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Mentorship Experiences of Latino Students Among University Mentors of Color in a California State University-Hispanic Serving Institution

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to better understand the mentorship experiences of Latino students among university faculty and staff mentors of color through the validation theory and community wealth model, in a California State University that is also a Hispanic Serving Institution or HSI. There is a limited number of faculty of color in the CSU system, yet research suggests that they are essential in propelling the educational experiences of Latino students. Through a mixed methods approach, structured interviews were used to further examine the mentorship experiences of six first generation Latino students from a CSU. A survey was also implemented to collect general information on mentorship across the CSU system to provide a comparison to the experiences of the six study subjects. The findings suggest that mentorship is most effective when mentors have an understanding of the intersectionality of mentees. In addition, pairing mentor and mentees by gender suggested higher level experiences. The navigational and social capital of participants was enhanced according to the guidance of the mentors on a variety of areas including the undergraduate experience, the graduate school process and career options.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DIVERSE FACULTY MENTORS

Federal grants such as the US. Department of Education's Title-V Developing Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) Program are devised to expand the educational opportunities and improve the attainment of Hispanic students. Despite these types of funding initiatives to advance the progression of Latino students, an area that continues to demand attention are the low numbers of faculty and staff of color in California's 152 HSIs (Excelencia in Education, 2016). The presence of diverse faculty and staff in HSI's is pivotal in supporting Latino student access to mentorship (Milem, 2003; Santos & Acevedo-Gil, 2013).

Faculty and staff of color consider mentoring students as a personal responsibility as to compared to their white counterparts (Figueroa & Rodriguez, 2015). Although these faculty of color may be "the only faculty member of color" in their respective department (Turner & Gonzalez, 2014), they are clear in their understanding of the importance of mentoring students from their communities. As other researchers have pointed out, faculty point to the importance of a mentor in contributing their knowledge, experience, and perspectives to a mentee to achieve

professional and personal development (Ahlström, 2007; Olsson, 2008). According to Moses (1989, p.9), "a professor takes an undergraduate or graduate student under his or her wing, helps the student set goals and develop skills, and facilitates the student's successful entry into academic and professional circles." Faculty and staff diversity is essential to providing students with the opportunity to access mentors with whom they identify culturally, and that possess a mindful perspective of the experiences of minority groups (Hurtado, 2001; Hurtado & Ruiz, 2012; Hurtado & Ruiz, 2015; Umbach, 2006; Turner, 2015).

Not all Latino undergraduates have the opportunity to access mentorship, in particular those of first-generation status (Perna, 2006). Lack of mentorship can deter navigating the higher education setting, workplace, ones' career path, and getting letters of recommendations for graduate school. Diverse faculty and staff are essential across the higher education systems to support the graduation rates and the attainment of professional degrees by Latino students. Further investigation on mentorship outcomes between first generation male and female Latino students is needed to better understand the impact of mentors of color, and the impact of gender pairing, at HSI's (Rudolph et al., 2014).

As demographic shifts continue to impact institutions of higher education, there is a growing need to investigate how mentors of color validate Latino students (Rendón and Nora, 1994), and in doing so, how might they strengthen the students' community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005). The following questions were used to guide the study:

- How are Latino males being best supported through mentorship?
- How are Latina females being best supported through mentorship?
- Was the mentoring experience impacted by the gender of the mentor?
- How do faculty and staff validate and strengthen the cultural, navigational, inspirational, and social capital of students through the educational experience?
- Are institutions adequately providing access to mentorship opportunities?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Faculty and Staff Disparities in The CSU System

According to the California State University (CSU) system, more than one-third of CSU students are first generation (CSU Fact Book, 2019). The CSU system awards more than half of all undergraduate degrees earned by California's Latino and African American students (CSU Fact Book, 2019). Twenty two of the twenty-three CSU campuses are recognized as HSIs (CSU Fact Book, 2019). The representation of minority staff trails behind white staff. Minority males make up a total of 9,869, and females 13,156. White males make up 12,915, and females 14,858 (CSU Fact Book, 2019a). There is a significant gap between minority males and white males. When examining faculty rankings between minority and white faculty the disparities are broader. Minority male professors make up a total of 893, and females 696. While male professors make up 1,821 of the faculty, females comprise 1,259. Minority male associate professors make up a total of 422, and females 451. While male associate professors make up 643, and female 644 (The California State University, 2019a).

Obstacles Faced by First Generation Students of Color

For first-generation students of color, education serves as a vehicle for upward mobility, increasing socioeconomic status and career advancement (Dervarics, 1989). These students

often face difficulty acclimating to the higher education setting and are more susceptible to dropping out (Ishitani, 2006; Miville & Constantine, 2006). They may have more obligations than the traditional student as they may financially support their families (Perna, 2006). Family obligations can restrict students from pursuing internships, which translates to being less marketable in the workforce (Pryor et al., 2012). Despite the given circumstances these students thrive in the higher education setting, with evidence suggesting that persistence and motivation may be rooted in family pride (Jenkins et al., 2013; Petty, 2014).

Mentorship by Faculty of Color

The need for faculty and staff of color is crucial as it contributes to minority students better performing in academic spaces (Marx & Goff, 2005). Faculty model positive academic behavior that is needed to succeed in the post-secondary education setting (Santos & Reigadas, 2002). They provide advice and enhance the self-efficacy of students by validating their cultural and educational experiences (Santos & Reigadas, 2002). Faculty of color are less mindful of providing this support as institutional service and many dedicate substantial time to mentoring students of color (Baez, 2000). Umbach (2006) conducted a national study of 13,499 faculty at 134 colleges where he explored the role of faculty of color on specified student outcomes. Findings revealed that faculty of color incorporate diverse pedagogical approaches and interacted more frequently with their students than their white colleagues. Furthermore, Hurtado and Ruiz (2015), found that many faculty at HSIs encompass a student centered pedagogical approach that better engages Latino students. It is incorporated through reflective writing practices, critical discussions, group projects, and journaling practices (Hurtado & Ruiz, 2015).

Mentorship

Defining a mentor varies across fields but there is consistency in identifying a mentor as someone that contributes to knowledge, experience, and perspectives to a mentees' professional and personal development (Healy & Welchert, 1990; Smith et al., 2000; Tareef, 2013). In the higher education context, four facets of mentorship have emerged as essential: (a) psychological or emotional support, (b) goal setting and career paths, (c) academic subject knowledge support, and (d) the existence of a role model (Nora & Crisp, 2007). Mentorship is unique according to its needs, yet it differs according to cultural mutuality and gender pairing between the mentor and mentee (Jacobi, 1991, p. 519).

Latino Students Navigation Barriers

In recent years, there has been growth in college admission for Latinos, yet achievement gaps remain between Latinos and other minority groups (Johnson et al., 2014; Nuñez et al., 2015; Rios-Ellis et al., 2015; Sáenz et al., 2015). Torres et al. (2006) suggest that Latinos may not have the social knowledge on how to navigate the higher education setting. If they are first-generation Latinx students, they are also limited in their access to information on higher education processes as their parents may not be able to offer assistance on this type of knowledge (Contreras, 2005). A vast majority of Latino parents did not have opportunities to obtain higher education which may hinder students from acquiring information on how to succeed in college (Gloria & Segura-Herrera, 2004).

In many cases Latinos find themselves as the only minority in their classes and mentorship can provide the needed support to connect with others and overcome institutional barriers (Clark et al., 2013; Contreras, 2005; Medina & Posadas, 2012). Torres (2006), found that encouragement, defined as the level of support students have towards pursuing their education, had a strong

indirect effect on the persistence of Latino students. Bordes and Arredondo (2005), noted that Latina undergraduates who were mentored indicated having a more positive perception of the university environment. According to Castellanos and Gloria (2007), Latino students benefit from mentorship that validates their culture.

Gender and Race Impact on Latino Student Mentorship

Gender and race are intersectional factors essential to mentorship that produce differing outcomes (McKeen & Bujaki, 2007). Literature on gender and mentorship has been influenced by gender inequities in the workplace rather than in academia (McKeen & Bujaki, 2007; Ragins, 1999). Bordes and Arredondo (2005) investigated whether the ethnicity and gender of the mentor had an impact on Latino students. Findings revealed that there was no significant outcome in the ethnicity and gender of the mentor on the impact of Latino student mentorship. In contrast, Santos and Reigadas (2002) identified the impact of Latino mentors on Latino faculty program participants. Findings revealed that Latino students perceived their Latino mentors to be more helpful and identified themselves to be more self-efficacious. Furthermore, in a recent study, Tran et al. (2016), examined the impact of faculty diversity on graduate students. It suggested that Latino students were more likely to acknowledge that faculty mentors of color supported their success. This study also notes the impact of diverse faculty on Latino graduate students enrolled in HSIs. Given the gender gaps in the literature on mentorship there are opportunities to examine the impact of gender in mentorship at HSIs of Latino students (Rudolph et al., 2014).

Despite Latinos being the largest minority group in the United States there is a disparity on the pursuit of graduate degrees (Fry, 2011; Santiago, 2013). Latinas are more likely to pursue graduate degrees than Latino males (Fry, 2011). The outcome may be rooted in the K-12 experience and factors associated with gender. Latino males are more likely to repeat grades in elementary and drop out of high school (Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2009). In particular, Latino males are more susceptible to gang-involvement in urban communities, which is a component of the school-to-prison-pipeline (Howell, 2010). Educational structures have negatively impacted the success of Latino males through low completion of high school, low enrollment in post-secondary institutions, overrepresentation in school suspension, labeled as emotionally or learning disabled, and often targeted by school police (Contreras, 2011; Noguera et al., 2011; Solorzano et al., 2005).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Based on the limited number of faculty of color in the CSU system it is necessary to examine their mentorship practices and impact on propelling the educational experiences of Latino students. Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model provides a robust theoretical foundation for understanding how various areas of capital are strengthened through the process of validation (Rendón, 1994). Rendón's (1994) validation theory is also helpful in understanding the need to develop enabling, confirming and supportive processes initiated by in and out-of-class agents that fosters academic and interpersonal development in students. Validation contains the following elements: when validation is present, students feel capable of learning; they experience a feeling of self-worth and feel that they, and everything that they bring to the college experience, are accepted and recognized as valuable. Lacking validation, students feel crippled, silenced, subordinate, and/or mistrusted. Like involvement, validation is a prerequisite to student development.

Validation can occur both in- and out-of-class. In-class validating agents include faculty, classmates, lab instructors, and teaching assistants. Out-of-class validating agents can be a

spouse, boyfriend, or girlfriend; family members, such as parents, siblings, relatives, and children; friends, such as classmates and friends attending and not attending college; and, college staff, including faculty who meet with students out-of-class, counselors/advisors, coaches, tutors, teaching assistants, and resident advisors. Validation suggests a developmental process. It is not an end in itself. The more students get validated, the richer the academic and interpersonal experience. Validation is most effective when offered early on in the student's college experience, during the first year of college and during the first weeks of class (Rendón, 1994, p. 44).

Yosso (2005) created the community cultural wealth model to counter the deficit model often used to describe Latino students and acknowledge the talents, strengths and experiences that students of color bring with them to the college environment. She presents six forms of cultural capital: (a) aspirational capital, (b) linguistic capital, (c) familial capital, (d) social capital, (e) navigational capital, and (f) resistant capital. Yosso (2005) argues that all six forms of capital can be utilized to empower students and their educational journeys.

Yosso (2005, p. 77) defines aspirational capital as the "hopes and dreams" students have for their future. Linguistic capital consists of the various languages that students speak and bring to their college environment, including "the ability to code switch in a variety of settings" (Yosso, 2005, p. 78). Familial capital refers to the social and personal human resources students have in their precollege environment, drawn from their extended familial and community networks (Yosso, 2005, p. 79). Social capital includes peers and other social contacts, that students utilize to gain access to college and navigate other social institutions (Yosso, 2005, p. 79). Navigational capital refers to how students utilize their skills and gain assistance from resources, information, and people to help them succeed in their educational journey and navigate social institutions (Yosso, 2005, p. 80). Resistance capital is based on the experiences of communities of color towards securing equal rights and collective freedom (Yosso, 2005, p. 80).

METHODOLOGY

The research site for this study was California State University, San Lorenzo (CSUSL), a four-year public university located in a suburban area of Southern California. This university is a medium size campus of approximately 15,000 full-time students with 46% enrollment of Hispanic students. Participants had to meet the following criteria to participate in a survey, and a follow up interview for those that volunteered: (a) Gender identify as "Male," "Female" or "Other," (b) culturally identify as Latino/a, (c) attend a CSU (California State University) recognized as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). "Other" was given as a gender option for participants yet no participants selected this option.

The researcher practiced snowball sampling by contacting advisors, program coordinators, faculty, and administrators who had prior or current contact with students that met the criteria of the study. An introductory email describing the purpose of the project was dispersed to each faculty, staff, and administrative member, along with a link to the online survey. The introductory email and survey were shared through university student support list-servs and other student service mailing lists.

The online survey entailed 40 questions related to: first generation status, parent and sibling education levels, major, age, identifying the number of mentors that participants have, ethnicity, campus involvement, and language spoken at home. Sixty-nine participants completed the online survey, and six volunteered to sit for structured interviews. The interviews were scheduled via

email and held in person in a study lab at CSUSL. Qualitative interviews provide insights into deciphering themes based on the participants' experiences through open-ended questions (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2003). The interview questions were based on the theoretical framework and focused on addressing mentorship outcomes, with a focus on the impact of gender differences between mentees and mentors. Participants were asked: (a) How do mentors best support your aspirations and goals? (b) How do mentors strengthen your ability to navigate the higher education experience? (c) What issues or experiences would the mentor comprehend if of the same gender? (d) Is your institution adequately providing access to mentorship opportunities? (e) How do mentors strengthen your ability to utilize peers and other social contacts?

The six interview participants presented a diversity of experiences and backgrounds. All but one interview participant were on track to complete a Bachelor's degree, while one is a second-year Master's in Public Health student. Two participants are single mothers, one male and female participant are veterans, and one male is married. The two student veterans enrolled as undergraduates previously attended a community college. Two students participated in their institutions' Faculty Mentoring Program, and one participated in the McNair Scholars program. All participants had a faculty mentor.

Table 1

Participant Descriptions

Pseudonym	Age	Major	Gender	Notes
Anuel	23	Psychology	Male	Queer Identified
Ozuna	26	Finance	Male	Student Veteran/ Transfer Student/ Married
Yandel	22	Counseling	Male	McNair Scholar
Ivy	25	Psychology	Female	Single Mother/ Transfer Student/ Faculty Mentor Program Participant
Becky	25	Public Health	Female	Queer Identified
Cardi	36	Psychology	Female	Student Veteran/ Transfer Student/ Single Mother/ Faculty Mentor Program Participant

All the interviews were transcribed and the data organized to prepare for analysis. (Creswell, 2003). The analysis consisted of open coding, axial coding, and critical evaluation. Analysis entailed deciphering patterns found in the data through the use of preliminary codes to identify potential themes (Charmaz, 2006; Saldaña, 2013). The survey data was analyzed using SPSS. Spearmen and Pearson correlations were predominantly utilized to find meaning between variables, coupled with cross-tabs. These various analysis techniques were used as there is evidence that this approach provides a more robust approach for interpreting mixed methods data (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2003; Patton, 2002; Saldaña, 2012).

The researcher disclosed his position related to the research topic and participants so that his biases and perspectives could be monitored throughout the research process and considered in the presentation of findings. It was disclosed that the researcher is a first-generation Latino male that attended the study site as an undergraduate.

MENTORING EXPERIENCES OF HSI STUDENTS

The purpose of the study is to investigate the mentorship experiences of Latino students among university faculty and staff mentors of color through validation theory and the Community Cultural Wealth model (Rendón, 1994; Yosso, 2005). Through this approach, this study can help address the impact of mentors of color at HSIs, paying particular attention to the impact of gender pairing between mentors and mentees. Analysis of survey and interview data resulted in three emerging themes: Femtorship and Mentorship Differences, Mentors Serve As Guides, Mentors Broaden Career Perspectives & Networks.

Mentorship Differences

Respondents to the interviews suggested that the mentorship experience differed according to the gender of the mentor and mentee. As Ozuna, a 26-year-old finance major stated: "my mentor was of the same gender, a male understands being a father or breadwinner, and constantly put under certain pressures to provide. I feel like, male mentors understand that as a male." Among males interviewed Ozuna is the only married male. His comment suggests that matching a male mentee with a male mentor provided an opportunity for greater understanding of male gender roles and experiences. Yandel, a 22-year old counseling major shared that having a male mentor provided a greater understanding for discussing the ways the school- to-prison-pipeline impacts males of color. Yandel added, "Male mentors of the same gender, they know not a lot of male students go to college nor finish off you know. Especially being Latino and first generation, like myself." Yandel states that male mentors have a greater understanding of social disparities experienced by males in the P-16 pipeline. There is also the issue of toxic masculinity, which in the Latino culture it is interpreted as "machismo." Anuel, a 23-year psychology major who identifies as queer, elaborated on the cultural understanding between him and his mentor which allowed them to have conversations on machismo,

> I have a mentor of the same gender and it was easy for him to understand growing up as a Latino male. We'd talk a lot about machista attitudes that exist in the Latinx community. We have open dialogues about toxic masculinity because it's something that we've seen growing up. That was a unique experience that not everyone can understand.

Male participants shared having a stronger connection with their mentors as a result of shared gender mutuality, based on understanding of cultural norms and values as Latinx males.

Femtorship Experience

Like male participants, female participants expressed having a unique mentorship experience according to a gender mutuality with their female mentors, or femtors. Femtor, is used to describe female-identifying faculty and staff mentors. Femtorship, expands on the interaction between the student and femtor. Cardi, a 36-year-old psychology major, shared that her mentor recognized her responsibilities as a student and a mom. Cardi experienced feeling validated when her mentor would acknowledge her successful management of academic commitments and duties as a mom. Cardi shared,

> My mentor is a female and a mom, but when she was going to school she wasn't a mom. She often says she is very impressed with the way that I manage my time, responsibilities at home as a single mother, and still

> work. She understands that motherhood takes a lot out of you, especially when you were you doing it by yourself.

Like Cardi, Ivy who is 25-year-old psychology major, expressed the impact of having a female mentor that understands firsthand being a student and a mother,

> My relationship with my mentor because we're both mothers I think she definitely comprehends what it's like for me to be in school and to have the responsibility of taking care of my child on my own. That's valuable to me because even having a mentor that is not a parent, they probably wouldn't understand what it's like for me. I don't know what my experience would be if I had a male mentor even if he was a father, unfortunately, being a single mother really does come with its own experiences.

Gender pairing between mentors and mentees brings forth a unique understanding of gender roles and experiences for Latino students. Analysis of the survey data also suggest a connection, with 41% of males agreed that mentors of the opposite gender impact the mentorship experience, and 20% of females agreed. As Table 2 indicates, the majority of respondents for both genders did not appear to have a strong opinion regarding the importance of gender matching for mentoring.

Table 2

Differences Between Mentor Gender Impact on Mentorship Experience & Gender

		Does Having A Mentor of The Opposite Gender Impact The Mentorship Experience					
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Gender	Male	2	5	13	10	4	34
	Female	0	6	22	6	1	35
Total		2	11	35	16	5	69

Mentors as Guides

In reference to the components of the cultural wealth model (Yosso, 2005), all interview participants identified their faculty mentors as agents of change that propelled their navigational and social capital. Mentors shared advice and stories from their undergraduate experience as a way to identify with students. Yandel shares, “mentors, they help you navigate your higher education experience through advice from their own experience. Through their road they've gained certain skills such as time management, so they know the specifics, like where to go or what to do.” Yandel, a 22-year-old male, affirms that by mentors sharing their undergraduate experience it serves as a guide for him to understand how to find their way through majors, classes and other opportunities. Anuel, a 23-year-old male, appreciated the reassurances he received as queer and first-generation student as he inevitable made errors in his journey through college:

> I had mentors who were first generation and queer that had a hard time getting through their undergrad. They gave me like a do's and don'ts when it came to navigating college. That was helpful cause I got to learn from their experiences and mistakes, and then I still made some of my own. And when I did, I told them about it, they kind of helped reassure me that it's not the end of the world and to use it as a learning experience. Using their experiences is like a template for what I can do, but still making it my own, going through my own challenges, and really being able to use that as learning tools.

Cardi, a 36-year-old female veteran, experienced a different mentorship experience as an older transfer student and parent. Being a student parent entailed working full-time to support her child. It also required leaving immediately after class for work which impacted her ability to spend time on campus. Being available less frequent on campus caused her to be unfamiliar with student support resources and centers. By participating in the Faculty Mentoring Program (FMP) her mentor was available to help ease her anxieties about accessing services and acclimating to campus,

> My mentor was amazing at answering every little question I had, whatever email I sent she'd respond within 24 hours, if not sooner. She was able to fit me into her schedule even though she was on a sabbatical last semester. Her just sharing knowledge was something that really has helped me navigate my education goals, and she put me in contact with other faculty. If she didn't have an answer to my questions, she immediately would email other faculty members to ask them. She did the same thing with my academic advisor I was able to get into my minor right away and see the chair of Spanish. She minimizes the anxiety and the stress of being an older transfer student that knows nothing about this institution. Sharing her knowledge and answering my questions has helped me navigate my college experience.

As stated earlier, by disclosing information from their undergraduate experience mentors helped provide mentees a guide to overcoming obstacles and building resilience. This was critical to strengthening the navigational and social capital of mentees (Yosso, 2005).

Exploring The Graduate School Process

First generation participants shared many questions and anxiety about understanding the process of applying to graduate school. Anuel, 23-year-old male shared,

> I have a desire to pursue a master's in student affairs, so my mentor taught me what that application process look like. That mentorship helped me solidify what it is I wanted to do in the future. Having people who never doubted me really helped. They said, hey, what do you want to do, let's talk about the steps on how to get there. Reinforcing this idea that you can do it and I'll help you get there, really helped me get to my goals and helped me set my aspirations a little bit higher than I would have if it was just myself.

The partnership between mentor and mentee during which the processes needed to navigate to the next step of the student's journey are made clear, helped Anuel solidify his career interest, providing concrete support for the attainment of his goals, and increased his knowledge of the process for applying to graduate school. Ivy, a 25-year-old single mother, also shared that her mentor was essential to understanding the unwritten components of applying to graduate school. Ivy shares,

> My mentor has significantly made a positive impact in me. I now know what a GRE is, I actually went through a GRE course in the summer. I didn't know what a CV was and now I actually have a CV. I didn't know that I had to get letters of recommendation, and so I have that. Also just thinking about the fact that when you're going for graduate programs, you're really applying to be under a P.I., and I didn't know that. I thought it was just like a program. She taught me it's not about the school you're going to. You really wanna make sure you match yourself with a good PI to be under, who's going to guide you.

Mentors of color are agents of change as they guide students on identifying careers of interest, support the attainment of goals, and understanding the process of applying to graduate school. This guidance is particularly critical for first generation students who may need assistance from mentors who can expose the unwritten rules and share institutional knowledge, as capital, that can support students in making informed decisions about their future. The first-generation students that participated in the survey, appear to support this point, as the majority (62) of participants (n=69) that identified as first generation, agreed or strongly agreed that having a mentor impacts a student's educational experience.

Table 3

Impact of Having a Mentor as a First-Generation Student

		Does Having A Mentor As A Student Impact Ones Educational Experience				
		Strongly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Indicate If First Generation Status	Yes	3	3	18	32	56
	No	0	1	6	6	13
Total		3	4	24	38	69

Navigating Unwelcoming Space

Mentors help students navigate the higher education setting, but they also helped them navigate unwelcoming spaces. Becky, a 25-year-old public health major is in a predominant male field of study, as a graduate student. As a woman and a person of color, she felt that her environment was unwelcoming. Her mentor, who is a Latina, not only supported her aspirational capital (Yosso, 2005) by validating her position in the field as a capable student, but also helped her navigate these spaces by preparing her for every step. Becky shared,

> My mentor really understands the kinesiology field, it is very male dominant, and the whole fitness world in general. She understands I am a

> minority in my classes and cohort of nine. Because I'm a woman, I think she understands that sometimes although we may be doing the same work and we'd be presenting on the same things, to get ahead we have to work twice as hard for some reason to prove ourselves. Which is unfortunate, so she really makes it a point for me to not only know everything I need to [do] when I stand up there, and believe in myself knowing that I am capable, if not more capable than any other man in my field or area of study.

Anuel, a 23-year-old psychology major, shared that having mentors that guided his experience in predominantly white field of work, such as Student Affairs helped his confidence as both a person of color and as someone who identifies as queer:

> When I worked down in student housing I had a mentor who identified as Latinx. A lot of the conversations we had were about, okay, you are an individual in a space that might not be tailored towards you. So how can you go in and occupy that space? He gave me tips on how to go in and not feel out of place in a room full of white professionals where I might be the only Latinx individual. Having a boss who identified similar[ly] gave us something to talk about. I had another mentor who identified as gay as well, we were able to talk about how that identity can affect my career in student affairs or how it might create new relationships in student affairs.

Mentors are more than just academic guides as they also help students navigate fields that can be isolating by gender or race and ethnicity. Often mentors have had similar experiences of identified as "the only one" in their departments or areas and can provide credible advice as students acquire skills to navigate through institutional areas in higher education.

Navigating Career Options Holistically

As the majority of the participants were first generation, they expressed difficulty understanding career options that they can pursue according to their major. Mentors are essential to helping students explore careers holistically beyond conventional choices. Conventional is described by participants as careers most popular according to their given major. Ozuna, a 26-year-old veteran, shares that his mentor expanded his understanding of career choices by encouraging him to integrate his linguistic capital (Yosso, 2005), such as his ability to speak Spanish. Ozuna shares,

> As a marketer she's like, you can always do something else because you speak Spanish. You have that second understanding of culture it'll help you with bigger endeavors in a company. If a company expands outside of the United States, you can support operations in a Spanish-speaking country. She gave me a really good insight in how I can better myself professionally.

Ivy, a 25-year-old single mother shares that her mentor asked her probing questions to help identify her truest interest based on personal values, rather than pursuing a conventional career choice. Ivy shares,

> My mentor was very transparent with me, she said, you don't have to do this just to do this. Like, if you want to do this, then that's great I'll give you the tools and all the support that you need. It was really good being able to talk to someone who understood what it's like following this path because you have to. I have to get my master's and my PhD, but she asks, is that really what you wanna do, is it really the field that you're interested in? Asking those heart level questions helped me realize what I'm meant to keep pursuing as I go through my career and education. So she really did help start opening up my mind to what my real goals and aspirations were, rather than just what I thought I should be doing.

Becky, a queer identified 25-year-old student also shared planned on following a conventional plan like Ivy, until she met with her mentor who helped her better frame her aspirational capital (Yosso, 2005). Becky shares,

> She really kind of opened the door for me in this field of public health. She's kind of taken my appeal to public health and pushed me to go into certain realms and bits. Not only research but also doing this adolescent health program where we are doing intervention study on students. She's helping me look at health in a holistic view by not just sticking to my initial realm of kinesiology. My goal initially was to be a physical therapist, but now I see that there's a bigger role that I need to play in the community, which is working in the community with these vulnerable populations. She's kind of shaped me, by pushing me to do things that I would not normally done if I was following the normal path.

Latinx females continue to experience the lowest educational outcomes compared to every other group in the US, but consistently maintain high aspirations for themselves and their children, highlighting the importance of mentors in helping Latinx females acquire skills to shape a plan to realize their dreams (Auerbach, 2004; Delgado-Gaitan, 1992, 1994; Solórzano, 1992; Yosso, 2005).

It is also important to note that the first-generation experience can be negatively impacted by not having support to acquire navigational and social capital that can impact students' understanding of career options. The role of mentors thus becomes even more important when students do not come into contact with professionals of color in their communities.

Access to Broad Networks

Mentorship is essential to building the social connections, or capital, that mentors share with mentees as they are connected to resources and faculty that can propel their educational and career experience. Cardi, a 36- year-old veteran states,

> My mentors put me in contact with other faculty members, in order for me to ask the questions that I need to ask. That's what makes me less afraid and anxious to talk to faculty, because a lot of times we think that we're bugging them or that they're really busy. But the faculty have been very open with me, it has been extremely helpful.

Becky, a 25-year-old student shares that being supported through the resources that her mentors make available to her affirms her position as she acquires navigational skills:

> They make a huge difference if I need any kind of help, it doesn't matter if it's school or career related, my mentor has someone I could speak to. She's provided me, socially, people who know the topic or can connect me with someone who knows somebody else who could help me out with whatever I need.

The survey results also provide evidence of the importance of the support experienced by students regarding career exploration, and the role mentors play in connecting students with faculty and campus resources.

BUILDING AN HSI MENTOR COMMUNITY

The four themes emerged from the analysis of the survey data: (a) Femtorship and Mentorship Differences, (b) Mentors Serve as Guides, (c) Navigating Unwelcoming Spaces, (d) Mentors Broaden Career Perspectives & Networks. Participants expressed having positive experiences with their faculty mentors according to gender pairing. Male mentees identified with their male mentors and appreciated the opportunity for shared understanding of male gender roles and issues that males face in the P-16 pipeline (Contreras, 2011; Noguera et al., 2011; Solorzano et al., 2005). Female mentees expressed having a unique experience with their mentors, particularly those that also identified as mothers. Mentees experienced feeling validated as their mentors recognized and commended their ability to manage school commitments and attend to their children (Rendón, 1994). Rendón (1994) highlights the importance of validation as a confirming process when led by faculty. Although Bordes and Arredondo (2005) argue that mentor gender and ethnicity has no significant outcome on the mentorship experiences of Latino students, this project suggests otherwise with the strongest evidence from the qualitative data obtained from the student interviews. This work also indicates that mentors' willingness to share their experiences regarding their intersectionality of gender and ethnicity is critical for students as they acquire navigational capital.

Mentors are critical guides to students as they support their navigation through the higher education setting. These findings support mentorship as pivotal for Latino students to overcome institutional barriers as they acquire the navigational and social capital needed to succeed in higher education (Clark et al., 2013; Contreras, 2005; Medina & Posadas, 2012; Torres, 2006, Yosso, 2005). Mentors shared information from their personal experiences that helped support students as they navigated through their undergrad and grad programs. This sharing of advice reflects Yosso's (2005) linguistic and familial capital, offered as advice to mentees through story telling founded in common experiences shared through cultural knowledge as 'familia.' There is a need to further investigate the mentorship experiences of students who are parents and transfer students, as their needs differ.

Mentors contribute their knowledge, experience, and perspectives to a mentees professional and personal development (Healy & Welchert, 1990; Smith et al., 2000; Tareef, 2013). Mentors served as guides to students by helping them understand the process of applying to graduate school and its requirements, addressing a critical need in the pipeline to the academy. Students expressed that the support acquired helped affirm the pursuit of their goals and helped them build resilience as their mentors helped them manage failure or frustration.

These findings suggest that the mentor role at HSIs is critical in expanding the navigational capital needed to diversify the academy, but that mentors are also important in supporting the aspirational capital of Latinx students (Yosso, 2005). Mentors not only guide students academically, but they also help students navigate unwelcoming spaces. Participants were guided by their mentors as they navigated career fields dominated by males and Whites. Students shared the value of mentors as they validated students' self-worth and capability in their respective fields (Rendón, 1994). Additional research is needed to strengthen the literature in this area to help support practices that can address mentoring in unwelcoming spaces for students of color. To note, the participant that was navigating a predominantly White field identified as queer, which is an identity shared with his mentor. This brought forth a unique mentorship experience that acknowledged the complex intersectionality evident in many communities. There is a need to further examine the outcomes to pairing students with mentors according to intersectionality.

Mentors also provided guidance by providing students connections to experienced professionals and introduction to social contacts. In one case, a student's awareness about career options grew substantially as his mentor elaborated on the benefit of being bilingual in the marketing industry providing him unique job opportunities that the student had not considered. By highlighting linguistic capital, the mentor employed an asset-based perspective to valuing the skill of being bilingual (Yosso, 2005). Participants expressed that their mentors helping them identify their truest career interests while providing specific paths and contacts that strengthened their social capital (Yosso, 2005).

Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings of this study reinforce the need for faculty and staff of color in CSU recognized as HSIs as they support the progression of Latino students. There are several strategies that administrators and faculty can utilize to enhance the mentorship experience of Latino students through programming and interactions. For example, mentorship programs must be cognizant of embodying a strength-based approach through a design that incorporates validation theory and the community wealth model. Secondly, institutions must challenge deficit-thinking among its minority students. Third, faculty need to encompass culturally responsive teaching practices to guide and increase the student success of Latino and minority students. Fourth, for administrators that oversee faculty mentorship programs, it is important to offer students an opportunity for a match with mentors of the same gender.

In addition, findings suggest that institutions must take time to understand students' identities to best determine the correct fit in matching with a mentor, as mentors may need to reflect the mentee's intersectionalities of race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation. Furthermore, although training programs exist to support faculty mentorship programs, it is essential for institutions to encourage faculty to practice their mentorship skills.

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