th>Everyday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
III. Racial Ethnic Identity

16.) Have you ever felt inferior to other White American or mainstream cultures at school, and therefore, you change the way you act at school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Yearly</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
<th>Everyday</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17.) How often do you experience racism or discrimination in your life?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Yearly</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
<th>Everyday</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18.) If you have/or do experience racism and/or discrimination in your life, how often do you feel this has hurt your academic performance?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Yearly</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
<th>Everyday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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</table>

19.) How much education do you plan to earn?

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Complete</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Complete</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Graduate</th>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Doctorate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Community College</td>
<td>College (Associates)</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>University (Bachelor’s)</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>Degree (Ph.D.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

Dialogue Questions

I. Family

Questions to Guide the Dialogue

What are your parent’s attitudes toward the value of your education?

Do you feel your family understands your school experiences?

II. Gender Role Socialization

Questions to Guide the Dialogue

What are your parent’s attitudes toward the value of you being a good daughter?

Discuss your role in the home and parent’s expectations.

Do your parents push you to excel in high school?

III. Racial Ethnic Identity

Questions to Guide the Dialogue

Have you ever felt inferior to other White American or mainstream cultures at school, and therefore, you change the way you act at school?

Do you experience racism or discrimination in your life?

How much education do you plan to earn?
APPENDIX C

Consent Forms

Consent for Research Participant
(Survey and/or Individual Discussion & Journal)

My name is Karina G. Figueroa, a graduate student in the Bilingual Multicultural Education Department at California State University, Sacramento. As you may be aware, Xican@/Latina@ students have the highest high school drop out rates in the nation. I am conducting research at your high school to further understand the challenges Xicana/Latina students experience in their educational achievement.

Your parent/guardian is aware that I am asking you to participate in this research study. A research study is when people like me collect a lot of information about a certain thing to find out more about it. This letter tells you about my study so you may decide if you want to participate or not. Before you decide, you can talk about it with your parents or anyone else you like.

If you agree to be in the study and your parents/guardian say it is okay, I will ask you to:
First, read and answer some questions from a survey about your personal experiences as a Xicana/Latina and how your family, culture, racial ethnic identity and gender roles have influenced your educational aspirations. The survey should take you less than 30 minutes and there will be other students in the conference room also completing the surveys. Only students with approval to complete surveys will be allowed entrance. No one will know the answers came from you personally because you will not be asked to write your name on anything.

After the surveys, I may ask you to join me in an individual discussion with no one else in my classroom. We will be talking about your family, culture and growing up Xicana/Latina. The discussion will be tape-recorded and you will be asked to review the transcripts after I have typed our conversations. I will also give you a journal so you may write to the same set of questions from the above discussion in more details a couple times a week.

Place and total time: the surveys should take less than thirty minutes in one of your school’s conference rooms. I might ask you to meet with me once or twice for one to two hours each time for the individual discussions in my classroom after school. I will ask you to write in your journal for six weeks and then remind you to turn it in to me in my classroom after school hours.

Any discomfort? You might get bored, tired or uncomfortable and decide that you do not want to finish the surveys or individual discussions and journals. If this happens, just tell me you want to stop. Some of the questions are personal and may make you feel uncomfortable. You may skip any questions you are uncomfortable answering.
Who will know? If I write a report or give talks about this research, I will not use any real names of people who were in it. I will just talk about what I learned from all the results put together.

Do you have to participate? No, research is something you do only if you want to. Whether you decide to participate or not, it will have no effect on your grades at school. And if you agree, you can always change your mind later if you do not want to be in the study any more. You will not be paid for any of this but I will bring you drinks/snacks when we meet as a treat.

Questions? If you have any questions now or later about my project, you may call me at [reddacted] or email me [reddacted]. You can also call my supervisor, Margarita Berta-Ávila at (916) 278-4395. If you need more help with any part of the project, you may call your school counselor, Carol Mills at (916) 433-5100.

If you decide to participate, and your parents agree, I will give you a copy of this form to keep. That way you can look at it later if you want to.

If you would like to be in this research study, please sign your name on the line below.

Student's Name/Signature (printed or written by student)  Date

Signature of Investigator/Person Obtaining Assent  Date

PERMISSION FOR TAPE RECORDINGS [OTHER RESEARCH RECORDS]

1. Researchers may audiotape me during the interview/discussion.
   Yes___   No___

2. Researchers may use the tapes to help teachers learn.
   Audiotapes:   Yes___   No___

3. Researchers may use the tapes to help other people learn.
   Audiotapes:   Yes___   No___

4. Researchers may share the tapes with other researchers.
   Audiotapes:   Yes___   No___

Student’s Name/Signature (printed or written by student)  Date
(Survey and/or Individual Discussion & Journal)

My name is Karina G. Figueroa, a graduate student in the Bilingual Multicultural Education Department at California State University, Sacramento. As you may be aware, the Xican@/Latina@ student educational aspirations continue to be drastically affected in our nation. Indeed, Xican@/Latin@ students have an alarming rate of high school drop outs and fewer pursuing higher education compared to other ethnic groups. I am conducting research at your high school in an effort to further understand the challenges Xicana/Latina students experience.

You are being asked to participate in research that will consist of reading and answering a set of survey questions about your personal experiences as a Xicana/Latina high school student. The questions will be about your family, culture, gender roles, and racial ethnic identity. The survey should take you less than 30 minutes and there will be other students in the conference room also completing the surveys. Only students with approval to complete surveys will be allowed entrance.

You may be asked to participate in research that will involve an individual discussion with me with no one else present. You are expected to meet with me once for at least an hour but no more than two hours. Depending on the dialogue, we may need to meet a second time for the same amount of time. The discussion will be tape-recorded and you will be asked to review the transcripts after I have typed our conversations.

In addition, if you participate in the discussion group, you will also be provided with a journal in which you will respond to the same set of questions from the above discussion in more depth 2-4 times a week. After six weeks, you will be reminded to submit your journal to me in my classroom after school hours.

Your involvement in this research is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time if you become uncomfortable. Some of the questions are personal and may make you feel uncomfortable. You may skip any questions you are uncomfortable answering. All of your information will be confidential and you will be selecting a pseudonym to protect your identity. Your name and/or other personal information will be excluded in the research. The results of the research project may be published, but your name will not be used. In fact, this is a completely anonymous project; your name or other personally identifying information will not be collected.
Your participation will assist in the identification and understanding of our Xicana/Latina students. Although there will be no monetary incentive for your participation in this research, you will be provided with light refreshments as courtesy.

If you have any questions regarding this research study, you may contact me at [redacted]. You may also contact my faculty advisor, Margarita Berta-Avila at (916) 278-4395. If you need further assistance with any part of the research, you may contact your school counselor, Carol Mills at (916) 433-5100.

I certify that I have read this form and volunteer to participate in this research study.

________________________________________
Student’s Name/Signature (printed or written by student) Date
Principal Consent Form

I. Research Background

Title of the Study: An Examination of Familia: Culture, Gender Roles and Racial Ethnic Identity Influences on Sacramento High School Xicana/Latina Educational Aspirations.

Name of Researcher: Karina Figueroa

Phone: [redacted]

Street address: [redacted]

City: [redacted]

State: CA

Zip: [redacted]

E-mail: [redacted]

II. Description of Research Proposal

Xican@/Latin@ students have an alarming rate of high school drop outs and fewer pursuing higher education. I am conducting research at your high school in an effort to further understand the challenges Xicana/Latina students experience in their educational aspirations.

Permission will be sought from students and their parents prior to their participation in the research. Only those who consent and whose parents consent will participate. I will be approaching 50 Xicana/Latina 9-12th grade students within my small learning community and ask for their willingness to complete a survey. Surveys should take less than thirty minutes. After, five students will be asked to participate in individual dialogues with myself. The dialogues should take approximately one to two hours. Furthermore, these five students will also be asked to complete journal entries for a period of six weeks.

All research is voluntary and participants will be advised of their right to avoid any questions (surveys or discussion) they may feel uncomfortable answering. All discussions will be tape-recorded then transcribed. The information collected will be treated in strictest confidence and all names will remain anonymous, including staff members and schools. Students will be advised of their right to withdraw from the research at any time without penalty.

Once I have received your consent to approach students to participate in the research, I will arrange for informed consent to be obtained from students and parents. Furthermore, I will arrange a time and place for students to complete surveys.
Attached for your information are copies of the Student and Parent Consent forms for the surveys and individual recorded discussions and journals.

III. Agreement (to be completed by principal)

I. [Name], principal of Libertad High School, understand

- the study and what it requires of the staff, students, and/or parents in my school,
- that the privacy and confidentiality of any staff or student will be protected,
- that I have the right to allow or reject this research study to take place at my school,
- that I have the right to terminate the research study at any time,
- that I have the right to review all consent forms and research documents at any time during the study and up to three years after the completion of the study.

☐ I grant permission to the researcher to conduct the above named research in my school as described in the proposal.

☐ I DO NOT grant permission to the researcher to conduct the above named research in my school as described in the proposal.

☐ I understand that data should be released only by the departments that own them. My staff and I shall not release data to the researcher without approval from the RRB.

_________________________________________  __________________
Signature of Principal                         Date
REFERENCES


