

EXPLORING THE ACADEMIC EXPERIENCES OF LATINO/X MALES IN HIGHER
EDUCATION THROUGH MENTORING

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

Using a qualitative methodology with a critical qualitative inquiry methodological approach, this dissertation explored the academic experiences of 15 Latino/x males from South Central Los Angeles in higher education through mentoring. A Community of Cultural Wealth lens was used to understand how Latino/x males succeeded in their higher education trajectory even when they had to overcome racism and other systemic challenges in higher education. Through the findings and the framework, it is evident that mentoring is an asset that Latino/x males come to college with and as such should be a form of capital that can be added to Yosso's (2005) Community of Cultural Wealth model. Overall, this dissertation provides a contribution to the overall Latino/x male research agenda, especially towards research that discusses how to better mentor these males of color in higher education.

Keywords: Latino/x male, mentoring, familia, community of cultural wealth, qualitative

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my comunidad. Mom, thank you for supporting me throughout these 7.5 years that I have been in Tejas, both for my master's and now doctorate degree. Even if that has meant being away from home. Your constant rezos y bendiciones have allowed me to get to this point in my life and I would not be the man that I am today if it was not because of your consejos de madre. It is these consejos, rezos and bendiciones that have allowed me to persist in higher education, even when they have told me countless times I do not belong here. To my sister, I thank you for your unwavering sacrifice that you have given not just to our entire familia, but to me specifically, by providing me with tough love and sincere advice throughout my entire life. To my godchildren, I love you with all my heart and I hope I have been able to set a good example for both of you as you start your lives. Always remember that Padrino loves you both so much and will always be there to support you in your educational and life endeavors. To my grandmother Mama Challos and grandfather Papa Esteban, whom although you left me and my familia too soon, I know you have been there every step of the way in my education. I hope from heaven you both are proud of me and know that you have also set an example in me of what un Pasillas really is. Papa Esteban, you were my mentor, my grandfather, and my father figure, and you will always continue to be that. I miss you and mama Challos every day, but I hope I can continue to make you both proud. To the teachers and faculty who have supported me throughout my education at Menlo Avenue Elementary School, Foshay Middle and High School, UCLA, UT Austin and TAMU, thank you for believing in me, even when others did not. Your teachings as educators played a crucial role in getting me to where I am today. To the rest of my extended family, to my friends, and colleagues, thank you for forming part of my small comunidad. For familia, for South Central, for CalifAztlán. Gig 'Em Aggies!

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Contributors

This work was supervised by a thesis (or) dissertation committee consisting of Professor Vicente Lechuga (dissertation committee chair), and dissertation committee members within my department consisting of Professor Christine Stanley, and Professor Glenda Musoba. Finally, my outside dissertation committee member was Professor Pat Rubio Goldsmith of the Department of Sociology. All work was completed by the student independently, but provided to committee members to provide feedback. Dr. Lechuga provided the majority of the feedback for each chapter and provided the framework for each chapter as he was the dissertation committee chair.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Education scholars argue that Latino/x male students experience difficulties in the academy stemming from systemic issues that particularly impact the Latinx population entirely. Specifically, college students coming from a cultural background in which males carry more responsibility, such as males in the Latinx community, specifically face academic challenges related to their racial and gender subgroup (Feagin & Cobas, 2015). These systemic issues include racial and gendered targeting (Guo & Harlow, 2014), linguistic challenges (Yah, 2013), citizenship status (Chavez, 2013), familial responsibilities (Chavez et al., 2017), financial challenges (Ayala, 2012), educational practices in schools (Santiago et al., 2015), criminalization of Latino/x males (Rios, 2011), among others. As a result, work that explores the educational challenges that limit Latino/x males' higher education access informs the research on academic intervention tools, such as mentoring. Such research provides an understanding for how Latino/x males can succeed academically across a P-20 education pipeline, specifically in higher education (Sáenz & Ponjuán, 2012; Sáenz et al., 2016).

Mentoring for Latino/x males in higher education is important because it helps these students in various ways. Latino/x males feel supported on their college campus when they have mentors, because they have someone who they can outreach to when they have academic, collegiate, or financial inquiries, or when they have questions about navigating their college education (Clark et al., 2013). Mentors also help Latino/x males feel seen, in particular if the mentor is another Latino/x male. Latino/x males help Latino/x male mentees create connections on the basis of shared their experiences as they have a first-hand understanding of the experiences Latino/x males endure in their quest for higher education access and degree

completion (Pérez II, & Taylor, 2016). Mentors also establish safe spaces for Latino/x males to open up and speak about their experiences, whether educational, financial, social, or other experiences. These safe spaces contribute to good mental health, an issue that is not only taboo in the male community in this country but is particularly taboo in the Latino/x male community, as it is culturally embedded in Latino/x males that men do not talk about their feelings because it makes them weak or homosexual (Gloria et al., 2009).

Unfortunately, the common myth of the education system in the U.S. is that it provides an equal education for all students, regardless of race and gender (Gandara, 2005). Soberingly, Latino/x male students, just like their Black male student counterparts, experience unique educational prejudices stemming from the deeply rooted white supremacy that has been ingrained in the fabric of this country since the white colonizers first arrived at México, Central and South America (Lopez, 2000). These educational prejudices are perpetuated through racial stereotypes, racial rhetoric, and even behavioral policies within the P-12 education system that deem Latinx students as uneducated and savages and target Latino/x males through their association of savagery because of their Aztec, Mayan, and Incan ancestry (Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2014). The Latinx population's indigenous roots historically influenced the persistent conceptualization of Latino/x males as violent criminals, ignorant indigenous people, etc., who have to be actively policed, and reminded of their inferiority to white people and their systems (Valdés, 2005). This is specifically reflecting in Latino/x male students' schooling retention rates, across their P-20 education pipeline (Gandara & Contreras, 2009; Nogüera et al., 2012; Solórzano et al., 2005).

The Latino/x Male Education Pipeline Dilemma

Scholars have found that one of the realities of the constant reproduction of these failed policies, especially in their P-12 education, is that these students (and their parents) do not realize that the schools they attend are not meeting their academic needs (Noguera, 2012; Hill, & Torres, 2010). Therefore, students, in this case, Latino/x males, do not realize that they experienced a disservice in their education until they attend college, where they are exposed to a critical education knowledge of the foundation of our education system across a P-20 educational pipeline (Contreras, 2011). Unfortunately, the problem becomes specifically challenging for Latino/x males because this racially gendered minority student population has the largest dropout rates of all of their student counterparts (Sáenz et al., 2016). For example, Perez Huber et al's (2015) work argues that out of 100 Latino/x male students who enter elementary school, only 60 Latino/x males graduate high school, only 11 receive an Undergraduate degree, only 3 receive a master's degree, and only 0.3 receive a Ph.D. or Ed.D. Therefore, this study will provide an understanding of how formal or informal mentoring practices influence the academic success of Latino/x Males in college, and how mentoring in general, may help these students overcome the racist barriers that make it difficult for them to succeed in these spaces.

The Importance of Mentoring for Latinx Students

Implications of scholarly work on Latino/x males has pushed for the importance of more student experiences and their voices when talking about how formal or informal mentoring practices in college influences the academic success of Latino/x males and helps them overcome systemic racism in higher education (Pérez II & Sáenz, 2017; Sáenz et al., 2015). Unfortunately, it remains minimal in comparison to African American male research that highlights how mentoring helps these students overcome racism in higher education (Harper et al., 2015).

Mentoring has already been identified as a key tool for education success amongst Latino/x males, but it has yet to be identified as a key tool to help Latino/x males overcome systemic racism in higher education.

Research that captures the voices of Latino/x males and their mentoring experiences in higher education is necessary for understanding the overall importance of mentoring for underrepresented student populations in higher education. Mentoring is a relationship built between two individuals, as a way for one individual to support the other to overcome challenges that the person might be facing. A mentoring relationship is especially critical in helping vulnerable populations that have been systematically disenfranchised or need guidance with an issue they are facing (Clark et al, 2013; Jackson et al., 2014). Mentoring research outlines the importance of understanding the academic experiences that student mentees have faced before engaging with them, either Latino/x males or Latinxs in general, in the mentoring process (Lechuga, 2011). Such a tool is necessary for populations that have been historically marginalized, persecuted, killed, and are racially and gender-stereotyped, like Latino/x males (Cabrera et al., 2016; Rios, 2011; Zarate & Burciaga, 2010).

An added layer of distrust stems out of Latinx and White relations throughout the U.S.’ White supremacist history of Latinx persecution. This plays a large role in the distrust amongst the Latinx community related White individuals because White people have historically used Latinx people when it benefits them. This has created an interest convergence, the concept to describe how black people’s interests are only addressed when they converge with that of white people in this country (Delgado, & Stefancic, 2012). In Solorzano’s (1997) work on Critical Race Theory, we are introduced to how this same concept also is prevalent amongst Latinxs in this country. This remains deeply rooted in political support and systematic programming for

Latinxs in the U.S. While there are many examples that could be given here where Whites have used interest convergence to use and dispose of Latinx people in this country, the most prominent one dates back to the Mexican American war (Quinones-Rosado, 2016). In this example, Mexicans were considered White under U.S. law briefly after the U.S. first acquired the states of New Mexico, Utah, Nevada, Arizona, California, Texas, and Colorado under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo after the U.S. defeated Mexico in the Mexican American war of 1846-1848. Under this treaty, Mexicans were given the opportunity to stay as U.S. citizens in the newly acquired states or leave for Mexico. If they stayed in the U.S., they would be allowed to keep their lands that they owned, and under U.S. law, only citizens were Whites. This meant that Mexicans who had just gained U.S. citizenship, were White. Under U.S. law, only White people were allowed to own land as well. Later, when the U.S. wanted to take away the lands of the Mexican people, the U.S. government changed the law declaring that Mexicans could no longer be legally considered White.

Historical examples like this one, illustrate why there has been a historical resentment and distrust in the Latinx community of whites and African Americans who engage in anti-Latinx practices, and other Latinxs who echo white supremacist sentiments in the U.S. (Gay, 2006; Fujioka, 2011; Lopez & Pantoja, 2004). School policies, academic intervention tools, government assistance programs, and mentoring programs, to name a few examples, have created distrust amongst Latinxs in this country when they come from whites (Sánchez, & Colón, 2005). A big reason for this distrust is because such "assistance" has historically benefited whites more than Latinx students in three ways. First, white mentors have historically engaged in service actions towards others, like mentoring, through a white savior lens, where they feel that they can save these oppressed students, further perpetuating the problematic viewpoint that

marginalize students experience systemic challenges because they bring these challenges to themselves (Brunnsma et al., 2017).

Second, white individuals have also engaged in mentoring partnerships with marginalized groups out of white guilt (Grzanka, 2010). In other words, whites engage in mentoring based on the idea that they know that the white population has done wrong in the past as a collective and want to rectify the mistakes of the past by engaging in service actions that support marginalized populations in this country (Grzanka, 2010; Linder, 2015; Louis, et al., 2018). Unfortunately, white guilt does not benefit marginalized populations because the intent with which the action is undertaken is not only meant to help the marginalized population, but rather to help white people feel better for what their ancestors did in the past (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2004). Third, white individuals have also used support mechanisms, designed to support students of color or marginalized populations, as a way to further disenfranchise or further perpetuate systemic oppression towards Latinxs in the US (Rivera, 2019). Mentoring programs, for example, is an academic intervention tool historically used by whites to support undeserving communities in this country (Brown, 2009).

It is important to note that not all white mentors, educators, and education practitioners lack the cultural competency training to deal with the societal, and racially gendered issues that these students face in their education and society. Nevertheless, it is equally important to note that there are some white and privileged faculty mentors who do lack the racial insensitivity and true racial understanding of Latino/x male students. (Castellanos et al., 2016). Fortunately, such challenges have paved the way for the adoption of educational intervention tools by support programs for people and students of color. Such programs have seen a positive result of mentoring on Latino/x males, specifically, when these males of color are mentored by other

Latino/x males (Jackson et al., 2014; Sáenz et al., 2015). Latino/x males experience more personal growth with Latino/x male mentors, either in a faculty to student educational relationship, or an actual formal or informal mentoring relationship (Liang et al., 2013). Such an intervention tool is most prevalent in a Predominantly White Institution (PWI), where Latinxs are the minority (Hurtado & Ponjuán, 2005).

Engaging Latino/x males in informal mentoring programs and informal mentoring practices where Latinx faculty or administrators in college are involved is important because Latino/x male mentees have historically experienced negative interactions with authority figures, like police officers who are mostly white (Rios, 2007, 2011). Due to systemic racism endured throughout these student's lives, Latino/x males grew up distrusting authority figures like police officers, or educators. This issue continues in their lives even in college, and as a result, see faculty members as authority figures, having an automatic distrust of them because these males of color see them with distrust because of the lived experiences they come to the university with (Harris III, 2010). Another example of Latino/x males' distrust is the criminalization stereotype that has been built around being Latinx and male. For example, when a Latino/x male passes a white woman on the street, Latino/x males often recall that the white woman will express fear through her actions, like grabbing a tight hold of her purse (Harris et al., 2015).

The Importance of South Central Los Angeles

Latino/x males from South Central Los Angeles, California (South Central) are the participant sample and the geographical location utilized. Specifically, this dissertation explores the influences that mentoring has on Latino/x male academic success. Scholars might inquire why researchers should be interested in examining the educational experiences of Latino/x males in South Central when there already exists a robust research agenda that explores their academic

and educational experiences throughout the U.S. This is important because Latino/x is part of a diverse population whose lived experiences vary racially, ethnically, and geographically. Said differently, Latino/x males on the west coast do not share the same lived experiences as those on the east coast (Arreola, 2009).

Within the context of California for example, Latinx people in Southern California face different challenges stemming from their surrounding community, political, socioeconomic, and other challenges that they must undergo compared to Latinxs in Northern California (Arreola, 2009). There is a gap in the literature of Latino/x male research agenda that fails to explore the experiences of Latino/x male students from a geographical context. This is a factor that could provide a comprehensive understanding of the academic experiences of Latino/x males in higher education (Garcia et al., 2017). Therefore, I will focus on South Central Los Angeles, to further explore how this geographical area is important when addressing how mentoring influences the Latino/x males in higher education and how their academic experiences are influenced by their geographical context. From a population context, this geographic location has been historically inhabited by African Americans, but now it is home to a majority population of Latinx from Mexico, Central, and South America, and who has a rich history of social unrest because of the large historic racism against Latino/x males throughout the city (Rosas, 2019). Given the complex competition for resources between Black and Latinx communities in this part of the city, it is thus important for us to engage in research that explores how educational intervention tools like mentoring support Latino/x males in areas like South Central.

Such geographical areas are important to the discussion of Latino/x males because of the added layer that South Central is part of the city of Los Angeles, a city that is home to one of the largest Latino populations in the United States, with nearly 2 million Latinxs living in the city of

Angels (U.S. Census, 2019a), making it the largest metropolitan Latinx populated city in the US (Pew Research Center, 2019). Additionally, such research is important because, in an overarching context, Latinxs in the U.S. comprise the largest minority population in the country, with nearly 61 millions of them living in the US, making up 18.5% of the entire US population, according to the most recent Census data (U.S. Census, 2019c). Specifically, Los Angeles County (LAC), California has one of the largest Latinx populations in the state of California and the US, with nearly 5 million Latinxs living throughout LAC (U.S. Census, 2019b). Unfortunately, despite the large representation of Latinx living in LAC, this population has been historically affected heavily by many socio-economic, educational, and health-related issues, both on a local, state, and national level (Saenz, 2004).

Problem Statement

Latino/x males are systemically pushed out of their P-20 education pipeline (Sáenz & Ponjuán, 2009, 2011). A sobering fact is that there is very little scholarly work that explores the possible solutions and academic retention tools that can cause Latino/x male students to both succeed academically and thrive in potentially racist environments such as colleges and universities. There is a dearth of literature that has explored mentoring and mentoring programs as a partial solution to these issues (Morales, 2010). This study hopes to partially fill that gap in the literature. This literature gap further creates an opportunity in the overall Latino/x male research agenda to create solutions for the academic success of Latino/x males, rather than treating such research as an afterthought and low hanging fruit, that does not receive the proper focus that can truly expand the Latino/x male research (Gloria et al., 2009). Furthermore, the research gap is exacerbated by the limited research that captures the stories of Latino/x males who have succeeded in higher education and who come from communities that are

stereotypically considered dangerous, like South Central Los Angeles (South Central) (Rosas, 2019). Such stories are necessary to understand how Latino/x males throughout the U.S., overcome challenges that have emerged in their respective neighborhoods to graduate from high school, pursue a college education and achieve degree completion (Martinez & Ulanoff, 2013). Therefore, I offer the following research questions.

Research Questions

The following two major research questions, followed by sub-questions under each research question, will guide my dissertation study. These questions are necessary for exploring the role and impact of mentoring in a Latino/x male's education and the role this academic intervention tool plays in helping the student combat racism in education.

1. What role does formal and informal mentoring play on the academic experiences of Latino/x males in higher education?
 - a. How accessible were the mentoring experiences at the Latino/x male's higher education institution?
 - b. What is the importance of having a mentor of the same gender in their higher education experience?
 - c. What role did a mentor play in helping Latino/x male students overcome the academic challenges these students faced in higher education?
2. To what extent do formal and informal mentors help Latino/x males overcome racism in higher education?
 - a. How did mentoring help Latino/x males understand that they may or may not have encountered racism in their classroom or campus experience?

- b. What role do mentors serve in the educational experience of Latino/x males who experience racism in a higher education institution?
- c. If the Latino/x male student did not experience a racist issue in higher education, what would they recommend mentors do when working with other Latino/x male students who have experienced racism on campus or in the classroom?

Purpose Statement and Objectives

The purpose of this dissertation is to understand how formal or informal mentoring practices influence the academic success of Latino/x males in college, and how mentoring, in general, may help these students overcome the racist barriers that make it difficult for them to succeed in these spaces. The dissertation has the following objectives: 1) explore how mentoring influences the academic and racialized experiences of Latino/x males in higher education, 2) contribute to an ever-growing research agenda on Latino/x male students in higher education that continues to need expansion as Latino/x males are not a monolithic subpopulation group, and 3) explore the mentoring experiences of Latino/x males from South Central Los Angeles who attended college.

Having these objectives are essential in this dissertation because Latino/x males experience challenges that are unique to the navigation of their educational trajectory (Ojeda & Organista, 2016). Additionally, they have the largest graduation pushout gap across the P-20 education pipeline in comparison to their educational counterparts (Sáenz & Ponjuán, 2009, 2011, 2012). Scholarly work that explores the academic persistence of Latino/x males is critical because it remains minimal in comparison to the literary work that exists on other racially and gendered minoritized populations, like African American males (Harper et al., 2015). Work that specifically captures the voices of its participants is necessary when exploring the impact of

mentoring because it can help researchers gain a better understanding of how to academically support Latino/x males, specifically those who come from historically and systemically marginalized Latinx communities like South Central (Huerta, 2015; Perez II & Sáenz, 2017).

Conceptual Model

This dissertation study will use Tara Yosso's (2005) Community of Cultural Wealth Conceptual Framework (CCW), adapted and reamplified from Oliver & Shapiro's (1995) Community of Cultural Wealth Model to explore how Latino/x males in this study experience higher education. By using this lens of understanding, the dissertation remains true in its intent, which is to move away from the deficit-based narrative that often paints Latino/x males as the problem for why they experience a graduation gap in higher education, as well it helps provide exposure to how this racially minoritized student sub-population succeeds in higher education. Such research is necessary when engaging in Latino/x male literature because too often does the literature on Latino/x males reinstates problems over and over again.

One important finding in the literature is that a small amount of literature, which actively seeks solutions for Latino/x male academic success, utilizes CCW to provide a lens of understanding of how these men of color succeed at the university level. Additionally, such a framework considers the racism that these students experience in higher education while also offering scholarly findings that can provide comprehension of how Latino/x males come into higher education with a set of skills that provide them with the opportunity to succeed. Such a framework can provide readers with an understanding of how Latino/x males utilize mentors, both formal and informal, to gain capital and then to succeed in their higher education institutions. CCW uses aspirational, familial, social, navigational, resistant, and linguistic capital that provides Latino/x males in this dissertation study with the community cultural wealth that

they need to navigate their higher education academic experiences. As a result, I will first provide a brief explanation of the roots of CCW, which stem from Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Bell, 1980). CRT is a movement of "...a collection of activists and scholars interested in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power. The movement considers many of the same issues that conventional civil rights and ethnic studies do but places them in a broader perspective that includes economics, history, context, group – and self-interest, and even feelings and the unconscious. Critical Race Theory questions the very foundations of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law (Delgado, & Stefancic, 2012, pp.3)."

As a result, I explain how CCW is rooted in CRT through each form of capital that makes up the conceptual framework I am using in this dissertation. I will then discuss how they all support Latino/x male academic success. To take it a step further, in Chapter 5, sticking with the tradition of the influences that the framework has had on racially minoritized groups, I will discuss how a seventh capital was not only created to enhance the model but paved the way for scholars to further develop new forms of capital that can enhance Yosso's (2005) model. As a result, in the last chapter of this dissertation, I will explain how a possible eight capital can arise from this dissertation, to contribute to Yosso's original six forms of cultural capital that make up the community of cultural wealth model conceptual framework.

Significance of this Dissertation

This dissertation study is critical because of the political rhetoric of the former President of the United States, Donald J. Trump. Although he is no longer in office, his legacy of divisiveness lives on. Such divisive rhetoric labels Latino/x men as a "bad hombre", exacerbating the systemic issues that racially and gender targeting of Latino/x males, a systemic issue that

stems from deeply rooted racism in the US, which continues to push these students out of their educational pipeline (Rios, 2011). In summary, I hope to convey why this dissertation is necessary to explore how Latino/x males use mentoring to persist in higher education despite the systemic racism that these students encounter in their P-20 education pipeline. (Sáenz et al., 2015).

Overall, this study will make a scholarly contribution to higher education because formal and informal mentoring is important to consider when addressing the academic needs of Latino/x male students in college (Sáenz & Ponjuán, 2009). Specifically, capturing the stories of Latino/x males can help us understand what mentoring practices work for these students and which do not. Unfortunately, the majority of mentoring programs in higher education were foundationally and systematically created by white institutional leaders who continue to fail to inform themselves on how to truly serve Latino/x males in higher education and simply impose their perceived best practices on these students (Feagin & Cobas, 2015; Feagin & Ducey, 2019; Huerta & Fishman, 2014; Zuberi & Bonilla-Silva, 2008). Therefore, this dissertation will contribute to higher education by providing a better understanding of how Latino/x males use mentoring to succeed in higher education even when they are faced with systemic challenges like racism at their institutions.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Literature Review

This chapter explores the literature that looks at the academic experiences of Latino/x males in higher education through mentoring, while also exploring on how mentoring helps these males of color overcome racism in their college education. Such scholarly contribution acknowledges that these male students of color must overcome specific systemic issues that are highly prevalent in the academic experiences of Latino/x males. Soberingly, there is a common belief amongst parents and aspiring college students in this country today, is that the United States (U.S.) provides an equal education for all students, regardless of race, socio-economic status, religion, creed, or sexual orientation, amongst other things. Another common belief is that attending college is the only way to socially advance in the United States (US) (Gandara, 2005). Unfortunately, students of color are often faced with the crude reality that the education system is unequal and inequitable, specifically in meeting the academic needs of Latinx students in this country (Sólorzano et al., 2005).

Such academic inequities are important to understand because Latinx students encompass the largest pushed-out rates from the education pipeline, specifically amongst Latino/x males (Nogüera et al., 2012; Sáenz et., 2016). Unfortunately, this critical realization does not come until late in the educational trajectory of Latinx students. It is here where they gain the critical knowledge to understand that both their pre-kinder through twelfth grade (P-12) and their undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral education (P-20 education pipeline) were founded for the educational advancement of Whites in the US (Alfaro et al., 2014; Contreras, 2011; Feagin, & Ducey, 2019; Thelin, 2011; Zuberi, & Bonilla-Silva, 2008).

Inherently, education scholars and sociologists argue that students of color experience academic challenges stemming from systemic issues that particularly target specific racial groups, like Latinxs in the U.S. (Feagin, & Cobas, 2015). These systemic challenges include racial targeting, linguistic challenges, citizenship status, familial, and financial challenges, all of which contribute towards limiting their opportunities for college access (Yosso et al., 2009). Fortunately, one of the critical components of overcoming the challenges that specifically limit Latino/x male higher education access and degree completion, is mentoring (Jackson et al., 2014). Thus, exploring the academic experiences of Latino/x males in higher education through mentoring can inform scholarly work that addresses the large graduation gap that Latino/x males experience across a P-20 education pipeline (Sáenz & Ponjuán, 2009; 2011; 2012). Such research can inform education practitioners and researchers alike about the efficacy of mentoring practices (formal and informal), and their impact on Latino/x males in higher education. Latino/x males often face a wide array of systemic challenges that widen their degree completion gaps in comparison to their Latina/x female student counterparts (Gandara, 2017). They also face other systemic challenges like high policing issues on college campus, low socioeconomic status (SES) issues, and other systemic issues as well (Huerta, & Fisherman, 2014; Sáenz, Ponjuán, Segovia, Del Real Viramontes, 2015).

Thus, this dissertation contributes to the Latinx scholarship because as this literature review found, mentoring is not a one-size-fits-all, especially for Latino/x males because of the complexity and diversity amongst the Latinx community (Apfelbaum et al., 2016; Torres, & Fergus, 2012). If there is any takeaway from this literature review, it is that there is a scholarly need to understand that Latino/x males are not a monolithic subpopulation in the U.S. and require different academic and educational needs to complete college. Therefore, exploring

Latinx issues is a complex yet critical educational research focus because Latino/x males vary within their ethnicity, phenotype, linguistic abilities, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status, among other intersectional identities that have yet to remain explored within the context of Latino/x male research (Longerbeam et al., 2005; Ponjuán et al., 2015).

Fortunately, academic retention tools like mentoring positively impact Latino/x male academic success because such support system provides these males of color a mentor that can provide educational advice or life mentoring (Jackson et al., 2014). Additionally, mentoring helps Latino/x male students overcome obstacles unique to them, like racially and gendered targeting, familial obligations, financial challenges, racial stereotyping, and even challenges with their immigration status (Hall, 2017; Sáenz, & Ponjuán, 2009). That is why Latino/x male researchers call for education practitioners, readers, and researchers alike to engage in a transformative conversation that can lead towards developing academic success tools for the higher education access and degree completion of Latino/x males. They also call for the recognition that white supremacy is the root cause of the systemic issues that widen the graduation gap and negatively impacts the lives of Latino/x males in the U.S. (Jung et al., 2011). Such systemic issues include how white supremacy is deeply rooted in systems of economic and social advancement in this country, like the various systems of education, such as higher education (Patton, 2016).

Considering the Latino/x male student Background in Mentoring and its Importance

Another equally important call for deeper investigations of the issue's Latino/x males experience in higher education is made by scholars who call for the recognition of lived experiences that make mentoring such a key educational component of Latino/x male academics. To answer this call, Lechuga & Stanley (in press), as well as Sánchez et al.'s (2008) work,

discuss in their work the importance of recognizing the Latino/x male student background in mentoring practices is critical in providing a more comprehensive and effective mentoring relationship that can support these students even more. Quintanilla's (2017) work also understood this call, by exploring how the student's background allows the mentor to understand what issues the student has experienced throughout their lives before the mentoring relationship begins. This allows the mentor to be more mindful of how to approach conversations with the mentee, and how to better engage with the student. Scholars like Sáenz and colleagues (2015) also argue that mentorship practices are critical for Latino/x male students because they often attend schools with limited information on how to get to college or even how to succeed in the classroom when in their P-12 education pipeline. This problem is exacerbated because Latinx students often attend largely crowded school districts with a large need of teachers and counselors to support the vast number of students that attend these schools (Madrid, 2011).

Consequently, much of the college information that these schools should be offering their students to prepare them to attend college, does not trickle down to them because there is not enough bandwidth to help every student in the schools that Latino/x males attend. This often forces schools to focus on the so-called "promising students" or top-tier students with good grades, leaving those who do not fall in these categories, behind to fend for themselves (Kimura-Walsh et al., 2009). Unfortunately, schools in low socioeconomic communities are home to a large population of Latinx students in the U.S. In fact, as noted in *Appendix A*, the U.S. Census data in 2017 recorded that Latinx people hit an all-time low poverty rate in 2017 with 18.3% of them living in poverty. This is critical because the Latinx population in the United States continues to have the largest poverty rates of any racial groups in this country (U.S. Census, 2018). Thus, the schools in low SES communities often lack the resources and the staff to

expand the bandwidth necessary to have the proper number of academic counselors paired with the proper number of students that can provide meaningful counselor-student relationships.

These relationships are necessary for the Latinx student to prepare successfully for the college application process and their academic survival in college as well. Unfortunately, the lack of one-on-one counselor interaction is not there, and many students fall through the wayside because they do not feel that they have the adequate support of their college counselor in their high school education (Kimura-Walsh et al., 2009). This is a mentorship opportunity that is lacking from these students' educational lives, even before they reach college, causing a gatekeeping challenge that fails to provide the Latinx student the proper sense of belonging necessary to meet their college access needs (Jackson, et. al., 2014). As such, mentorship opportunities facilitate the support that schools cannot offer because they increase the students' chances of academic success, higher education access, retention, and degree completion.

Three Reasons for why Mentoring Is Critical to the Academic Success of Latino/x Males

Beyond the importance of mentoring Latino/x males in their P-12 education, the literature revealed how formal collegiate mentoring programs or informal mentoring practices in colleges and universities often offer Latino/x male students a one-size-fits-all educational mentoring approach (Watson et al., 2016; Zalaquett, & Lopez, 2006). As a result, within this scholarly work, education scholars revealed three important reasons for why mentoring is essential to the academic success of Latino/x male students in higher education. First, Latino/x males often suffer from a lack of educational support in the classroom (Huerta, & Fisherman, 2014). Secondly, these students can often be racially, and gender scrutinized, as well as criminalized by the education system (Rios, 2011). Thirdly, Latino/x males often lack a role model outside of

school because often the parents of these students are of low socioeconomic status who must work multiple jobs to support the family, thus rarely present (Sáenz et al., 2015b).

Latino/x Males' Lack of Educational Support

Scholars argue that Latino/x males benefit tremendously from mentoring, both formal and informal because they suffer from a lack of support in the classroom (Brooms et al., 2018). Latino/x males experience a lack of help-seeking behaviors because of their cultural upbringing that they should not ask for help, and if they do, they would be seen as weak and with a lack of intelligence. This is exacerbated by the fact that faculty outreach is minimal unless students seek them out for support (Cabrera et al., 2016). Additionally, when Latino/x males are taught by white faculty, these males of color are less likely to outreach to these educators because historically, white educators have racially stereotyped Latino/x males as ignorant and as individuals that will not get far in life throughout their educational careers (Harwood et al., 2015). Furthermore, Latino/x males often come into the classroom with a lack of sense of belonging and the last thing they want to do is to ask for help from their faculty member because they fear that asking for help will make them seem ignorant and incapable of grasping the classroom material (Pérez II, 2017).

The Racially Gendered Scrutinization and Criminalization of Latino/x Males

Latino/x males also experience racially gendered scrutinization and criminalization, leading them to need mentoring to overcome these systemic barriers that often serve as gatekeepers of their degree completion (Portillos, González, & Peguero, 2012). Scholars who engage in Latino/x male research often find that these males of color experience racially gendered motivated discrimination, like comparing their education progression in the classroom to white males and failing to engage these students in the classroom over their white male

counterparts (Cejda, & Hoover, 2010). Latino/x males also experience being stereotyped by their faculty, administrators, or other school officials as dangerous or violent, especially for Latino/x males who come from racially stigmatized geographical areas (Solórzano, 1997; Lynn, 2006). They also experience perceptions in the classroom by their professors about their lack of intelligence and lack of care for their degree completion. These racist behaviors often expressed through micro aggressive comments, make these men of color feel less than other students and further fuel their imposter syndrome (Ramirez, 2014; Hernandez, 2020). This further deters these students from seeking the help that they need to succeed academically, often because of a lack of cultural competency amongst faculty, especially amongst white faculty specifically (Garcia-Louis et al., 2020).

Scholar work like that of Feagin and Cobas' (2015), as well as that of Rios (2011), have found that these education approaches are white supremacist tactics utilized to actively disenfranchise these males of color out of their education pipeline. Even more sobering, critical scholars also argue that education practices like zero-tolerance policies across a P-20 education pipeline, often utilize Latino/x males' gender and race as a systemic tool of oppression to further disenfranchise Latino/x males in higher education, both implicitly and explicitly (Sáenz, & Ponjuán, 2011). These racist practices by faculty are foundational and systemic in education because the system of higher education was created for the academic and social advancement of whites in this country (Thelin, 2011; Zuberi, & Bonilla Silva, 2008).

Lack of Cultural Competency in Educators of Latino/x Male College Students

Finally, Latino/x males also benefit from mentoring practices because they experience a lack of cultural competency in the classroom by their faculty, and by their student peers as well. Scholars have found that these males of color often experience academic challenges in the

classroom because of feeling a lack of sense of belonging. Such feeling is often triggered by faculty members who fail to understand the cultural experiences that often deter Latino/x males from being fully engaged or fully present in the classroom (Marrero, 2016). Additionally, a large issue that Latino/x males undergo in their academic experiences in higher education, is being taught by white faculty. Unfortunately, white faculty are the predominant educators in college, as it is a career field that is predominantly white.

Due to the majority of faculty being white, Latino/x males experience a huge cultural disconnection in the classroom with their professors. This often deters these males of color from succeeding in the classroom because they feel invisible and that there is a lack of caring for them in the institution (Banks, & Dohy, 2019; Marrero, 2016). The lack of representation goes a long way to making a Latino/x male feel part of the campus, and as such, mentoring, whether formal or informal, helps to fill this void that is often missing from the college institution. Mentors, especially other Latino/x males, provide the visibility that these men of color need to achieve a safe space in their academics or simply in their education, that can make them feel cared for and seen as contributing students of the campus (Perez II, 2017). These mentors also help these students create families away from home, building relationships that help Latino/x males persist in higher education (Sáenz, et. al., 2018).

Challenges that impact Latinx Students in General

Beyond the three reasons for why mentoring is critical to the academic success of Latino/x males, over 55 different scholarly articles were reviewed solely on mentoring which revealed five recurring academic issues that Latinx students experience in higher education; racial targeting (Szkupinski et al., 2014), linguistic challenges (Garcia, 2009), the immigration status of some Latinx students (Ayón, & Becerra, 2013), financial challenges (Cerezo et al.,

2013), and familial challenges (Ayón, 2014). An additional important finding that was not as common as the previously mentioned but still came up in the literature review was geographical challenges (Durán, 2018).

Racial targeting

Educational scholars have found that while more Latinx students are going to college now than ever before, the numbers do not reflect the continued educational challenges that this racially gendered minoritized student population continues to experience across their P-20 educational pipeline (Cejda, 2020). Specifically, scholars have found that one of those educational challenges that particularly hinders Latinx student's educational trajectory towards accessing higher education, is racial targeting (Cobas et al., 2018). While all racially minoritized student populations experience some sort of racial targeting, Latinx students experience racial targeting that stems from historical oppression of Latinx people in the U.S. (Catalano, 2013; Chavez, 2013; Chulup et al., 2019).

In education spaces, this racial targeting is manifested in various ways. For example, racial targeting includes the active policing and suspension that Latinx students experience in their P-12 and higher education pipelines (Rios, 2011). Another way is through the dismissal of their lived experiences, by interpreting their academic struggles as excuses to not perform well in school in comparison to their white peers (Cabrera, & Padilla, 2004; Grissom et al., 2015). Latinx students also experience racial targeting through the overt discrimination that educators and school administrators impose on Latinx students when they hyper criminalize them both in the primary, secondary, college classrooms or campuses, specifically with regards to Latino/x male students (Rios, 2010). Finally, scholars have also found that Latinx students are often

perceived as outsiders from another country that should be feared rather than supported and encouraged to succeed (Chavez, 2013; Chuang, & Roemer, 2015; Romero, Zarrugh, 2018).

While many racially minoritized student populations experience some sort of racial targeting, Latinx students in particular experience the racial targeting that stems from historical oppression of Latinx people in the US (Catalano, 2013; Chavez, 2013; Chlup et al., 2019). Specifically, Latinx students experience historic racism that stems from the racial inferiority that comes from Latinx having indigenous ancestry. Martha Menchaca's (2001) work can be used to understand how Latinx people's indigenous ancestry today is something that white people in this country utilize as a tool of oppression to downgrade Latinx people, all while also believing that Latinxs are racially and cognitively inferior because they have indigenous ancestry. Trepagnier's (2017) work further adds that it is important to examine how and why white people see white skin individuals as racially and cognitively superior to people with non-white skin.

All this systemic racism dates to the colonizing times both in the now U.S. and in Mexico, Central, and South American countries (Menchaca, 2001). The idea that indigenous people are savages, violent, and simply meant to serve the white master, stems from Christopher Columbus's times, who is said to have "first discovered" the Americas. Since the late 1400s, white people have invaded, illegally and unlawfully immigrated and stolen the livelihoods of people in North, Central, and South Americas with the firm belief that having a white skin pigmentation is superior to any other color pigmentation, among other premises. Furthermore, according to this white racist mentality, there is inherent inferiority; both cognitively, physically, and racially, that puts white people at the top of the racial ladder in comparison to African and Indigenous people around the world (Feagin, & Ducey, 2019). We must recognize both African and indigenous racial groups because, given the slave history throughout the new world, that is

why you have Latinx people in this country today who are both of African and Indigenous ancestry, as they are now known as Afro-Latinx people who are also part of the Latinx issues that they face in education today (Fergus, 2009; Greene, 2007; Haywood, 2017).

Throughout history, indigenous people have been seen as racially inferior, and in Latin American countries, the situation is no different than in the US. As such, there is an inherent connection between racism and colorism, as a lot of the racial targeting that takes place happens more prevalent to Latinx people who are of a darker complex (Golash-Boza, & Darity Jr, 2008). Mix this with the fact that men of color are inherently seen as more dangerous in the US (Cammarota, 2004), and you have a recipe for racism. Latino/x males are seen as dangerous because of their indigenous ancestry and white supremacists who interpret this as historically savage and dangerous (Chavez-Dueñas, Adames, & Organista, 2014; Gomez, 2018), as well as because of the media, which is controlled by white people in power, who continue to feed the image of Latinx men as gangsters, violent criminals, rapists, etc. (Berg, 2002; Brooks, & Hébert, 2006; Dixon et al., 2019).

Our very own former president fed this kind of rhetoric to the American public and around the world, throughout his presidency and even prior to being the 45th president of the U.S. In his speech where he announced that he would run for president, Donald J. Trump, said that Mexicans, "...bring drugs, bringing crime, they were rapists, and some [he assumed] were good people...". He also spread his racist rhetoric into a country-wide panic against MS-13, a strong gang from El Salvador, who he said was deeply embedded in this country's communities. While this was just about Mexicans, his racist rhetoric created a chain of reactions that although always present in this country, arose a sense of utter and overt racism against Latinx people in this country (Pulido et al., 2019).

The overt racism that Latinx people in this country have foundationally and historically experienced in this country persists today and continues to directly affect Latino/x males in higher education today as a result (Feagin, & Cobas, 2015; Reynolds et al., 2010). There are various ways in which white supremacist ideology, an ideology that has dominated U.S. culture since its creation, continues to instill such mentality throughout various systems through mediums like media outlets. Such media outlets include things like movies, tv shows, and even the news media outlets in this country. These mediums portray far too often portray Latinxs as criminals and as people who do not care about school, especially Latino/x males in the U.S. (Rodríguez, 2018). Unfortunately, this cancer infects our very own educators. As these students navigate their P-12 education pipeline, Latino/x males are systemically targeted by their teachers and their school administrators who have either already fed into the racist rhetoric built overtime about the Latinx population, or simply let themselves be influenced by mainstream media. These educators and school administrators thus continue to perpetuate this systemic racism in a vicious cycle that only causes further perpetuation of the systemic oppression of this racially minoritized population in education systems.

Soberingly, this is already something that Latino/x males grow up experiencing in their local communities and throughout the U.S. (Cammarota, 2004). Such educational policies like those of zero-tolerance policies do not make it any easier for these males of color to succeed at this level of education. As previously mentioned, these men of color also experience random backpack searches, that although designed to remove contraband or possible weapons from the school, often result in Latino/x suspensions (Rios, 2011). These policies are developed to weed out students from their education pipeline, pushing out the students with the highest disciplinary actions against them, which are often Latino/x males (Skiba et al., 2011). Consequently, this

prevents them from accessing higher education. Thus, P-12 education institutions often serve as gatekeepers that deny them the opportunity for men of color to pursue a college education because they stop them from being accepted into college, even before they apply to these institutions of higher learning (Nogüera, 2003).

Racial targeting continues to manifest itself in college for these men of color, who often experience racial targeting in the college classroom through small racial micro aggressive comments either by faculty or students in the classroom, that include but are not limited to white students (Harwood et al., 2015). In the case of faculty, professors can often exert racial targeting when they do not offer the same classroom support to Latino/x males to their white male counterparts (McCabe, 2009). Additionally, faculty are known to racially target Latino/x males when they make assumptions about their level of interest in the classroom material through a deficit-based thinking lens (Pappamihiel, & Moreno, 2011). Additionally, Latino/x males are no strangers to racial discrimination on campus, and a big reason for this is both their brown skin color and their language, which is often synonymous with each other (Findling et al., 2019). As a result, Latino/x males are seen as inferior, both foundationally and systemically, because of the indigenous roots attached to being Latinx in this country and because the Spanish language is attached to a once colonized group (Feagin, & Cobas, 2015).

Given the racial targeting experiences of Latino/x males in the college classroom, we must recognize the imperativeness of mentoring in their academic success in the classroom. Mentoring as an academic tool of intervention for Latino/x males to combat racial targeting, can look different depending on if you are talking about a formal or informal mentorship relationship (Lechuga, 2011; Stanley, 2006). For formal mentorships, mentoring creates a space where students can step away from their academics and speak to a professional about what they are

going through, in this case, with regards to racial targeting (Zelaquett, & Lopez, 2006; Ragins et al., 2017). This professional individual, whether it be a professor or student affairs practitioner, then directs the student on how to access university resources to help him deal with the problem. It also provides the Latino/x male with the opportunity to meet professionals on campus that provide the student with a sense of belonging. Thus, Latino/x males see the power that this professional may have to facilitate this sense of belonging for the student or even to mitigate the racialized experience. Doing so can be as simple as pointing the student in the right direction of who can address the racial issue, he just experienced, providing a sense of visibility and understanding to the Latino/x male on campus (Morales, 2010; Tovar, 2015).

An informal mentor relationship looks slightly different. Such mentorship could be manifested through a friend or even a faculty member, but in a less professional manner, which although might provide comfort and security for the male of color, mainly provides friendship and familial support away from home (Morales, 2009). More importantly, though, informal relationships provide Latino/x males with a sense of community on campus that can make them feel like they belong on campus, often sharing a lot of the common values, both the Latino/x male and the informal mentor (Ayon, 2013). All in all, informal mentoring helps the Latino/x male to combat racial targeting by providing him with the opportunity to vent and have someone hear him out in his time of frustration. These types of mentorships are formed more organically than formal mentorship relationships because they are created. After all, both parties want to be in each other's lives. Usually, the mentorship relationship begins because the mentor is at a more advanced stage in their collegiate career, and they can then show the ropes to the Latino/x male. They can then talk to the mentor about how they navigated their college and racial experiences at the same time, providing informal insights into survival on campus (Pérez, & Sáenz, 2017). Most

mentorship relationships are often informal and in the case of Latino/x males, they are often more successful when the mentor is another male of color, specifically another Latino/x male (Sáenz et al., 2015b; Sanchez et al., 2018).

Latinx Undocumented Students

Another prominent challenge that limits Latinx college enrollment and degree completion is the legal status of some of the Latinx population in the education system (Chavez, et. al., 2015). Latinx students who identify as undocumented, often experience a lack of sense of belonging in school, and fear of deportation for them and/or their family members as well (Gonzales et al., 2013). Such fear and lack of sense of belonging cause these students to go into the shadows and stay as silent as possible by making sure that they do not give any form of information that may disclose their political status in this country (Jefferies, 2014). Their fear limits their opportunities of pursuing higher education because they fear that the information, they provide in any scholarship form or student aid from the state government will be distributed to immigration agencies, disclosing their undocumented status in this country, and making them or their family members vulnerable for deportation (Nienhusser et al., 2016). Despite educational institutions not lawfully allowed to disclose student information, these students experience a lack of knowledge attributed to many factors that not only deter these students from acquiring higher education access but also from achieving degree completion (Williams, 2016).

Unfortunately, undocumented Latinx students are unable to apply to any federal and the majority of state government student aid (Lauby, 2017). Additionally, Latinx high school students often are not aware that they are undocumented until they are going to apply to college. By then, it can be hard for some students to apply to scholarships and other college grants, that are non-federally funded and who can support these student's college endeavors financially.

Unfortunately, this can often deter students to attend college out of fear and lack of preparation to apply to any funding opportunities (Kantamneni et al., 2016). Also, undocumented students often attend overpopulated schools, and as a result, their administrators, counselors, or educators fail to provide them with the information necessary to keep the student knowledgeable about the college and financial application process (Gonzales, 2010). Another reason is that college students often seek community college institutions primarily (Nienhusser, 2014). Unfortunately, by that age when they can enroll in a college institution, these students often have financial responsibilities to their families (Terriquez, 2015), something that will be explored further in sections that follow this one. This mixed with a lack of federal funding, and a lack of financial information, makes it extremely hard for these students to pursue higher education beyond a community college or at least transferring quickly to a four-year institution (Long, & Kurlaender, 2009).

Thus, mentoring is essential to the academic experiences of undocumented Latino/x male students because it helps in various factors, on both a formal and informal mentoring basis. Formally, mentoring can provide institutionalized security for these men of color as they deal with the uncertainty of their undocumented status while in a higher education institution (Oberoi, 2016; Perez et al., 2009). Such security provides them with a sense of belonging (Stebbleton, & Aleixo, 2015) that alleviates, but does not remedy, the challenges that come with being an undocumented student, both financially and socially. Often formal mentoring for undocumented Latino/x male students can come from faculty, administrators, or student affairs professionals who mentor the student in an official capacity both inside and outside of their offices (Raya, 2018). These mentors are known to provide a home away from home for these students in their offices and can often be education practitioners that serve as an institutional bridge between them

and the university (Stebbleton, & Aleixo, 2015). In doing so, these mentors often point undocumented Latino/x males in the direction of educational and financial institutional resources that could provide these men of color with the support that they need to succeed academically at their collegiate institution.

Informal mentors are also equally important for the undocumented Latino/x male students. These mentors often also serve as a home away from home but are usually not connected to the institution on a professional basis (Zalaquett, & Lopez, 2006). These mentors are usually their friends or community organizations, or even family members who support these men of color in their academic success throughout their higher education pipeline (Perez et al., 2009). Often this form of mentoring is more transformational than formal mentoring because it provides students with a familial sense of belonging on their campus, or in the case of people like their parents or family members, these mentors serve as support networks that these men of color can recur to when they need advice about college or any other life events while in their educational institution (Morales, 2009; Stanton-Salazar, 2003).

It is important to note that undocumented students often come to college with these support networks that serve as mentors because they are the first people undocumented students recur to when they need support on anything regarding their academic experiences (Schueths, & Carranza, 2012). Furthermore, mentors who serve in an unofficial capacity, reinforce students' skillsets by encouraging them to pursue their educational interest, among other things. Informal mentoring amongst undocumented Latino/x males are more effective for two reasons. First, these men of color choose not to ask for help as men in Latinx communities are culturally conditioned to not ask for support. Second, fear of disclosing their undocumented status and becoming visible and thus having their legal status in this country be visible as well is another reason why

informal versus formal mentoring works more (Zalaquett, & Lopez, 2006). Overall, these men of color receive the informal mentoring as a mutual connection with another student or even a parent or family member, and especially one that can outreach to the student without having that Latino/x male asks for the help originally.

Linguistic challenges

Linguistic educational scholars have found that Latinx students, who are native Spanish speakers often have trouble understanding the language that is covered in the educational curriculum of the classroom (García et al., 2002). Latino/x male students often have academic challenges in understanding the curriculum of the courses that they take in their K-12 education, due to the lack of proper educational resources that they fail to receive in low SES community schools that are often found in Latinx communities throughout the U.S. (Zarate, & Burciaga, 2010). When these students get to college, they continue to experience these same linguistic issues in the college classroom, often preventing them from degree completion (Rios-Aguilar, & Kiyama, 2012).

Furthermore, these students experience a lack of support for their primary Spanish language, specifically stemming from the historical push for an English-only curriculum throughout the U.S., and in the case of this dissertation, particularly in states like California (Callahan, 2013; Contreras, 2011; Gandara, 2017). Scholars often argue that engaging in bilingual education practices is critical for students whose primary language is not English because students must master their primary language before they can master their second language given that some Latinx students grow up learning informal Spanish, rather than formal Spanish (Bailey, & Huang, 2011; Proctor et al., 2005). Linguistic challenges coupled with legal status can create a set of complex issues that some Latinx students need to overcome.

Unfortunately, this literature review revealed a large gap in the literature that connects Latino/x males and language issues across their P-20 education pipeline. While most of the scholarly research shows that Latinx students struggle academically in their P-12 education, scholars do show that they also struggle academically because of language, in their higher education (Nuñez et al., 2016). Unfortunately, their scholarly research fails to bridge the gap between Latino/x male educational issues and linguistic issues both in P-12 and especially in higher education.

Going back to our language discussion, language has often been used by white supremacist ideology as an indication of someone's legal status (Chiswick, 2009), racial inferiority (Feagin, & Cobas, 2015), and intelligence (Cobas, & Feagin, 2008). The literature reveals that language is utilized as a tool of oppression for Latinx students because white supremacist ideology has built over time in this country, the racist rhetoric that anyone who does not speak the English language, is seen as non-American and even cognitively inferior (Hartman, 2003). Historian Carlos Blanton writes in his (2004) book on *The Strange Career of Bilingual Education in Texas* that the Spanish language has been seen as inferior to the English language, not just in the state of Texas, but throughout the U.S., specifically in states like California, which have a rich history of Latinx inhabitation like that of the state of Texas. To problematize this even further, sociologists like Joe Feagin and José Cobas mention in their (2015) work that white supremacists have notoriously utilized the English language throughout history to retain the racism deeply rooted in systems throughout the U.S., including but not limited to, the education system where Latinx people take part of. As such, this impacts Latinx people in this country because the anti-sentiment against Spanish in education, as we see in Blanton's (2004) book, has never truly been unrooted from mainstream society and persists today.

This also impacts Latinx people because language is such an important aspect of the Latinx community. After all, it often carries culture with it (Rivera, 2012). Scholars have found that language carries culture throughout generations (Tellez, & Ortiz, 2008). This unfortunately has led to many individuals who do lose their Spanish language as they grow up, also lose their culture, often being one of the biggest critiques of the Chicano culture amongst Latinx people (Perez-Torres, 2006). Unfortunately, this is part of the same racist rhetoric that has been built by white supremacy throughout U.S. history because it normally blames the Latinx people for the active removal of the language, when this loss of primary language has been a result of the anti-immigration movement that caused for the anti-Spanish language sentiment in this country (Hopkins et al., 2014). This historicity must be recognized when talking about the challenges that Latinx people face in the U.S., because such anti-Spanish language sentiment, causes Latinx students in colleges and universities to refrain from speaking Spanish to blend into university life (Bernal et al., 2009; Urrieta, 2013).

Due to the historic implications of the Spanish language in a Latinx student, and by extension a Latino/x male student's use of it, mentoring is indeed a critical component within the language aspect of Latino/x male academic success in higher education (Alcocer, & Martinez, 2018). Specifically, having a mentor who can speak the Spanish language like the Latino/x male is significant because it provides the Latino/x male with a safe space for the male of color to feel a sense of belonging wherever the mentorship relationship is taking place. Sáenz and Ponjuán's research briefly mention it in their research (2009; 2011). They discuss the importance of addressing the academic experiences that these students undergo in their higher education pipeline, through a mentoring academic intervention. These scholars argue that students can have better academic experiences when mentors can understand the academic experiences that they

undergo, in this case of language. Other mentoring research also revealed the complexity amongst Latino/x male identities that must be recognized when describing the mentoring needs of these men of color. Race, gender, and language are three intersecting identities that influence the experiences of Latino/x males in higher education (Lozano, 2020; Rudolph et al., 2015). In the case of language, mentors must recognize the intersectionality of what it is like to be a Latino/x, a male, and a student who speaks a language considered foreign in the U.S. It is important to note that although the term of intersectionality was first coined to discuss the intersecting identities amongst African American females in Kimberly Crenshaw's (1990) work, her explanation on intersectionality is very much applicable towards discussions that refer to identities who become intertwined in a person of color's life, in this case of Latino/x males.

Specifically, mentoring influences the academic experiences of Latino/x males who experience linguistic challenges through formal and informal practices. For example, through formal mentoring i.e., academic counseling or even mentorship relationships between students and faculty helps Latino/x males who experience a lack of sense of belonging in the classroom or campus, feel like they belong. This is especially true when the mentor can speak to the student in Spanish or provides the space in the classroom or in the counselor's office to speak using their primary language and further encourages the speaking of Spanish speaking to better enhance their academic experience (Schwartz et al., 2009). Scholars have found that language provides the Latino/x males with the ability to feel like they are seen as mattering, as belonging, and that they are a contributing member of society (Castellanos et al., 2016). Unfortunately, most of the time, universities don't have an adoptive language component built in the classroom or any other aspect of their academics. This often only takes place when the student is taking Spanish classes in the Spanish department. As a result, when the professor or academic counselor, for example,

can speak to the student in Spanish, it triggers a sense of comfortability and familiarity because it automatically provides the student with a feeling that there are others like them as well who speak their language (Lo et al, 2015).

With regards to informal mentoring, Latino/x males who speak Spanish primarily, really can benefit from mentorship on this level through creating friendships with other students or even with faculty outside of the classroom and in social settings that speak Spanish as well. These mentorship relationships happen organic and often take place when the Latino/x male student hears other people talking Spanish in the classroom, or on-campus, or in social gatherings (Cox et al, 2014). As a result, Latino/x males who engage in informal mentoring based on language, have a more socially based connection that is often more powerful and provides a student with a strong community because these mentors can interact with the student much more and often beyond the confines of the university (Rodriguez et al., 2016). Additionally, these mentors also help Latino/x males establish a sense of belonging and visibility throughout campus, showing them that other students like them can survive their educational trajectories and who often speak the same language that they do and who can also share their culture as transmitted through the language (Sbaratta et al, 2015).

Financial Challenges

Financial challenges also influence the academic experiences of Latino/x males in higher education (Nuñez, & Kim, 2012). Latinx students in general often struggle financially as a large portion of them come from low income and low socioeconomic status (SES) communities (Landale et al., 2017). These low SES problems often prevent these racially minoritized students from college access because these students are not provided with the information necessary to apply for scholarships or even loans necessary to attend these institutions (Taylor, & Graham,

2007). As mentioned earlier, Latinx students often attend overpopulated P-12 public schools that do not have the bandwidth to provide students with adequate counselor support for each student. In this capacity, these schools fail to provide these students with the information necessary for them to learn about the financial opportunities that they may have for college access (Kimurah-Walsh, 2009; Luna, 2013).

As a result, some Latinx students do not gain the financial capital that they need from their schools, not because they cannot gain it, but because they are denied the opportunity for it. Fortunately, the Latinx community is very well connected and as a result, they gain this financial capital necessary to understand the financial aid process from their family friends, extended family members, etc. (Rosa, 2006). Unfortunately, this comes too late in the student's academic trajectory, causing these students to often go straight into the working field, or go to a community college (Kurlaender, 2006). While there is nothing wrong with either of these pathways, Latinx students often struggle economically because they do not possess a college degree. This is especially true for Latino/x males because of the cultural responsibilities at play that force the male of color to pursue a job that can help support the family right after high school, especially when they reach the adult age, the same age that they reach when it's time for them to go to college (Sáenz et al., 2013).

The sobering reality of this is that these financial challenges often cause Latinxs who go into community colleges to be pushed out of these institutions, even when the tuition cost is cheaper (Moreno, 2021). While there is financial help in these institutions, these students are often unaware of this financial help because the institution once again fails to provide them with this information. In the case of Latino/x males, research shows that they often do not ask for these financial resources and information (Dias, 2017; Salinas & Hidrowoh, 2018). Scholars find

that these institutions of higher learning could do more to support these students, especially by being more transparent about the financial resources that exist within the institution (Clayton et al., 2019). Nevertheless, they don't, and this causes students to fail to understand that there is money out there, they are just not made accessible to these students by the institution. This leaves Latino/x males having to learn how to balance both the financial challenges that have persisted in Latinx families while also learning how to balance the collegiate financial challenges as well (Arbona, & Nora, 2007; Contreras, 2009). That is where mentoring comes into the picture. Being able to offer formal or informal mentoring provides Latino/x male students with the ability to point them in the right direction of financial resources on campus that these male students of color otherwise would not seek (Sáenz et al., 2018). Mentors take on the role of guidance that Latino/x males often fail to seek themselves because they do not want to seem as uninformed, among other cultural-based machismo related reasons that these male students of color juggle with other responsibilities in higher education (Brooms et al., 2021; Huerta, & Fishman, 2019). The fact remains that Latino/x males face cultural responsibilities that often fall on the males of the family (Clayton et al., 2019). Such responsibilities often cause the male of color to stretch himself thin and not staying focused on his academics (Sáenz et al., 2018). Thus, mentoring can provide that sense of support and understanding, especially when the mentor is another Latino/x male as they share similar lived experiences with their mentee (Salinas et al., 2020).

Inherently, mentoring provides the male student of color with financial capital or simply with extra resources necessary for the student to make ends meet and persist in college (Rudolph et al., 2015). Specifically, education scholars have found that when it comes to discussing tough subjects, like finances, Latino/x males are more likely to talk to mentors who look like them, i.e.,

Latinx, especially if they are Latino/x males (Morales, 2009). Even then, scholars find that it is challenging for Latino/x males to speak about these issues because this is a sign of asking for help (Sáenz, & Ponjuán, 2009). Thus, mentors serve as a support mechanism that can help Latino/x males to be able to discuss these issues all while being able to gain knowledge of job opportunities or scholarships that perhaps they knew of but need the extra push to apply to them (Hines et al., 2019).

Formally, mentors play a role in helping mitigate Latino/x male financial challenges when they inform them of financial resources within the institution, like scholarships and grants, necessary to alleviate the stress of paying for college (Sáenz, & Ponjuán, 2011). Such formal mentors include faculty, academic counselors, and anyone who serves in an official capacity to support the academic success of this male of color through passing financial wealth from the mentor to the student. These mentors allow the student to feel like they care about them (Clark et al., 2013). Formal mentors, usually within the institution, provide students with the visibility that these students need to feel like they matter on campus and they are not just any number (Sáenz, & Ponjuán, 2012). Latino/x males often feel like they are not seen for various reasons. One of those reasons is that there is a lack of faculty representation on campus that looks like these males of color (Ponjuán, 2013). Another reason is a lack of faculty or even education practitioners within the institution, who are willing to hear them out and provide some direction for them (Huerta, & Fishman, 2014). Therefore, mentors serve in a capacity that not only supports them but with a safe space that provides Latino/x males with a sense of belonging on their college campus.

Informally, mentors also provide Latino/x male students with financial information that will help them pay for college, i.e., telling them about certain scholarships and grant

opportunities, just to name a few examples (Zalaquett, & Lopez, 2006). Informal mentors are often individuals who do not have an official position on campus (Sáenz et al., 2015b), or who are more of the friends, i.e., college friends or family friends, and family, i.e., parents or aunts and uncles, of the Latino/x male student (Stanton-Salazar, & Spina, 2003). These mentors are often more essential to Latino/x male academic success, because, for the most part, these mentors are racially, and even ethnically like Latino/x males (Erickson et al., 2009).

Nevertheless, informal mentors are not just other Latinxs who support them. They could be community leaders, or simply people who are heavily invested in the student's academic success and who provide them with words of wisdom. These mentors are known to provide students with actual financial support to pay for certain things in their college education (Ayon, 2013).

Additionally, these mentors are the first responders to Latino/x male's call for outreach, providing a space where these men of color could speak about their needs and struggles while lessening the cultural challenge than men of color do not seek help (Holloway-Friesen, 2019).

Informal mentors are truly integral towards alleviating the financial challenges of Latino/x males in higher education and are often more crucial than formal mentors in this capacity.

Familial Responsibilities

Finally, familial responsibilities can often present a challenge for Latino/x male academic success (Stein et al., 2014). One of the biggest challenges that Latinx students experience in their education pipeline, is choosing between a college closest to family or one that is further (Sanchez et al., 2010). The challenge with choosing a college in Latinx communities is that college decisions are not the sole decision of the student, but rather of the parents of the Latinx student as well (Ceja, 2006). This often results in the student choosing a college campus that is close to home, both as a cultural value of keeping the children close to home, and out of safety concerns

so that the family could reach the Latinx student if they were to need them (Perez, & McDonough, 2008). Latinx communities' value close relationships, and as such, keeping the children close to their parents or family members is vital to keeping the culture alive (Durand, 2011). Scholars have found that going away to college can often be seen negatively, as Latinx students face the daunting challenge of choosing between their family's aspirations and theirs (Bohon et al., 2006). While this is a problematic mindset, it is a prevalent form of thought highly present in Latinx communities.

It is important to note that this is not always the case where parents influence their child's decision. Scholars have found that such decisions can also often boil down to self-assigned obligations that these students place upon themselves to help the family pay for household expenses, or simply contribute to supporting the family household after high school, even when enrolled in college (Becerra, 2010; Pérez, & McDonough, 2008). Another cultural value deeply instilled in Latinx students is the value of family and helping them financially. When Latino/x male students grow up and become old enough to work and contribute to the family it is often a cultural responsibility that these individuals take care of their elders upon their self-growth into adulthood (Hill, & Torres, 2010). As a result, many Latinx students tend to take on self-assigned obligations when they reach 18 years of age, which is when they would normally transition from high school to college. It is also important to note that Latinx self-assigned obligations do not just come out of financial necessity, but out of health necessities as well, such as taking care of the health needs of their parents, i.e., taking them to their doctor's appointments, getting their medicine, or even continuing to be the translators of the family as some students tend to have that familial obligation of translating from English to Spanish legal and doctor documents, among other things, since a young age (Saunders, & Serna, 2004).

That is why familial responsibilities are such an extremely large challenge among the college-going Latinx community, specifically amongst Latino/x male students. Latinx students often struggle with the choice to uphold familial values or pursuing a college education (Carolan-Silva, & Reyes, 2013). Thus, formal, and informal mentoring is such critical components of addressing these issues in a Latino/x male college education. Mentoring provides the Latino/x male with the ability to discuss some of these topics in a safe space, like the self-assigned familial obligations and often the self-imposed guilt, that comes from going to college and having these responsibilities back home (Santos, & Reigadas, 2002). These males of color do not get the opportunity to voice these feelings a lot because in the Latinx community, males discussing their feelings or even having any feelings at all, makes the male seem weak and makes him seem like less of a man (Sáenz et al., 2015a).

In the case of familial responsibilities, formal mentoring looks a bit differently. These mentors serve the capacity of understanding the person and their experiences, of listening, but most importantly of all, of providing a safe space for these students. Often these mentors are family members, as a father or mother. Zimmerman, Bingenheimer, and Behrendt (2005) discuss how these mentors are what scholars have known as “natural mentors”, which are part of the formal mentoring process but have familial and blood ties to the Latino/x male. Faculty members, especially those who have a similar racial background and who have kids, fulfill the role of formal mentors as well. These individuals serve the role that the Latino/x male yearns for, which is to be able to be communicative and have someone understand his experiences (Salinas Jr. et al., 2020). It is important to note that the literature review did reveal that a common formal mentor is often a father that is caring and understanding and who hears what his son is going through and actively looks to support his academic success by alleviating some of the familial

burdens or even advises their son on how to progressively grow into the role of a male in a Latinx family. These are usually the first formal mentors that these men of color meet (Zalaquett, & Lopez, 2006). Informal mentoring is seen in this capacity but not as much. Informal mentoring often stems from individuals who care about the experiences of the Latino/x male student, but who are more like friends and family members that have no decision-making powers (Morales, 2009; Tovar, 2015). These individuals serve the purpose of providing a space where these men of color could vent to them and where the Latino/x male can feel like someone who shares his experiences, is hearing him out (Brooms et al., 2018). These men of color often find these friends in student organizations on campus or outside of the university and are usually the first people they outreach to because of not being able to have any decision-making in their lives (Perez II, & Taylor, 2016).

Geographical Location Matters

Beyond the general issues that Latino/x males experience in higher education, something that is often rarely discussed in literature focusing on Latino/x male educational challenges, are challenges associated with a geographic location that these students experience in their college education. Given the nature that Latinx people in the United States are such a diverse racially minoritized population, we need to recognize that Latinx people in for example the Western United States, encounter similar yet different racialized experiences than those in the Eastern United States (Becerra, 2010). One of the main differences for this is the political and historical differences that caused these individuals to make their way to the United States both in this country and in their home country as well (Schmidt et al., 2000). Therefore, South Central Los Angeles, a group of communities in Southern California, is a unique geographical location because of the large influx of Latinx populations from Mexico, Central, and South America who

have immigrated to this part of the U.S. for many years, and who now live with African Americans, the original settlers of South Central (Rosas, 2019; Vargas, 2006). Additionally, the political and racialized history that Latinxs have experienced in this part of the country, add another layer of uniqueness to the specific racially gendered experiences that Latino/x males face in South Central. These political and racialized experiences stem from the civil unrest that put Latino/x males under the magnifying glass throughout the city of Los Angeles, during the Zoot Suit riots, in which they encountered many racist acts and killings through the system of oppression thrust upon them by both the U.S. Navy and the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) (Alvarez, 2001; Franco, 2018). This continued though, with the specific persecution of Latinx and Brown males during the 1981 and 1989 Reagan administration, which resulted in racial profiling by police of Black and Brown males in the city of Los Angeles, specifically in racially minoritized and low SES communities like South Central (Monico, 2018). The system of oppression used during this time was yet again LAPD, who persecuted and wrongfully incarcerated Latino/x males for non-violent offenses in efforts to rid the streets of drugs and violence, but who was racially targeting low-income black and brown men of color in Los Angeles.

South Central Los Angeles is unique in comparison to other Latinx populated areas in the US because the communities that make up South Central were originally black (Rosas, 2019). African Americans moved here after violence against Blacks erupted in the South, after the Reconstruction Period (Kun, & Pulido, 2013). Mexican immigrants later followed suit during the Mexican Civil War and periods after because there were jobs in South Central, which was the original reason why Blacks moved in the first place (Martinez, 2016). Despite the racial segregation that existed in the West during the late 1800s and early 1900s, there were still more

opportunities for people of color here in South Central and throughout the West, in comparison to other areas throughout the US, which also saw a large influx of Mexican migration during this time (Rosas, 2019). Historically, South Central Los Angeles (SCLA) remains black, despite the huge influx of Latinx immigration to LA that has taken place throughout history (Vargas, 2016). First came Mexican people fleeing the Mexican civil war. Then Central Americans followed, with a significant yet smaller population of the Caribbean and South American Latinxs immigrating to the U.S. as well (Duany, 2011; Menjívar, & Abrego, 2012). Therefore, there is a mixture of Latinx immigrants that struggle through the same low SES issues, and who also must compete for the same resources with African Americans, Blacks, and other Latinx ethnicities in South Central (Rosas, 2019).

Overall, the recognition of the educational challenges Latinxs face in higher education is necessary if we want to engage in a true conversation about how mentoring influences the Latino/x male student for one main reason (Sáenz, & Ponjuán, 2009). Scholarly work has found that mentoring is one of the most effective academic intervention tools for the success of males of color in education, but unfortunately, scholarly work fails to recognize the foundational and systemic issues that racially and gendered groups experience in education and society (Smith et al., 2011). As a result, engaging in research work that discusses how geographical location influences Latino/x male academic success is integral towards understanding the academic experiences of these male students of color in higher education.

Overall Significance of Mentoring Latino/x Male Students in Higher Education

The research highlighted above also informs the research on Latino/x males, specifically, because these issues can often hinder Latino male student experience even more so than in comparison to their Latina/x female student counterparts (Sáenz, & Ponjuán, 2009; 2011; 2012).

Scholarly work explains that the larger population of Latinxs who do not pursue higher education, are Latino/x males stemming from historical oppression of Latino/x males in this country (Feagin, & Cobas, 2015; Zarate, & Burciaga, 2010; Nogüera, et. al, 2013; Saenz, et. al., 2016). Furthermore, Latino/x males have been historically marginalized, persecuted, killed, and racially gender stereotyped in this country, contributing to the educational distrust that some of these Latino/x males experience in education (Cabrera et al., 2016; Rios, 2011)

Educational scholars argue that knowing such critical history about Latino/x males is important when looking for educational intervention tools that can support such population that can help them overcome systemic challenges in their educational pipeline (Garcia, 2010).

Therefore, Latino/x male scholars argue that a key intervention tool for Latino/x male student success is mentoring (Saenz, et. al, 2015). Mentoring is a relationship built between two individuals as a way for one individual in the mentorship relationship to support the other to overcome challenges that the person might be facing. A mentoring relationship is especially critical in helping vulnerable populations that have been systematically disenfranchised or need guidance with an issue they are facing (Clark et al., 2013; Jackson, et. al., 2014). Mentoring research outlines the importance of knowing the experiences the student population has faced before engaging with the mentee when it comes to mentoring Latino/x males or simply Latino individuals (Lechuga, 2011).

This is necessary because white people have looked to help Latinx individuals, but from a white savior mentality that has done more for white people, than for Latinx people themselves. Additionally, such mentoring efforts have failed in supporting Latino/x males effectively because these white mentors, educators, and education practitioners lack the cultural competency training to deal with the societal and racially gendered issues that these students face in college and

across their entire education pipeline (Castellanos et al., 2016). As a result, Latino/x male scholars make the argument that Latino/x males have a better mentoring experience when they are mentored by a person of color, and even more crucial, when the mentor is another Latino male (Jackson, et. al., 2014; Sáenz, et. al., 2015). Latino/x males experience more personal growth in a Latino/x male to Latino/x male mentoring relationship, whether it is a faculty to student educational relationship, an actual formal mentoring relationship, or even in an informal mentoring experience (Liang et al., 2013). Further research has found that this happens because Latino/x males experience a lack in their sense of belonging as well as institutional racially gendered racism in college, especially in a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) where Latinos, in general, are the minority (Hurtado, & Ponjuán, 2005).

Understanding the level of importance of Latino/x male mentoring by Latinx faculty or administrators is crucial because Latino/x males have historically experienced negative interactions with police officers, mostly white, who they see as authority figures (Rios, 2007; 2009; 2011). Therefore, a distrust for authority figures is built, trickling down to the higher education context, especially when dealing with white faculty members, because these Latinx students see these educators as authority figures, thus building a distrust stemming from systemic oppression of Latino/x males in society (Harris III, 2010). Latino/x male mentoring by individuals with shared similar racial, ethnic, and even gender backgrounds is also essential because there is a trust that informed with individuals who share similar lived experiences (Harris et al., 2015).

Exploring Latino/x Males' Academic Mentoring Experiences through a Conceptual Lens

Overall, mentoring as an educational intervention tool is important to consider when addressing the needs of Latino/x males, but equally important, is a discussion that talks the assets

that these males' students of color use to succeed in their higher education trajectory. The literature revealed a lot of literature that discussed the issues Latino/x males experienced in higher education, or even prior to accessing higher education. Nevertheless, there is limited research that explores the assets that Latino/x males have at their disposal to use for higher education access, college persistence, and even degree completion. Engaging in such scholarly findings could inform scholars on how to better serve Latino/x males in higher education, using these assets that these males of color come to college with. That is why I have found that using Tara Yosso's (2005) Community of Cultural Wealth Conceptual framework provides us with that explanation. Latino/x males come to higher education with certain assets that allow them to succeed (Cerezo et al., 2013), yet they are not discussed enough in Latino/x male scholarly work. Additionally, using such conceptual framework allows scholars to understand how the various systems at play in Latino/x male academic experiences, often present challenges for them to succeed, including things like racism and socioeconomic status (Luis et al., 2020). Nevertheless, these males of color can succeed, and if we explore their stories, I believe we can begin to enhance the academic experiences of Latino/x males in higher education using what is in front of us, their success stories about how they used these assets to succeed.

Theoretical Framework

This dissertation uses Tara Yosso's (2005) Community of Cultural Wealth conceptual framework (CCW) to explore the academic experiences of Latino/x males in higher education through mentoring, and how mentoring helps these college-going male's students of color to overcome racism in these spaces. As noted in *Appendix B*, The CCW framework asserts that there are six forms of capital: *aspirational, familial, social, navigational, resistant, and linguistic capital*. The authors argue that these forms of capital demonstrate that Latinx students have the

cultural wealth to navigate their higher education academic experiences, providing a counternarrative to Latino/x males of color educational challenges that paint them as the culprits of their own educational downfalls (Sáenz, & Ponjuán, 2009; 2011). Given the conceptual framework's theoretical roots in Derrick Bell's (1980) Critical Race Theory (CRT), I will first provide an explanation of how CCW was developed to provide a critical counternarrative to racism of people of color, and how Yosso's framework came to be adapted in education. I will then go through each form of capital and discuss how they all support Latino/x male academic success.

Roots of Community of Cultural Wealth

Tara Yosso developed Community of Cultural Wealth (CCW) (2005) out of the necessity to provide the counternarrative that would help scholars understand the experiences of Latinx students in higher education. More importantly, though, her conceptual framework stemmed out of Critical Race Theory (CRT) (1980), a theoretical framework that stemmed out of Critical Legal Studies (CLS) in the 1970s to help scholars understand the experiences of people of color in this country. In her (2005) work, Yosso discusses how CCW essentially became a tool of CRT to challenge "...traditional interpretations of cultural capital..." (pp. 69). Her article on CCW begins with how the work of Dubois (1903, 1989) inspired research that explored how racism negatively impacted the lives of African Americans in this country. She also goes on to say that her work also stemmed out of the necessity to critically analyze how theoretical frameworks like Bourdieu and Passeron's (1997) and later Bourdieu's (1985) social inequality framework on social and cultural capital fall short. In doing so, Yosso challenges the gaps found in the scholar's work that fail to critically analyze the deeply rooted reasons for why children in low socio-economic status (SES) communities often fail to gain cultural and social capital in the

United States. She also recognizes that their work is based off of a French society, one that does not have much diversity in comparison to the United States. Her work does acknowledge to some capacity that society does deem individuals with lower SES backgrounds as having less cultural capital, i.e., less schooling across a K-12 and or higher education, among other forms of capital that provide people with a more affluent lifestyle. Nevertheless, she argues that this is a societal stereotype and not a reality because SES individuals tend to be people of color who are born into a country with various systems that are deeply rooted in white supremacy designed for the economic and social advancement of white people.

Therefore, while Bourdieu and Passeron discuss how individuals with low SES experience cultural inequities in a cyclical manner simply because that is how society works, Yosso pushes back on this idea and makes the argument that people of color, like Latinxs, are more than capable of being successful in this country. She argues that Latinxs for example, possess certain forms of capitals that allow them to thrive even when mainstream society, and the deeply rooted whiteness of it, does not necessarily value them and makes it hard for them to succeed through racism and systemic oppression. Inherently, Bourdieu and Passeron focus on the social and cultural capital issues of individuals from a collective societal standpoint. Meanwhile, Yosso argues that the issues of inequality among people's social and cultural capital go beyond this. As a result, Yosso makes a compelling argument for the consideration of race and historical systemic racism that is deeply rooted in the United States when talking about the social inequities people of color face in this country. Simultaneously, she also makes the argument for the consideration of the assets and capital that allow these individuals to persist in systems like higher education, which as I mentioned earlier, is a system that was originally created for the social and economic advancement of white people in this country.

In doing so, she remains true to Gloria Anzaldua's (1990) work, which recognizes the urgency to develop theories that will challenge other theories that have a deficit narrative about people of color. In her (1990) work, Anzaldua discusses how to challenge theory, you must challenge it with other theories, and Yosso discusses in her (2005) work that as a result, CRT was a great way to challenge the deficit narrative that depicts people of color as unable to succeed in the same fashion than white people. Yosso argues in her work that there needs to be a theory that challenges Bourdieu's social inequality framework on social and cultural capital because she believes it is simply deficit-based thinking to even conceptualize that people of color, like Latinxs, have certain cultural and social values that essentially make them inferior to whites. That is why Yosso's framework on CCW is rooted in CRT. As mentioned earlier, CRT is a theoretical lens born out Critical Legal Studies (CLS), a critical school of thought that argues that the laws in the U.S. are used to maintain white people at the top of the social structure and African Americans at the bottom of the social structure (Unger, 1983). Nevertheless, CRT also incorporates other racially minoritized groups, and recognizes that people of color have experienced hundreds of years of racial inferiority at the hands of white people.

CRT also recognizes the degrading lived experiences of racially minoritized people in this country, which stem out of the fact that white supremacy is deeply rooted in the fabric of this country because the United States was created for the social and economic advancement of white people (Unger, 1983; Zuberi & Bonilla Silva, 2008). Thus, CRT allows Yosso to challenge Bourdieu's social inequality framework on social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, & Passeron, 1977) using the knowledge of CRT and its contributions in society and then later in education. Yosso recognizes that CRT was created out of a necessity for the understanding of people of color, specifically African Americans, who were supposed to be understood by CLS, but

unfortunately, the framework developed in the legal field did not offer strategies for change for people of color in this country, even when the framework interrogated the legal field and its role in the continued oppression of people of color in society.

As a result, legal theorists and scholars like Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman developed a new theoretical framework, still rooted in the legal field, but that was more conducive to understand the experiences of people of color, especially that of African Americans in the U.S. CRT incorporated race and racism into the analysis of why the legal field would fail people of color. Unfortunately, this was something that CLS failed to do on top of failing to incorporate the stories of those affected by these systemic issues that came because of persistent white supremacy and white dominance in this country (Delgado, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Unfortunately, this framework had downfalls as well, as it mainly focused on Black/White terms, something we know now as the Black and White binary (Perea, 1998), an issue that continues to persist today in the race and racism discussions in this country (Gonzalez-Sobrinio, & Goss, 2019). The framework did not mean to become irrelevant as a result, but rather that it needed help. So, scholars developed branching frameworks, meant to support the race and racism discussions that continued to suppress people of color and keep them voiceless as noted in *Appendix C*. As a result, AsianCrit, FemCrit, LatCrit, TribalCrit, and WhiteCrit, emerged to explain the experiences of Asian, women, Latinx, Native Americans and as well as how White people could recognize their privilege and the hundreds of years of systemic racist dominance that they had inherited, but to whom could also help them understand how they could become allies and support the people of color.

These frameworks were not mutually exclusive or designed to compete against CRT or to create racial tensions between the two. Rather they were created to help illustrate the experiences

of people of color, benefit the overall discussions that CRT is supposed to have, and tailor the discussion to be more understanding of each racial group's experiences as well as the gender experiences of women in this country all while centralizing that race and racism are real and stem from white supremacy in this country. Gloria Ladson-Billings and William F. Tate's (1995) work then brought CRT into the education discussion through her work on *Toward A Critical Race Theory of Education* where Ladson-Billings discusses how CRT is a framework that could be applied to understand the racialized experiences of people of color in all forms of systems of this country, like education.

Thus in 1997, 1998, because of the fluidity of CRT, Solórzano released his work on how CRT could help us understand the experiences of Latinxs in education, through its five tenants: the intercentricity of race and racism with other forms of subordination, 2) the challenge to the dominant ideology, 3) the commitment to social justice, 4) the centrality of experiential knowledge, and 5) the transdisciplinary perspective. These tenants are important as they provide an understanding of the necessity for Yosso to develop CCW in the first place. The five tenants presented in Solórzano's work, challenge the deficit thinking in US schools, which is a purpose of Yosso's conceptual framework.

In her CCW conceptual framework, Yosso provides a counternarrative to the deficit thinking deeply rooted in the various education systems in this country through her six forms of capital, as they are part of the systems created for the social and economic advancement of white people in this country, and who remain deeply rooted in white supremacy to this day (Zuberi & Bonilla Silva, 2008). As a result, the following describes her framework through her six forms of capital that were created as a necessity to help scholars and education practitioners alike understand that Latinx people are both capable of succeeding in higher education and possess

various forms of capital that give them cultural wealth because of their community. These six forms of capital are discussed below.

Aspirational Capital

Yosso's Aspirational Capital refers to the desire that Latinx students must succeed, a drive that they bring to their higher education institution. Latino/x males for example, come to the university or even to their community college with a desire to do good in their classes, and graduate. This in turn counters the common racist narrative that dominates Latino/x males' higher education trajectory, that paints them as problematic students that are not serious about their higher education (Knight-Manuel et al., 2019). On the contrary, Latino/x male students have high aspirational capital in college because others believe in them, i.e., parents, mentors, etc. These students in turn, use such aspirational capital as motivation to succeed academically (Martinez & Castellanos, 2018). Unfortunately, Latino/x males have the largest push-out rates in comparison to other racially minoritized student groups, and especially to their white male student counterparts (Pérez Huber et al., 2015). In fact, as NCES data shows, Latino/x males continue to be the largest pushed out student subpopulation amongst 16-to-24-year-old students.

This of course is despite the fact that overall Latinx (both male and female students) pushout rates are at an all-time low according to the most recent data from the Pew Research center (Gramlich, 2017). Therefore, if we zoom in at who has the largest push out rates (Latina/x females or Latino/x males), we will notice that it is Latino/x males who lead this graduation gap, which maintain the overall Latinx graduation gaps higher than any other racial group. In fact, as noted on *Appendix D*, Latino/x males between the ages of 16 and 24 have historically seen a 95% increase in their pushout rates between 1960 and 2017 (NCES, 2019). Perez-Huber and colleague's (2015) work, further discuss the graduation gap that exists amongst Latinx

graduation rates through a longitudinal study that the authors engaged with in their pursuit to explore how the graduation gap amongst Latinx students persisted across a P-20 education pipeline in comparison to white and other racially minoritized student groups. In fact, in *Appendix E*, we learn that the scholars found that out of 100 Latinx students (both male and female) who enter Pre-K, only 60 Latino/x male students graduated from high school. Nevertheless, the cycle did not end there. Out of the 60 Latino/x males who graduated with a high school diploma, only 11 graduated with a bachelor's degree. Out of those 11 Latino/x male students who received a bachelor's degree, only 3 received a graduate degree. Finally, out of those 3 Latino/x male students who graduated with a graduate degree, only 0.3 received a doctorate degree. This is in comparison to the much larger rates of white students that were sampled in the same education pipeline, and as well as with other racially minoritized student groups that were part of this longitudinal study. Yosso (2005) further pointed out how Gandara's (1982, 1995) work discusses how Latinx students experience the lowest educational outcomes. Perez and colleague's (2015) work also talks about this further adding that the educational challenges that Latino/x males experience in their education pipelines, continue to persist.

Nevertheless, despite the large graduation gap amongst Latino/x males in higher education, Yosso discusses how Latinx parents, and other people in their lives, have high aspirations for these male students of color. This completely debunks yet another racist assumption that has become the common narrative in Latino/x male student lives, where parents are depicted as uninterested in student's educational success (De Gaetano, 2007). This form of capital of CCW debunks another deficit narrative that situates Latinx parents as pushing Latino/x males to only pursue a job after high school and not college (Bradley, & Renzulli, 2011).

Thus, while there are many common narratives that depict parents as one of the major reasons for the large graduation gap amongst Latino/x males in higher education, Yosso stresses that these males of color are faced with other challenges that are out of their control, completely helping to change the narrative that it is Latino/x male students' fault that they fail academically in college. In doing so, Yosso does a very good job in providing scholars with the lens necessary to see the opposite viewpoint that tells another story, specifically, one where Latino/x males want to succeed in higher education.

Familial Capital

Familial capital refers to the knowledge gained and instilled at home, often by the family values and cultural values. This form of capital often transcends the norms of friendship and builds family ties between blood relatives, parents, friends, co-workers, bosses, etc., which creates a community for the Latinx student to latch on to and use to succeed academically. This form of capital is brought on by the student into the higher education institution to build community amongst its peers but does not always mean it is created in college campuses. This form of capital is brought from the support network, the *familia* that a student builds outside of the confines of the institution, but which plays a critical and pivotal role in the Latinx student's academic success. These individuals are often the community that the student reaches out to for advice, financial and moral support, amongst other things. In the higher education world, there is often a figure of speech or expression often mentioned amongst students. That is, that it takes a village to help you go through college. That same concept is what Yosso talks about in her CCW framework with familial capital. It is the notion that Latinx students utilize these community networks to succeed, and it doesn't just mean your parents. It is comprised of anyone and everyone who forms part of this village for students to grow academically. Such community

provides such things as economic assistance, caring, mentorship, and other forms of support that the student might need, and it can often come from individuals and/or organizations in the student's community.

Familial capital also refers to other networks, like neighbors, that may not necessarily be Latinx, but still support the Latinx student growth. These networks include African Americans and other racial groups that form part of this community that allow the student to grow and persist in higher education. Yosso (2005) discusses that this form of capital stems from both African American community “communal bonds,” the "funds of knowledge" within Mexican Americans, and as well from the knowledge that these individuals learn at home and bring into the academic setting, i.e., traditions, stories passed down from generation to generation or even other forms of customs that these students use to succeed academically in higher education. In theory, familial capital is used as the fuel that Latinx students need to understand that their academic success goes beyond their lives, but also it is a success for their families and communities back home. A win for them is a win for their village.

Social Capital

Yosso discusses social capital as another critical component of Latinx student success because of the connections and networks that come with possessing such capital. Through this cultural capital, Yosso discusses how Latinx people often rely on such networks to advance in society. This is contrary to Bourdieu’s theory of Cultural Capital which fuels the common narrative that depicts Latinx students as people who are low SES, and as a result, they cannot succeed because they do not have the capital to create networks that will help them advance in society. Yosso recognizes that not all Latinx students are low SES. Thus, Bourdieu is interpreting that Latinxs are not capable of establishing cultural capital because they don’t have

the financial wealth built over time to develop a culture of social advancement in this country. This fails to recognize that not all Latinxs are low SES and even further, developing a cultural capital that will provide social advancement for Latinx communities, does not only rely on financial wealth, or inherited cultural capital. Latinx people develop communities that they foster and grow from organically in low SES communities just as much as they do in affluent communities as well. They rely on their networks and in knowledge acquired by various members of their community, which are then shared throughout these communities.

That is why Yosso debunks this with the social cultural capital of her CCW framework by providing an understanding that Latinx people use their communities to advance in society, even in higher education. Latinx students often rely on people like their extended family, neighbors, friends, or even former educators to learn about ways that they can acquire the necessary financial or educational resources necessary to succeed. Even further, Yosso writes in her explanation of social capital that "...these peer and other social contacts can provide both instrumental and emotional support to navigate through society's institutions..." (Gilbert, 1982; Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Yosso, 2005, pp.79). Latino/x male students use these social networks to gain mentorship opportunities through emotional support, debunking the common narrative that males of color engage fail to seek academic, or other educational help on campus on purpose. This in and of itself further influences the deficit-based narrative because while these males of color may actively choose not to ask for help, they choose not to ask for help from particular people, not necessarily everyone (Alcocer, & Martinez, 2018).

This allows Latino/x males to succeed because they rely on their networks, whoever they may be, to succeed, causing a need to further interrogate the systems of higher education from which Latino/x males are pushed out of. We can then ask ourselves as researchers what factors

cause Latino/x males to be pushed out of the education pipeline, rather than continue to rely on a narrative that further enhances the deficit-based perspective that explains why Latino/x males fail to succeed. After all, they, among other things, engage in self-destructive behaviors, like not asking for support or seeking support, when they need it. Yosso debunks that and proves that Latinx people historically have relied on their networks, for them to advance in society. Her biggest example of this is undocumented groups who rely on community networks like extended family, friends, neighbors, etc., to acquire jobs and economic opportunities through word-of-mouth information spreading. This does not remove the fact that Latinx people face racism and racist systems of oppression in this country, but it does recognize the social capacity that these individuals have to succeed, which is a counternarrative to the common narrative that Latinx people don't socially advance because there are cultural behaviors that deter them from doing so, something that Bourdieu actively believes in his social and cultural capital theory work (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977).

Navigational Capital

Navigational capital refers to the ability of students to overcome systemic challenges in their educational trajectory. Yosso (2005) discusses how Latinx students come to higher education institutions with experience navigating racism in their communities. Yosso discusses that Latinxs can succeed even when they are presented with academic challenges that can push them out of their educational pipeline. Additionally, resiliency is a resource that Latinx students use to overcome systemic racism that would prevent them from succeeding in higher education and in turn, use this to adapt to their environment. Navigational capital thus acknowledges that Latinx students have the sole ability to succeed academically, but also recognizes that these students have the community to fall back on to use to help them succeed academically.

Navigational capital is critical to Latino/x males because using this form of capital allows Latino/x males to tap into their inner ability to succeed, using the challenges that they have faced in their communities through systemic racism, to fuel their desire to push through adversity and succeed academically. Additionally, through resiliency, these males of color can persevere in their studies, all while recognizing that they have a village at home or in their social circles that they can rely on to persevere in higher education. All of this relates to the old saying mentioned earlier about how it takes a village to traverse higher education. This is a Latino/x male village, and they use it as part of their navigational capital to succeed academically.

Resistant Capital

Latinx students have resistant capital as well. These students rely on such capital to transform and fight back against the systemic oppression of students of color in higher education. What Yosso explains in this form of capital is that every Latinx student has the “knowledges and skills” (pp. 80) necessary to fight back against injustices committed against Latinxs in this country (Yosso, 2005). Such capital is rooted in the resistance that exists within these communities of color that make them knowledgeable about the issues their community faces. This is important because what Yosso tries to convey here is that historically, Latinx communities around the world have faced systemic racial oppression because they are seen as inferior to the white race. As such, Latinx students come into higher education knowledgeable of the oppression they have had to endure historically and presently. Specifically, Yosso discusses how Latinx students are aware of the various systemic issues within higher education that push Latinxs out of their higher education pipeline. Such awareness of systemic issues like the lack of faculty of color (Banks & Dohy, 2019; Dulabaum, 2016), the lack of Latinx student community in higher education (Ayala & Contreras, 2019), racial microaggressions in the classroom

(Garcia-Louis et al., 2020; Sanchez, 2019), lack of mentorship opportunities in higher education (Lunsford et al., 2017), among other things, contribute to the resistance capital that Latinx students possess in higher education. Thus this capital acknowledges that they have a fundamental understanding for the need to persist in higher education as they know that the very act of their persistence in this system of education, is resistance in higher education.

Linguistic Capital

Finally, Yosso also talks about linguistic capital, which refers to the ability to use language as a form of resistance, and by extension that cultural aspect of language as well. In her (2005) work, Yosso discusses how linguistic capital is used by Latinx college students to persist in higher education. This is critical to this dissertation because as research shows, Latino/x males often feel more comfortable reaching out for academic support, either through tutoring or even mentoring, when the mentor can speak the Spanish language as the Latino/x male student. In this component of linguistic capital, Yosso links both the student's "racialized cultural history and the language" (pp.78) as part of the cultural wealth that the Latinx student possesses. Even deeper, this capital cements the fact that Latinx students come into higher education with a set of skills that derive from the ability to speak multiple languages and as a result inherit certain abilities to communicate and learn better than students who only possess one language. While there are students who are not Latinx who might possess the ability to speak more than one language, the fact that Spanish is tied to their cultural background carries an extra benefit for these students.

Beyond the Spanish language, Yosso also discusses how linguistic capital also refers to the Latinx student's confidence and determination to succeed. This happens through information sharing of stories or even other non-vocal techniques used to establish a connection with someone of the similar race and or ethnic background, regardless of whether they are Spanish

speakers or not. As Yosso's (2005) work discusses, not all Latinx students speak Spanish, yet the language is merely a tool of the cultural upbringings of the student. Through things like stories, random cultural sounds like whistling, or even through music sharing, linguistic capital is manifested in Latinx students in higher education that allows them to create community and support amongst other Latinx students to persist in these academic spaces.

Thus, Latinxs can rely on this cultural capital to remain assertive of their capable positionality in higher education. Their linguistic capital provides students with the strength and mental capacity for Latinx students to succeed academically because of their strong ties to their cultural background, mainly nurtured through their ability to speak multiple languages and culture sharing with other Latinxs in higher education. Furthermore, Latinx students foster linguistic capital through their storytelling traditions of recounting sayings, proverbs, or *dichos*, and oral histories, parables, stories, or *cuentos*. Through this form of capital, Latinx students can carry on their culture either in Spanish or English and can use these strong cultural roots, to succeed in spaces like higher education. This linguistic capital transcends into the ability to codeswitch, talk differently with different groups of individuals, or even use different forms of communications like whispers, whistles, or different tones to establish connections with individuals or groups of people that will allow them to make the cultural connection in different spaces. Cultural capital is essential for Latinx students to build connections and roots in spaces like colleges and universities, based on their cultural background, as a way for them to persist in their higher educational trajectory.

Concluding Thoughts on Conceptual Framework

A Community of Cultural Wealth framework is essential towards Latino/x male research because it provides the researcher with the lens necessary to recognize the academic persistence

of Latinxs but also to interrogate the deficit narratives and systemic racism that hinders Latino/x male's academic success in higher education. Due to its roots in CRT, CCW is one of the tools used by CRT to root the experiences of Latinx students in white supremacy, as these students of color have experiences because higher education was a system in this country created for the social and economic advancement of white people.

Nevertheless, Yosso's CCW is a fitting framework for this dissertation because mentoring programs like Project MALES have been informed by Yosso's work (Saenz et al., 2015; 2020). In fact, Saenz et al., (2015; 2020) work talks about a seventh form of capital within CCW. This form of capital was developed by African Americans to contribute to Yosso's work. In it, African Americans acknowledge that their racially minoritized group uses culture to persist in higher education. Saenz, and company (2015; 2020) used cultural capital to inform their mentoring practices and the overall fabric of the Project MALES program, a mentoring program focused primarily on mentoring Latino/x males in middle schools and high schools in the city of Austin. That is why such a framework fits perfectly when exploring the academic experiences of Latino/x males in higher education through mentoring.

CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

Why a Qualitative over Quantitative Method?

Scholars argue that when researching racially minoritized populations, like Latino/x males, it is best to employ research methodologies that are more encompassing of the participant's experiences (Yosso et al., 2009; Milville et al., 2017; Patton, 2016). On one side of the coin, this is important because historically, the white supremacy deeply rooted in the United States has systematically silenced the voices of people of color to continue to the superiority of whites (Bonilla Silva, 2018). On the other side of the coin, other methodological practices could be employed when engaging in Latino/x male research, such as using a quantitative methods. Nevertheless, while quantitative research is not a disingenuous way to research Latino/x males in this country, it leaves out their voices and experiences, causing scholars to only be able to tell part of the story. Quantitative research continues the status quo of research on people of color that fails to tell the complete story of its participants, simultaneously keeping racially minoritized groups voiceless. Therefore, qualitative research is a better fit for this dissertation study, as this is the best way to capture the data necessary to understand the academic experiences of Latino/x males through mentoring (Torres-Harding et al., 2012).

Research Design

Due to the nature of this dissertation, a qualitative research methodology was applied in order to capture participant data (Creswell, & Creswell, 2018) to explore how mentoring influences the academic success of Latino/x males in higher education and have their voices guide the research (Storlie et al., 2014), in the case critical qualitative research (Canella et al., 2015). Scholars argue that Latino/x males aspire to share their stories because these students

often go through their educational trajectory being seen as nothing more than a number, causing educational institutions to fail to meet their needs (Cammarota, 2004; Carrillo, 2013; Harper, 2015; Howard et al., 2016; Maxwell, 2012). Therefore, employing a research methodology that allows participants to play a role in the research process through story-telling and data construction answers the call of Latino/x male scholarly work. This call is made by scholars who push for more research that provides a voice to Latino/x male students. These male students of color often remain silent about the systemic and racial oppression that they face in order to continue upholding cultural norms and out of distrust for authority figures who often see these students as nothing more than a statistic.

Critical Qualitative Research

As stated previously, this qualitative study will use Cannella et al.'s (2015) Critical Qualitative Inquiry research approach to understand how formal or informal mentoring practices influence the academic success of Latino/x Males in college, and how mentoring in general, may help these students overcome the racist's barriers that make it difficult for them to succeed in these spaces. The critical qualitative inquiry approach fits the dissertation study because it relies on capturing the lived experiences of the participants. The desire to pursue a critical qualitative inquiry approach in this dissertation stems from the critical literary work that explores the experiences of Latinx students' education, specifically in higher education, as well as how racially minoritized student populations remain in the margins to this day (Cannella et al., 2015). Despite there being over 50 different qualitative approaches (Cresswell, & Cresswell, 2018), I use Critical Qualitative Inquiry because it critiques the system of higher education and interrogates systems of oppression around the participants as well.

Data Collection Process

I conducted 15 Zoom and telephone voice recorded interviews to apply a qualitative research methodology (Creswell, & Creswell, 2018) to this study. The data were collected using semi-structured interviews and participant interviews were audio-recorded via cellphone's voice memo application to capture the participant's stories as well as through Zoom interview recording feature and transcribed by rev.com. The parameters used to determine if participants were eligible for my dissertation study were the following:

1. Participants must be from South Central Los Angeles, California
2. Latino/x men
3. Must be 18 years of age
4. If participant were out of college, participants must have at most five years of graduating from or of attending college.
5. Can identify a formal or informal mentoring experience during their college education (undergraduate, masters and/or PhD).
6. Participants should be available to have interview conducted via Zoom, Skype, Webex, other video software, or through phone calls and recorded through voice memos.

The following is a chart of my participant information:

Participant Information

Pseudonym	Age	Latino Male or Latinx Male	Community College	Transfer Year	Undergraduate Education	Undergraduate Major	Graduating Year	Masters Education	Master's Degree	Class Year	PhD Institution	PhD Degree	Class Year	1st generation in the U.S. (indication of country of origin) or 1st generation in college (indicates first generation)
Franky	29	Latino Male	N/A	N/A	UCLA	Chicano Studies Major, Education Minor	2014	USC	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages	2016	N/A	N/A	N/A	1st Generation
Kelvin	25	Latino Male	N/A	N/A	Pacific Lutheran University	Social Work	2017	California State University Fullerton (CSUF)	Student Affairs in Higher Education	2019	N/A	N/A	N/A	Born in Puebla
Eduardo	27	Latino Male	El Camino Community College	2014	University of North Texas	Music	2019	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1st Generation
Ritchie	29	Latino Male	N/A	N/A	California State University Dominguez Hills	Criminal Justice Major, Spanish Literature Minor	2015	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1st Generation
Felipe	29	Latino Male	N/A	N/A	Cornell University	Government	2013	USC	Student Affairs in Higher Education	2017	N/A	N/A	N/A	1st Generation
Alex	28	Latino Male	Los Angeles Trade Tech Community College (LATTCC)	2013	USC	Sociology	2015	USC	Public Policy	2017	USC	Urban Education	2021	1st Generation
Kike	23	Latinx Male	N/A	N/A	California State Polytechnic University, Pomona (Cal Poly Pomona)	Architecture	2020	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1st Generation
Alejandro	23	Latino Male	West Los Angeles Community College	2016	UCLA	Double Major in Political Science & Anthropology	2019	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Born in Oaxaca
Miguel	30	Latinx Male	N/A	N/A	Whittier College	Environmental Science & Spanish	2012	San Diego State University (SDSU)	Higher Education Student Affairs	2014	SDSU	EdD in CC Leadership	2021	1st Generation
Daniel	23	Latinx Male	N/A	N/A	California State University [Name Omitted on Participant Request]	English/Creative Writing Major & Child Development Minor	2020	USC	Postsecondary Administration and Student Affairs	2021	N/A	N/A	N/A	1st Generation
Pablo	29	Latino Male	El Camino Community College	2015	Cal Poly Pomona/ California State University Long Beach (CSULB)	Undecided/History Major	2017	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1st Generation
Haro	30	Latino Male	N/A	N/A	USC	Public Policy, Planning, and Development	2012	California State University Dominguez Hills (CSUDH)	Quality Assurance Manufacturing Engineering	2022	N/A	N/A	N/A	1st Generation
Ken	30	Latino Male	Santa Monica College	2013	Humboldt State University (HSU)	Double Major in Political Science & English, Spanish Minor	2016	Humboldt State University (HSU)	Political Science with a Focus on Human Resources	2018	N/A	N/A	N/A	1st Generation
David	29	Latino Male	LATTCC/ Santa Monica College/LATTCC	2009/2013/2015	California State University Los Angeles (CSULA)	Mechanical Engineering H-VAC, Metallurgy, & Manufacturing Process	2020	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1st Generation
Panfilo	24	Latino Male	N/A	N/A	UCLA	Communication Major, Education Minor	2018	University of Indiana at Bloomington	Instructional Systems Technology	2022	N/A	N/A	N/A	Born in Honduras

I recruited participants through email and social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram. They either responded to my recruitment messages via a social media platform or through email. In this day and age, social media and technology have become such an important way of life and an important source for connection to various people around the world (Reich, 2015). Social media was necessary in recruiting participants that perhaps no longer live in South

Central Los Angeles, California (SCLA), but who fit the criteria of my study. I also applied snowball sampling to the recruitment of my participant, an effective measure that helped decrease the chances of researcher bias, and a process that allowed for me as a researcher to engage in a more neutral interview process (Sadler, Lee, Lim, & Fullerton, 2010).

Qualitative scholars argue that being able to record participant interviews is critical to both ensure that the participant's story is fully captured, to help reduce researcher bias, and to ensure researcher credibility and validating of data (Guest et al., 2012; Henderson et al., 2012). As I interviewed my participants, I took notes as an essential component of my data collection process and an integral part of telling the full story of the participant in my research. Qualitative researchers argue that taking notes during the research process is critical in qualitative research because they capture both the body language and facial expressions that are not captured during the interview recording process (Muswazi, & Nhamo, 2013).

Data Analysis

The first step of my data analysis approach was to read the transcripts once my data was transcribed in order to become familiar with the data. This process allowed me to break up my data in order to unitize it (Cannella et. al., 2015; Saldaña, 2016). I then utilized the constant comparative method for data analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 2017), to analyze the transcripts for coding and themes. I first highlighted the important findings in each transcript. Next, I created an excel sheet with each of the columns representing one of my participants, with the pseudonym of my participant at the top of each column. I then took each highlighted important finding in each of my transcripts, and I coded it, using descriptive coding (Saldaña, 2016) with a couple of words that would summarize that point. I then took those paraphrased words and input them in each cell of my Excel sheet, under each participant column.

By the time I was done with each interview, I had a list that ran down the column of the excel spreadsheet with findings ranging from as low as 22 to as high as 51 important paraphrased findings. I did this for all 15 participants. Once completed, I then highlighted the recurring codes across all columns, with three different colors that represented the set of questions that the findings came from. As such I was able to get from 29 categories on the first set of questions, 57 categories on the second questions, and 38 categories on the third set of questions, to 5 categories per set of questions. These 5 categories per set of questions, left me with three different themes. Overall, I went through five revisions of descriptive coding to get to my final themes and categories. The following are the final themes and categories identified by the coding process used in this data analysis:

Categories	Familial Mentorship	Collegiate Mentorship	"Full Service Anti-Racist Mentorship"
1	Immediate familia mentorship	"Mentoring Was Life Changing for Me"	Impact of formal and informal mentoring
2	Extended familia mentorship	Importance of Feeling Culturally Connected	Mentoring Latino/x Males through Racialized Experiences In and Out of the Classroom
3	Student Organizations and Fraternities as Familial Mentorship	The Struggle is Real: Mentor-Mentee Understanding of the Latino/x Student Experience	How Mentors Can Address the Racism Latino/x Males Endure in College
4	"Chosen Family" as Mentors	Paying It Forward	Addressing Latino/x Male Racist Experiences by Diversifying Faculty and Staff
5		Ask for What You Need	

In doing this, I was able to see and physically work with my data, without using qualitative computer software. Scholars like Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that using computer software to analyze data, can provide less clarity and a weaker connection to the data during the research process. Ultimately, by avoiding qualitative software I provided a stronger and more transformative and transparent data analysis process.

Rigor and Trustworthiness

I established reliability and validity in my dissertation by engaging in a data collection and writing process that was reflective of the voices of my participants, where participants were asked if they wanted to see their interview transcript after transcription (Krefting, 1991; Ormston et al., 2014; Turner III, 2010). Nevertheless, every participant said they did not wish to see their transcript after transcription, therefore member checking was not necessary for this dissertation (Ryan-Nicholls, & Will, 2009). Such process was necessary to allow participants to see what they said during their interview and be able to correct what they said during their interview (Thomas, 2017).

Neutrality was used to ensure that my biases did not influence how I interpreted their responses to the protocol questions. Research on the importance of qualitative research argues that to increase rigor and trustworthiness in a qualitative study, researchers must employ such methods in their research as well as their positionality in order for the researcher to remain as transparent as possible during the research process (Ormston et. al., 2014). Having a transparent research process that was easily visible to the reader, increased the researcher validity amongst my participants, while also increasing the chances of knowledge contribution representative of how mentoring influenced the participant's academic experiences in higher education (Qu, & Dumay, 2011).

Participants/Sources of Data

The members of my sample were Latino/x males and were born and raised in South Central Los Angeles (South Central)/South Los Angeles (South LA) (often referred to interchangeably). In my study, I refer to these men of color as being from South Central, as South LA was the term adopted by whites who have gentrified communities throughout Los

Angeles and have displaced hundreds of thousands of Black and Brown people from their homes. The South LA term is used to make South Central seem more appealing to whites who looked to move into the communities of South Central but feared the negative racist stereotypes that were created about the area (Kun, & Pulido, 2013; Rosas, 2019). Latino/x males were not limited to being first-generation college-goers and included participants who were first-generation in the U.S., in order to increase the pool of possible interested participation in the interview process of this dissertation. Research participants graduated from either trade college, community college, or university (private or public), although all participants graduated from an undergraduate university. The ages of the participants ranged between 23 and 30 years of age.

Participant Recruitment

I recruited the first 3-5 participants through a targeted sampling method for and included a snowball sampling method after these initial interviews. Targeted sampling is a: “purposeful, systematic method by which controlled lists of specified populations within geographical districts are developed and detailed plans are designed to recruit adequate numbers of cases within each of the targets...” (pp. 420). Additionally, targeted sampling is a valid mode of acquiring participants in qualitative research and essential towards acquiring participants from South Central (Watters, & Biernacki, 1989). Furthermore, targeting sampling was essential in this dissertation’s mission, which was to address the academic experiences of Latino/x males from South Central, in higher education through mentoring. Acquiring participants from South Central did not guarantee that participants that I knew or that were from communities where I grew up have, or currently live in, would be interested in taking part in this study.

I started my participant recruitment process by selecting three Latino/x male participants that were a good fit for my dissertation study. These individuals were former college students, no

more than five years after graduation, as well as current students attending college (undergraduate, Master's, and Ph.D. Latino/x male students) that experienced a formal mentoring program or who had informal mentoring relationships with either faculty, administrators, or other members of the university community. With regards to the parameters for students who have graduated within no more than five years, I chose this point because I wanted to make sure that these students could recall their mentoring experience vividly.

Posting a call for potential participants of my study through social media platforms allowed me to recruit the rest of my participants for this dissertation through a snowball process. I posted a call for participants on social media webpages, which include Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn and participants who were interviewed then recommended participants to outreach to me via email or the social media platforms listed above (Baltar, & Brunet, 2012; Dussek et al., 2015). I also snowball sampled my participants by approaching and asking teachers, friends, principals, and or administrators in South Central schools individually. I asked them if they could recommend any former Latino/x male student(s) who have graduated in the last five years from college or if they know current Latino/x male students in undergraduate, master's, or Ph.D. programs whom I can then reach out to and recruit them as participants in my dissertation study (Naderifar et al., 2017).

This process also allowed me to increase validity in my research (King et al., 2018). Research shows that participants are more likely to discuss their experiences with researchers with whom they are familiar. In this case, while they might have not known me, they knew the person who was recommending them for the study, so there was a trust built on this basis from the start of the recruitment process and through the interview process as well (Jacob, & Furgerson, 2012). This also provides the participant with the confidence that you care for more

than just their story but for them as human beings wanting to understand their story, helping increase the chance that participants were truthful and transparent (Sadler et al., 2010).

Study Site

South Central is a large geographical area within the city of Los Angeles, and each community within this part of the city is diverse in its way, ranging from the gangs that wage violence in the streets to the ethnic communities that inhabit certain parts of Los Angeles. That is why South Central is such a unique location to explore. There are areas within South Central that are predominantly inhabited by Salvadoran, or Mexican, or Guatemalan people, etc. Although these participants might have varying lived experiences due to the diverse Latinx country backgrounds in the communities of South Central, their cultural backgrounds come together in the P-12 schools in which they attend, are internalized and taken with them to college.

Even more critically, all of these ethnic cultures strive for the same resources and fight to keep their cultures alive, refusing to be part of the so-called melting pot that white elitists in the US thrust upon individuals as *the* American identity. South Central is a perfect reflection of what America is, an immigrant-based community just as the same principles that founded this country but who now rejects and expels through unjust mass deportations and incarcerations (Jaramillo, 2012; Rios, 2011). Nevertheless, one thing remains the same. All Latinx students in South Central are taught under the same education system, and the schools in this geographical location are, almost all, low resourced schools, that cannot offer every student the same equitable education. Recruiting from the South Central population provided me with some leverage as I am from this part of Los Angeles and have the cultural capital and credibility that creates rapport with participants and validity in the research conducted (King et al., 2018).

Latinxs in South Central are unique because of the lived experiences that come from living in diverse neighborhoods. South Central is a unique geographical location because of the diverse ethnic and racial communities that make up South Central that are not necessarily from the same geographical locations than Latinx peoples in areas of New York, who tend to be from Caribbean countries such as Cuba, or Puerto Rico, and South America (Davis, 2001). It is important to note that African Americans were the first people of color group to move to South Central (Rosas, 2019). Thus, Latinx lived experiences in diverse neighborhoods are necessary for contributing to the overall Latino/x male research agenda that explores the academic success and challenges of these males students of color population throughout the US. Unfortunately, such research rarely looks at the experiences of Latino/x males from communities in diverse geographical areas like South Central and focuses more on the overall Los Angeles County, the city of Los Angeles or other urban areas throughout the US (Howard et. al, 2016).

Sampling Technique and Sample Size

Using a target sampling technique provided me with agency, validity, and allowed me to provide confidence to my participants that the research that I produced would not be distorted (Trotter II, 2012). As an insider and member of a community within South Central, I understood that this could result in providing an intimidating space where participants might feel forced to share what they thought I would want to hear (Abrams, 2010; Kristensen, & Ravn, 2015). Simultaneously, as an insider, I also brought in the comfortability of understanding the participant's stories as I am a member of their community, creating a space that fostered confidence and openness in the stories that were shared (Munn et al., 2014).

My sample size consisted of 15 participants. Data reached saturation at the 15th participant. These questions were demographics related. This was done to ensure that their

voices are accurately captured, and as a way to acquire their stories more efficiently (Thomas, 2017). Such a methodological approach was necessary to develop a study that was truly representative of my participants' stories (Mero-Jaffe, 2011).

Instrumentation/Data Collection Techniques

I developed an interview protocol (see Appendix F) that was reflective of the research questions that I posed earlier in this dissertation. The interview protocol questions helped my participants share their experiences of growing up in South Central and how these might have influenced their academic experiences, how mentoring influenced their academic experiences, and on how mentoring helped them overcome racism, if any, in their education pipeline. During the interview, I took notes on my participant's emotions, important details that highlighted their stories, and other important information that might help with participant demographic information.

Procedure

The interview process gave me the opportunity to ask follow-up questions once the interview was transcribed, if the participant did not provide substantial information when answering my protocol questions (McIntosh, & Morse, 2015). Other than demographic questions, no interview protocol questions were asked beyond the interview. I asked participants about their experiences in college generally, after which I focused on specific questions that pertain to the mentoring experiences that they encountered while in college, the racism they encountered throughout their collegiate experience, as well as how they believed mentoring helped them overcome their racialized experiences as Latino/x males. This kind of procedure during the interview increased the comfortability of my interview participants as well as the level of data that my participants shared with me (Alam, 2005). The interviews were conducted during

the participant's free time to ensure that he or they were focused on the interview and could respond to the questions efficiently (Dempsey et al., 2016). The interviews were held in their homes, providing the participant with the comfortability and ability to answer the protocol questions to the best of their ability. My interviews lasted an average of 75 minutes in length to ensure that I remain respectful of my participant's time and to avoid repetition within my participant's responses (Herzog, 2005).

Quality and rigor

To minimize researcher bias and obtain accurate information from my participants during the interview process, I did two things. First, during the interview process, I did not contribute any opinion or information that may have swayed my participants to respond in a particular way that could manipulate their responses. Second, I refrained from using facial expressions or any other body behaviors that could manipulate the participant's way of responding as it is used in the interview process of a semi-structured interview (Gill et al., 2008; Harrell, & Bradley, 2009). To establish validity, participants were asked if they wanted a copy of their recorded interview transcript so that they may add anything they felt was left out during their participation, or to redact anything they did not want to be disclosed in the study. All participants did not feel the need to see their interview transcript after it was transcribed.

Positionality

My positionality is that of a Latino male, who was born and raised in South Central, California with roots from Zacatecas, Mexico, state, and home country where my father and mother were both born and raised. As a student in South Central, I attended public schools in this neighborhood, from Kindergarten through 12th grade. While attending UCLA, I lived my first three years in the school's dormitories, my fourth year I commuted and lived at home with my

mother and sister, and in my fifth year I lived in a university apartment off campus. While living at UCLA, I would go home on the weekends, allowing me to continue to spend time at home even while in college. The proximity that I have with my geographical location, allowed me to understand the educational, financial, and racial challenges that people of color face in these neighborhoods (Kun, & Pulido, 2013; Rosas, 2019). Simultaneously, it also allowed me to be aware of the needs of Latino/x males in these communities within South Central.

Beyond my previous explanation on my positionality in this dissertation, I am also a straight Latino male who understands how the notion of *machismo* and *familismo* (Ojeda & Piña-Watson, 2016) plays in the life of a Latino male. On the one hand, I recognize the multiplicity in Latinx identities, and how my cis-gender identity might have been a challenge for some of my participants to openly talk about how their racial background, gender expressions and sexuality experiences in higher education, intersected. On the other hand, as a South Central native, my roots provided participants with a level of comfortability to discuss their experiences while being recorded, trusting me in the process while also connecting via the conversations we had during the interviews. As a Native Spanish Speaker, the ability to speak Spanish also provided Latino/x male participants with the ability to respond more thoroughly to the questions being asked of them. Participants also appreciated the opportunity to share their stories about their academic experiences in college with another fellow Latino male. Both the participants and I recognized that as Latino/x males, we do not often share our experiences with other males, which is not only part of a *machista* culture, but also part of being Latinx as well. As such, my empathetic personal attributes help to create trust, which provided Latino/x male participants with the ability to be vulnerable, share their emotions, and reflect on their life experiences leading to their higher education access, college education, and in their degree completion as well. Finally, with

COVID-19 protocols being so strict in California during my data collection process, participants appreciated that I was able to offer them the ability to share their stories through safe means and at times that worked with their working schedule as well.

The reason why I chose to acquire interview participants from South Central was that earlier in my doctoral program, I engaged in a pilot qualitative study. This study was on English Learning Latino/x Males in Urban Los Angeles. I asked my participants to discuss their educational experiences of going to schools in urban areas throughout the city of Los Angeles and the affect language contributed to their educational trajectory. Some of the responses that I received talked about how these Latino/x males had experienced racial discrimination in their educational trajectory. A recurring theme in my interviews in the pilot study with Latino/x males who had graduated from college was that mentoring was a key component of their educational success in college. Nevertheless, because the interview protocol did not ask questions about mentoring, this was a topic that was not probed during these interviews. I saw recurring themes of racism and mentoring topics discussed by my participants who grew up in South Central during these pilot interviews. This caused me to become intrigued as to whether there was a relationship between overcoming racism in the college classroom and mentoring amongst Latino/x males in South Central.

Limitations

The limitations of a study are defined as:

...those characteristics of design or methodology that impacted or influenced the interpretation of the findings from your research. They are the constraints on generalizability, applications to practice, and/or utility of findings that are the result of how you initially chose to design the study or the method used to establish internal and

external validity of the result of unanticipated challenges that emerged during the study
(Price, & Murnan, 2004; USC Libraries, 2020).

Therefore, the limitations in my dissertation study were my connection to some of the participants that perhaps created an opportunity for them to not be completely honest about their experiences with regards to mentoring during their higher education experience. Like with all research studies, there is always room for participants to not fully address the topic being covered in the interview, even when they fit the criteria for the study (Queirós et al., 2017). This is important because not every student, especially those who pursued a college education in a STEM field, is aware that there is racism in higher education that can highly impact their academic success.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The following chapter discusses findings that relate to the academic experiences of Latino/x males in higher education through mentoring. First, the chapter begins with a **Background of Latino/x Male Participants from South Central** section which provides some context of the geographical experiences as well as the social and economic background of the Latino/x male participants in this dissertation. Second, the chapter provides three key themes that recurred in the data collection process: 1) **Familial Mentorship**, 2) **Collegiate Mentorship**, and 3) **“Full Service Anti-Racist Mentorship”**. These themes are followed by subsequent categories that make up each of the themes. Third and finally, this chapter has a **Formal Mentorship amongst Latino/x Males in this Dissertation Study** section, which provides some further context as to the understanding of what type of mentorship was most beneficial for the Latino/x male participants in this study.

Background of Latino/x Male Participants from South Central

It is essential to provide background of the Latino/x male participants from South Central Los Angeles. Study participants come from a low socioeconomic status (SES) background, experienced culture shock while in college, and endured a lack of college guidance prior to getting to college. Towards the end of this section, these students provide accounts to how mentorship was able to mitigate some of these issues, providing an understanding for why this dissertation is necessary to highlight the Latino/x male experiences in higher education through mentoring.

Latino/x Male Participants Worked to Get through College to Overcome Their Low SES

Latino/x males spoke about their experiences of both working through college and having to make certain academic and educational sacrifices that their classmates did not do, because of their low SES status while in college. In particular students like Eduardo, a Latino male who attended El Camino Community College straight out of high school and then transferred to the University of North Texas (UNT), recalled his experience of balancing financial responsibilities as a low SES college music student.

And going to music school was a very different kind of schooling because apart from the general coursework you have to do and the music stuff, at the same time, you're supposed to work on your craft. So I found myself a lot of the times sacrificing some of my coursework in order to practice or having to go to work and then wanted to do the homework because I was still supposed to practice. So I lament that was my situation, but I had to do it. So I found myself often missing out on opportunities to go see recitals or masterclasses because I was stuck at work.

Eduardo recognized that being low SES and going to music school, did not just require him to balance his academics with his job responsibilities, but also to balance his responsibilities as a student within a music program that required rehearsals, music playing opportunities, and other components necessary to be a successful music school student. Unfortunately, he also recalled that he had to pay his bills, therefore it was imperative that he had a job in order to support himself. Also, he was an out of state student, attending UNT, a school that was over 1,000 miles away from his home and had no family to live with. Therefore, he had to work in order to support himself through college. This was an added pressure for him because he had to do all three things but could only rely on himself. He knew he was stretching himself too thin.

Consequently, coming from South Central was factor enough for college students to seek job opportunities while in college. In fact, students began preparing for such things since their time in high school, revealing their awareness of how their low SES backgrounds influenced the kind of academic experience that they had in college. In his interview, Alejandro, a Latino male who attended West Los Angeles College (WLAC) for community college and transferred to the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) to continue his undergraduate education, recalled in his interview:

I felt like the challenges definitely continued. Sometimes it was just a matter of resources. Because growing up in the hood [South Central] I always came up with the mentality of like, all right, if you're going to go to school you also have to work. Because you're going to have to pay for these things. So the entire time that I was at UCLA I was working part time and obviously going to school full time. It was kind of a thing where I didn't have access to the same [resources white students did]... [and] even though they [academic resources] were there, I didn't really [ask for them]... [because] the resources that were there weren't as flexible to accommodate for students who were working.

Alejandro recalls that regardless of the work responsibilities he had, he knew he had to finish his degree. So he relied on his friends to help him succeed throughout his academic trajectory. This did not mean that there were no resources there for him to access while at UCLA, he just did not have the time to access them.

Beyond mentally preparing themselves to pay for college prior to entering their higher education institution, participants also spoke about how they cut costs while in college in order to be able to make ends meet. For example, Alex speaks about his experience as a South Central native going to college at the University of Southern California (USC). Alex is a Latino Male

who went from the Los Angeles Trade Tech Community College to USC for his undergraduate and stayed there for his master's degree and current doctoral work. In his interview, Alex shared his experience as a low SES student from South Central attending not only a predominantly white institution in his neighborhood, but the financial choices he had to engage in, to persist academically at USC.

And another thing is obviously, as a transfer student, I think my experience was different than it is for a freshman, somebody who's going in and dorming. I was commuting, I was going to USC and leaving. And so I wasn't getting the type of experience that some of the students there would have. For example, I would go park at the cheaper parking lot. It was only a \$100 cheaper than the other parking lots, which were like \$500. So I would try to save money by parking really far away. And so on my long walk to this far away parking lot to save myself \$100, I would see the USC kids partying, splashing beer and drinks all over the floor and having all this fun. Then, I was walking in the rain to this far away parking lot to save \$100. And so it was moments like that where I always felt like, "Damn, why do I have to struggle so much? And why is it only me? So, yeah.

Alex recollects these thoughts and the feelings of a lack of sense of belonging because he was also attending a school filled with students who had more financial resources than he did and often wished he had access to the same resources in order to have a less challenging educational experience.

Culture Shock in College

Participants also recalled the culture shock they experienced in higher education. For example, Miguel, a Latinx male who attended Whittier College for their undergraduate education and San Diego State University (SDSU) for their Masters and current Doctoral education,

recalled his experience at Whittier College coming from high school. Miguel specifically remembers the academic implications that transitioning from high school to college had on their new collegiate educational experience.

I think it became really evident because I went to a small private liberal arts college, and even though it was only 20 minutes away from where I lived at that time, at that time we already lived in Bell Gardens and it was only 20 minutes away. It's stupid really now when you think about it, but even in our comunidad [community], you kind of make this idea like oh, you're South Central, you're in the hood and you keep getting better. Then Bell Gardens, then Downey. It's like, "Oh, you're from Downey te crees [you think you're all that]." Even though it's relatively within a 15-minute drive, an eight mile difference, those little slivers of different little cities, create this idea of "I made it out of the hood. I no longer live in the hood." It's like, well no, you still do. It's just different. When I went to college, it was like, "Yeah, you're like the only one." I lived on campus, so it was like oh my God, it's hella white." I've never been with so many white people. Growing up it was black and brown, and then went to college and it was just whoa, culture shock, you know?

Miguel recognized the culture shock of transitioning to college because being from South Central Los Angeles, you are accustomed to being with people who look like you, Latinx students for example. Nevertheless, that is not the case when you go to college, especially in small Liberal Arts colleges throughout the U.S. that often tend to be private colleges in nature and only accessible to more affluent students or students who have scholarships to cover the cost of attendance of those colleges or universities.

Haro, a Latino male who received his undergraduate from USC and is currently doing his masters at California State University Dominguez Hills, also spoke about his own culture shock when transitioning from high school to college at USC. In his interview Haro shares that:

I'm around peers in high school, right. Still students from my high school. When I got to USC, having classes that are 250 students, a whole auditorium, and you're the only Latino there, that was brand new to me. I felt out of place. I didn't feel smart enough. I felt like I didn't belong. What the hell am I doing here? I definitely felt it in my first year. I didn't want to speak. I was intimidated, 100%. It was brand new to me, so it took me a while to understand that there's a reason why I was sitting in that chair.

In his interview Haro spoke about going from being the majority in high school to being the minority and the psychological implications that this had on his academic experience at USC. In doing so, he highlighted how imposter syndrome was often dominant in his life while in college, predominantly because of the overwhelming ratio of white to Latinx people in the classroom.

Kike, a Latinx male who attended California State Polytechnic University, Pomona (Cal Poly Pomona), also added to Haro's point, by talking about the culture shock he experienced at Cal Poly Pomona, which simultaneously enhanced his imposter syndrome in the classroom that caused him to question his intelligence at this university.

It was just like a culture shock. It was just me being in this new environment, probably it's different, because it [before in high school, it] was all black people. It was all Latino...[While in college,] it was just...different people that I felt subconsciously that they knew more than me and I shouldn't talk because maybe they know more than me. It's just being insecure about people in class which slowly got better toward the end, but yeah, I think it was just the culture shock. I think it was the first time knowing that I'm a

minority, like my culture isn't really here. I can't just talk to people how I... I mean I could have but I can't express myself how I did in the hood. I was different.

Kike recalled feeling overwhelmed with the curriculum because not only did he feel out of place at Cal Poly Pomona, but also, he felt that his prior education made his academic challenges more visible to those around him. This was an issue that further increased his imposter syndrome (Clance, & Imes, 1978) he already had coming into the university, coupled with the culture shock he experienced at the university coming from South Central. Unfortunately, and as we will see in the next subsection, Kike explained in his interview how the imposter syndrome that they experienced in college, could have been mitigated if only they had received a better college transition guidance prior to entering Cal Poly.

Latino/x Male Students' Lack of College Guidance Prior to and in Higher Education

In speaking about the culture shock, these participants also spoke about the lack college preparation that these students realized when they transitioned from high school to college. Some even spoke about how this lack of college preparation in high school continued to affect them as they continued on their college journey. For example, Felipe, a Latino male who attended Cornell University for his undergraduate education in Government, and would later attend USC for his master's in Student Affairs in Higher Education, explained that:

I didn't know how to navigate that [higher education]. I could have been taught more about principles of professionalism, that way I would have known a little bit more when I got there. Just because there was a lot of moments of friction and culture shock basically, that I had to learn I guess things the hard way of how to communicate, how to behave, because you know white professionalism, it's all over our universities.

Felipe recognized that high school education could have prepared him not just academically, but provided him with some college cultural and/or socialization techniques that would have been influential towards him being able to fit into college. Such techniques could have provided him with both a sense of belonging and enhanced cultural and social capital for navigating higher education more efficiently. This did not mean he did not already come with cultural and social capital to help him navigate higher education; this means that there are certain dominant culture capitals that could be provided to enhance students like Felipe but he was not provided with such tools because he did not attend an affluent high school like his white student counterparts.

This college information would have also provided students with the guidance that is often racially minoritized students in grades P-12 from urban communities like those in South Central. In his interview, Pablo, a Latino male who went from Cal Poly Pomona to El Camino Community College and then back to California State University Long Beach, talked about the lack of guidance he experienced in high school that could have helped him to have a better academic experience in higher education.

One of the biggest challenges I had then was more like guidance. I didn't really have someone really telling me exactly how to go through college like: What is college? What classes to take. Focus on this. As being a first-generation college graduate, your parents don't really have any idea what it is. My parents would just say, "We want you to graduate, get a degree in something," but that's all they would say. They would support me in case I needed money or something like that, but there was no real guidance in telling you or pushing you, saying like, "Okay, you have to keep up your grades. You have to take certain classes. This is how financial aid works," all that, the way college

works, the way you get classes, the way you register, where to go, how to decide on what school to go to. All that was really on myself, and I didn't really know much about it. Pablo highlighted that he didn't have anyone that could provide him with some semblance of college guidance both in and out of his high school. This contributed to him experiencing academic challenges and not understanding what degree he wanted to pursue in college. Pablo further explains that:

So, initially from Cal Poly, I just didn't know what to do. I didn't know if the major that I had was correct. If I would have changed my major, probably into a General Ed classes, or even to History, which I ended up doing, if I had found a way how to do that, then it would have probably been easier for me to stay in college and finish quicker.

The negative implications of a lack of guidance causes students to struggle academically. In the case of Latino/x males who are already experiencing large push out rates in higher education, factors like the lack of guidance that affect all racially minoritized student populations further hinder Latino/x male degree completion rates. Therefore Latino/x males are influenced by a wide array of systemic challenges that push them out of the higher education pipeline, like they almost did with Pablo. Fortunately, Pablo's desire to graduate from college revealed the counter narrative to the popular narrative that Latino/x males leave higher education because their priorities are elsewhere.

Factors That Helped Students Succeed in School and in College

Beyond the low SES, culture shock, and lack of guidance that Latino/x males faced while they transitioned on to college and while in college, these Latino/x males also spoke about how such influences pushed them to seek mentorship opportunities while in college, especially when they were able to see people that looked like them as educators in the college classroom. For

example, David, a Latino male who attended two different community colleges before transferring to California State University Los Angeles, spoke about the importance that having a mentor had on his academics while at CSULA,

I remember being in a physics class where the professor was a black male, and he was very kind to us and very understanding. I connected with him a little bit better that way, being just a person of color because the intimidation was less because of that.

This is critical because it shows that Latino/x males in higher education are more comfortable under the teachings of a faculty of color, reinforcing the need for more faculty of color in college campuses throughout the country. It is equally critical for institutions to specifically have students meet with faculty of color. For example, David went on to further add in his interview that being placed in a counseling class at Santa Monica College (SMC), allowed him to meet other faculty of color and that in itself had a positive influence in his academic trajectory. He specifically recalls how:

...there's a class called counseling where every student has to take and you find professors of every ethnicity in there, but it's up to us students to pick a class. I mean, that's how college is, we make our own schedules. I was fortunate enough to find a professor of Latino who I scheduled a meeting with him and he's the one who advised me to transfer to Trade-Tech just because he says that the education is universal everywhere, colleges are just going to look at your grade and your class, but they won't really know you at a personal level. And he recommended that I should transfer to Trade-Tech because the commute was kind of difficult just from South Central to Santa Monica coming from impoverished backgrounds, I do not have car, I do not have the money to

really pay for public transportation, so I would cycle my way up to school. That was like a 10-mile trip daily, 20 miles round. Yeah, while hauling like 15 to 20 pounds of books. David further reinforces his point about the importance of faculty of color in higher education institutions, by highlighting the importance that a Latino/x male at SMC had in him transferring to an institution where he would struggle less academically and where it would be easier for him to transfer to a four-year university. Unfortunately, that is not the case for every student, and it further pushes one to point to where they have to consider if being at that institution is even worth it or prolongs their time at a community college without transferring.

Theme 1: Familial Mentorship

Immediate familia mentorship

Latino/x male participants in this study recalled that the mentorship received during their higher education endeavors came through their families and those close to them. In fact, some of the participants associated mentorship with familia or family. In doing so, participants were able to recall how at times the advice they got from their parents continued with them throughout their lives and well into college. For example, Kelvin, a Latino male who attended Pacific Lutheran University and later attended California State University Fullerton for his bachelors and masters respectively, mentioned in his interview how the mentorship he received from his mother stayed with him throughout college and even in graduate school.

I don't know, as a kid, my mom always told me, "Copy what you see those smart kids doing." And I've always taken that to her league, throughout high school and throughout college and my master's program. I didn't know how to really do these things, right? But I just saw what that "smart kid" was doing. And I was like, "Okay, if they're doing this, they're applying to these things, they're doing things this way. And they're on top of their

things this way." And I kind of like mimics those things. I've been able to be successful in a way, through my academic journey, really.

Kelvin recognized the valuable impact that such advice had on his life, and could not talk about mentorship without talking about that which he received from home, and most importantly from such a significant figure in his life, as was Kelvin's mother.

When Latino/x male participants spoke about mentoring, they often spoke about their families, and more importantly how these members of their familia were often the first mentors they had. For example, Daniel, a Latinx male who went to California State University and then USC for their bachelor's and master's degrees respectively, spoke about their father as their first mentor by sharing:

I would say, I guess, the closest Latino mentor for me would be my father but that would be a bit different just because my dad's very...machis[ta] [the sense of being manly or what society deems a man to be in a patriarchal dominant society] and very ... I can't have a regular conversation. It always has to be a lesson, it always needs to be what I need to do or maybe I'm not listening. He's always the dad role in our family. He's never a friend or the brother or someone that I can just go to.

Daniel recognized that while the mentorship he received from his father was crucial to his development as a Latinx male in higher education, his mentorship always came with lessons, lessons that he often felt were more "tough love" in nature because they were both men. Nevertheless, these lessons taught to them by their father, were essential to their development of in higher education even though this mentorship would sometimes be rough and serious, often referring to the mentorship as formal.

Beyond Daniel's experience, Felipe, a Latino male who attended Cornell University and USC for his bachelors and masters respectively, also spoke about the experience he had with mentoring, especially the mentoring that came from his father when Felipe was growing up. Even though he was young, Felipe, spoke about how this mentorship carried with him as he went through his higher education trajectory.

Those values instilled in me, by my dad growing up and seeing how he was a perfectionist. And he was a really hard worker, kind of followed me into academics and yeah, we were, I was always like that growing up.

Felipe often experienced academic hurdles in college, especially at Cornell being so far away from home, but he specifically highlighted how it was through the mentorship he received growing up that helped him get through those academic obstacles. Even as he was back home in his master's program at USC, a university that was a few miles away from his familia, rather than thousands, those mentorship lessons continued to carry on with him and into his work at one of the local community KIPP schools.

Within the immediate familia mentorship, some Latino/x male participants spoke about having a sibling mentor them. For example, Alex, a Latino male community college transfer from Los Angeles Trade Tech College (LATTC) who attended USC for his bachelors, masters, and during the interview was in a doctoral program within USC, spoke about the mentorship he received from his brothers. Alex recognized that his brothers were his first mentorship figures, and not necessarily because of what they told him but rather the values they instilled in him through the examples they set for him. In his interview, Alex further explained the powerful example his brothers set for him:

And so, mainly, I looked up to my brothers as role models because they were good brothers. They did what they did. They worked hard to help my mother pay the bills when times are rough, or other times. And I modeled that behavior. You know, when I went to community college, I was helping my mother with different things and I sort of modeled their behavior of trying to, okay, they went to community college and they transferred. So then, I sort of was able to understand the lingo of what that meant, of going to community college and trying to pick the right classes, and then, transferring. Essentially his brothers mentored him by setting the example of what he should do once he would go off to college, an example that would follow him throughout his P-20 education (Prekinder-12th grade, college, masters, and even doctoral education).

Extended Familia Mentorship

Latino/x male participants in this dissertation also spoke about their extended familial mentorship as critical mentoring that influenced their higher education access, persistence, and degree completion. For example, Haro, a Latino male who attended USC for his undergraduate education and is now at California State University Dominguez Hills for his master's degree, spoke about how his cousin really was a change agent in supporting him throughout his academic trajectory:

I think primarily it was people that were close to me. In college, I have a cousin right now that is actually older than me. He also went through the same program in high school, did not get into USC right off the gates but he transferred over. So he was the first one to go to college. Automatically out of the gates, we've been inseparable like brothers since we were kids. So as he went to college and I was still in high school, we kind of separated. And once I got into USC, he got into USC, we kind of partnered up and he just flourished

after that. He flourished. He got into law enforcement, federal level, and I feel like all this time, as close as we are as people, just as cousins, I think he's always been present. As far as any professional decision, I hold his opinion very high. We discuss a lot of things. He does the same with me but I feel like I could definitely speak to him openly about some of the major decisions in my professional life. He's been a very important person in my life, again just growing up, but also throughout college. I spoke to him about my mental wars. I spoke to him how I wasn't really feeling I guess like I belonged at USC and I'll never forget this. He actually took a class with me just for that reason. It was just some GE that he needed to take. It's like I've been taking this GE. He's like, "Let's take the same one together. Screw it."

Haro's cousin went out of his way to be there for Haro and this to him meant the world to him because he did not feel alone, like he was doing this college process by himself. So to him, this was mentorship enough, but more significantly, it was mentorship that came out of a family member. While his cousin is considered an extended family member, he is still a mentor within his familia, nonetheless. These kinds of mentorships were significant and although often not conceptualized by many as mentorships, the fact that some of the participants consider them as such, is significant enough to report, especially when talking about the importance of mentorship within la familia.

Student Organizations and Fraternities as Familial Mentorship

Another form of mentorship that was seen as familial came from organizations on campus, specifically through student organizations and fraternities. Felipe mentioned how:

So as a student, I feel like my fraternity brothers who were older were the ones that served as my mentors with that specific aspect of racism because, and it was more so

seeing that they understood. That they've seen it too. It confirmed that these things were very real and that my feelings about the predominantly white institution were validated. It made me feel like, "Okay, I'm not going crazy, I'm not being hyper-problematic, and I'm not being paranoid. Like there's some racist shit going on." And they were able to confirm that for me, and we were able to get into discussions about "Yeah, man, it's socioeconomic issue, access issue, education issue, funding issue. We... So that was definitely something that helped me navigate that and break free through that. Cause if I didn't have that, if I didn't have my community, if I didn't have my brothers as mentors, I don't know how I would've done it. I don't know how I would have graduated without having that community and that guidance from members of that Latino community at Cornell. I don't think I would've. I think I would have gotten tired of it. I think I would've come back home and probably reapplied to other schools for next year...

Felipe spoke about the importance that his fraternity had on his undergraduate experience, recognizing that the mentorship he received, both through their mentorship initiatives and as a fraternity all together, was instrumental in his persistence within higher education. The critical component Felipe explained later in his interview, and as it will be discussed later in this chapter, was the racism he faced as a Latino male in his higher education experience that often made him feel like he did not belong at Cornell. Additionally, his low SES, as it was mentioned earlier in this chapter, also contributed towards this lack of sense of belonging in college. Nevertheless, in this finding, we can see how his fraternity offered a mentorship that really supported his higher education persistence and even degree completion. More importantly though, we also see how this form of mentorship really provides an example of how his fraternity was seen in his eyes as

a family, as a home away from home, and especially one who provided him that sense of belonging that allowed him to persist in higher education.

Franky, a Latino male who went to UCLA and USC for both his undergraduate and master's degrees respectively, also spoke about how he experienced mentorship from a student organization that focuses on the social justice issues Latinx students experience in higher education, and addressing them to the university. In this instance, Franky spoke about how his organization helped mentor him:

Okay. One of the main spaces would be one of the organizations I joined on campus that precisely addressed these issues and these incidents, when they would happen. We would have a talking space where we would discuss this issue. We would discuss this and we would express ourselves and come down to the bottom of what's going on and why this keeps happening.

Franky explained later in his interview how such space was seen as a familia because it would help him overcome some of the racism that he faced within his experience as an undergraduate at UCLA. Specifically, this student organization, which was a social justice oriented one, would provide that safe space for students to come to this organization and raise awareness of the issues Latinx students at UCLA faced; issues that were later taken to the institutional leaders to be addressed. Therefore, this student organization's familia mentoring that Franky experienced, was seen as a safety net for students like him, who experienced racial issues during their time at UCLA.

"Chosen Family" as Mentors

Latino/x males also spoke about how mentors would become familia or were seen with a familia lens. While these males of color spoke about the impact that mentors had in their

academic experiences in higher education, some spoke specifically about the positive influence these individuals had on these males of color lives that they became like family. For example, Kelvin mentions in his interview how:

But then there's all that act of mentorship that I've experienced with this mentor [Miguel] that I met...I've known him for six years, super, super intrusive mentorship. I love it. It's like family, it's family. Chosen family to the next level, it's like, "Hey, I have these opportunities for you apply to it, or consider applying to it." But sometimes you get the... "Yeah. I just applied to it." Like, "Send me a draft, get it done, get it done." And that's the type of mentorship I've been lucky enough to experience. They're in your face, get it done, do it, have you done it? Hitting you up like, "Hey, have you done this? Have you done that? Get it done. Get it done." And it's been amazing. I feel indebted to this mentor because that's essentially how I got this job at Everett Community College... So he's been that formal-informal mentor/family/just everything.

Kelvin spoke about his mentor Miguel, a Latinx male who attended Whittier College and then later San Diego State University for both his undergraduate, masters and doctorate respectively. In his interview, Kelvin shows just how the kind of mentorship he calls “intrusive, in your face, mentorship” really had a significant academic impact in the way he experienced his time at PLU. In fact, the relationship became so strong, that Kelvin saw Miguel as familia, or “chosen familia” because Miguel was not only able to provide that home away from home space, but a caring and supportive mentorship that Kelvin felt could only be found in his familia. Therefore, he is able to make the connection of Miguel to his familia, and it allows Kelvin to really look at Miguel as a family member, one that he could count on for anything and whom actually ended up even

helping him get a job near his former undergraduate institution in the state of Washington where he met Miguel.

Felipe also spoke about the familial mentorship he had as he went through his undergraduate education at Cornell, specifically with his fraternity brother. In his interview Felipe associates his fraternity brother as his mentor, as family, not only because the mentor was able to support Felipe in his entire educational endeavors throughout his college years, but because the mentor was even welcomed in his home back in South Central Los Angeles.

Specifically, Felipe mentioned that:

I would say I did have a mentor, like my fraternity brother Andrew. He was a year ahead of me and he kind of took me under his wing. I was kind of like a little rough around the edges, rascal. He was very in tune with academics and responsibility. He was so responsible and well put together, you know? I definitely aspire to be like him and to be so like, he was so eloquent in the way he spoke. He was so like, he always sought to find a solution to problems. He was just such a great person. I gravitated towards him, and to this day, we're very close. We talk almost every day, play video games. He visits, two, three times a year and he stays with us. He knows my family. He knows the bakery. My sisters know him, my parents know him and love him. He definitely became my mentor. It was because of him that I went to student affairs initially, because after he did Cornell he went to U Penn for his master's in higher ed, and then he went back to Cornell to work for maybe three years and then went back to U Penn to get his PhD. Now he's working for KIPP public schools in the East coast.

Being able to invite someone into your home to meet your parents, siblings, and even see the family business was definitely a rite of passage into the familia for Felipe towards his mentor and

fraternity brother Andrew. His familia mentorship relationship really transcended the borders of academics and education into his personal life. As Kike, a Latinx male who attended Cal Poly Pomona, shared in their interview, "...for Latino males...[we] don't ask for help." As such, not only seeking help from another Latino male, but also bringing them into their familia, and making the mentor be part of the family because as Kike would later go on to share, it becomes easier to share things when the mentee sees the mentor as a family member.

Speaking of Kike though, they also had their own experience with their mentor being like family. In fact, Kike mentioned how their advisor, their professor, and even a transfer student, played those roles of close mentorship that would later become like family in his life and which would contribute towards their academic success at Cal Poly Pomona. Specifically Kike mentions how:

I think with Mireya, that mentorship. It started off with her being my advisor, just that kind of person you could go talk to, but it slowly turned into her becoming a friend and becoming like family I could say just because she was a... She understood me and she was able to talk to me in a way no other staff was able to because she got it. She got it that I was a person. She got that I felt like I didn't belong there but she reassured me that I was there for a reason and that I should... She just really helped. And then another one I could talk about was a professor actually, her name was Irma Ramirez. I took her one class but it was 2020, our spring semester and that's when COVID hit and I had her for a bit... She mentored me through... just helped me know that it's possible... I don't know how to explain it. Her mentorship was different for sure. It was more architectural based...It was much like an educational... like in architecture she'll reassure me there, just seeing her. Because I feel like there was a few others, like Latino teachers, like ex

teachers. But she was one that I talked about what I was feeling and how she felt it and how she didn't feel like she belonged. In the first class that I ever took with her she talked about that, and that's all the mentorship I could speak about. I could speak of another mentor...I just remembered. His name is Victor, Victor Mercias. He was a transfer student. He was four years older than me. He was also... He was both informal and formal, but more informal because he was just friend. He's been through community college and knew how school was and how it worked, so just having him there to be like, "Yo, man. How do I do this? How do I navigate through this?" It was him who was informal for sure. He's a friend. He's my homie and that's another good mentorship I could talk about. I feel like they [the mentorship experiences he went through] helped a lot. They just helped me reassure myself that I was able to do that. I was able to continue school and I was there. I was just in school and they reassured me that in my capabilities and how I presented myself. They were just comfort. They just reassured me again, "You could do it. You're good." It's just like what I got in high school from my family, my friends. It was just that now because they knew more about it. They knew how school worked and how this higher degree of learning, what it's about.

All three of these mentors were essential towards Kike's persistence and degree completion from Cal Poly Pomona. In fact, as he would later go on to describe in his interview, Kike went to a predominantly white institution where he often experienced a lack of sense of belonging especially in the classroom with his white professors. He mentioned in his interview, and I will explain further in the chapter later, how these professors would make him feel out of place in the classroom because they would often refer to the whites solely. Nevertheless, with these individuals, this was not the case. In fact, he was able to create familial relationships with these

three individuals on the basis of mentorship because their style of mentoring Kike allowed them to get to know each of these individuals on a personal level, and the three mentors in turn got to know Kike, providing a sense of familia, as he described in his interview how only family members are able to understand him the way that these individuals did, automatically associating these mentors as familia.

Finally, in this theme we have Miguel, who as mentioned earlier was Kelvin's mentor. Miguel specifically spoke about their own form of mentorship and how the closedness that he experienced with his mentors beyond the classroom, academic, and even educational component, allowed Miguel to associate his mentors with specific family roles within a Latinx-catholic family. In his interview he explained how he saw his mentors as "padrinos and madrinas" (godfathers and godmothers), who hold very special familial status in the Latinx culture. Specifically Miguel explained that:

Some of my mentors, like how I said some of them are not Latinx, so they [do not] provide very great insight. It's also like, "Yeah, but you don't get it because you're not from the hood." I have other mentors who are from Inglewood and they're Latino and they're coming in and you know they are at Fresno State. So they're amazing. I call them my scholar padrino and my scholar madrina because they help me navigate this academic experience at the intersections of our hometown and our racial ethnic identity, and the cultural piece of your padrinos or your madrinas. They really help me make meaning of "Yeah, fuck that. You should pop off!" You get that validation.

The idea of referring to these mentors as scholar padrino and scholar madrina, comes from recognizing that these were academics first and foremost, but their closedness to Miguel allowed

the mentors to get to know them in a personal level, and in a way that these scholars could continue to support Miguel's work academically.

Latino/x males often saw these mentors as family members, even going as far as assigning them particular sacred roles of guidance. As such there is an inherent connection between the way these Latino/x males see family and the way they see mentors. This does not mean that they lose any respect for them, but rather that they see them as guiding individuals that help provide protection, and intellectual growth for them as they went through their higher education. As a result, family is such a critical component of the mentorship experience that helps Latino/x males succeed academically in higher education because of the closeness and understanding that these individuals are able to provide, which mostly happens amongst Latino/x males in their families back home.

Theme 2: Collegiate Mentorship

"Mentoring Was Life Changing for Me"

The second theme that was revealed by the findings was "Mentoring Experiences in College". Many important categories arose that fell under this theme. Nevertheless, some important categories that recurred more frequently, spoke about who provided the mentoring for these students. A lot of the participants recalled someone in their family that specifically offered them some form of mentoring. In Haro's case, he discusses how his cousin provided him with informal mentoring that made him look up to him and someone who he could speak to about issues that he could not speak to others about, like his mental wars that he discussed in his interview. Specifically, Haro discussed how such things helped better his mental health in general. In his interview, he mentions how:

I wasn't a huge believer of mental health, but I think over time and I think just me speaking about it right now, I think mental health was a very important thing in my youth and I didn't realize it until right now that I'm really diving into that aspect. I find myself keep saying mental health, mental health. I think mental health was important to me in college. So I think my peers or my mentor or my mentorship was important to my mental health which equated to me being able to be successful in school. And I think and as you're well aware, in the Latino community, especially in the male community, mental health is frowned upon, right. Not speak about it. Do not talk about it. If you speak about your mental health, you are weak. You are less of a man.

This aspect of mental health is critical amongst Latino/x males because as men of color within a Latinx community, Latino/x males are taught to not share their mental health challenges. They are taught that this makes them seem weak. Thus Haro being able to speak to his cousin about these issues, as well as any other issues that might arise, provided him with that space to be able to open up and really overcome those cultural barriers that are often present amongst Latino/x males that prevent them from seeking academic or educational help for example.

Ritchie spoke about an individual who specifically provided him with mentoring while in college:

I met him [his mentor] when I was about to graduate. My friend mentioned to him, "Hey, Richard wants to be a Police Officer." And right off the bat he was like, "Oh, here's my phone number. If you have any questions, I'll help you out." And I honestly want to do everything he's been doing. I want to help guide people throughout the hiring process. I want to help my community. Yes, he grew up in the Newton Division community as well, so he's helping the community. That's what I want to do for the Southwest community.

Ritchie mentions how this mentor, although a close mentor and a continued support in his push to be a police officer for the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), was an informal mentor that continues to have a critical impact in his career pursuits and subsequently, he was also a critical component in his academic preparation at CSUDH that would eventually prepare him to pursue a college degree that would give him the opportunity to pursue a career in law enforcement for the city of Los Angeles. With regards to faculty who might have provided him with some sort of mentoring in his academic trajectory at CSUDH, Ritchie does recall how:

A lot of my professors provided some kind of guidance. I did have a professor, Lieutenant Becker, he kind of gave an informal teaching of what it would be like to be a Police Officer. I remember he would describe like, "Hey, the career is honestly a rollercoaster. One day you're going to get promoted and then everything's going to be going good. Suddenly, it's all going to go bad. You couldn't rescue so and so. You're going to feel sad. But hey, everything else is just going good; you just bought a new home. And then things are going bad in your career; you're going to help your community." I remember that and then he pretty much described what's it like to be a Deputy as well working in the court system. He described what it's like working in jail.

Ritchie recalls that Lieutenant Becker was more of an informal mentor who he interacted with in classes and who served as an example of the kind of mental capacity he wished to have when in this career as a police officer. Ritchie recalls fondly how this professor have him the reassurance that this was the career field he belonged in and made him seek the opportunities beyond the classroom necessary to put him on the path towards becoming a police officer for the LAPD.

Eduardo also recalls his experiences with faculty mentorship at UNT. He specifically recalls how he had specific mentors of color who served as his role models, keeping him

grounded in his educational pursuit. These mentors contributed to his persistence even when he encountered academic challenges at UNT.

I have two teachers that come to the top of my head and they were both people of color, Professor Aponte, who I just mentioned, and one of my trumpet teachers, Tanya Darby, she was a great trumpet player too. She grew up in Oakland, so she kind of understood that socioeconomic struggle of coming from an underhanded [low socioeconomic status] community. I call it cutting a lot of slack, but they understood my struggles, they understood that I came from a certain place, that unlike most of the student body in the music school, I had to work, and I had financial responsibility that I had to worry about first. So they offered me lots of help, they kind of pointed me towards like, "You have all these resources here too." At UNT, you're in a band and we usually meet Monday through Thursday every day. If I ever had to miss, I would just tell them, and they'd be okay as long as you send in a sub for yourself. They were very understanding and made my harder years in school much easier.

The fact that these faculty members were able to understand where he came from and the struggles that he encountered provided Eduardo with a very transformational academic experience for him at UNT. In fact, he went on to add the impact that these mentors had on his academic trajectory by explaining that:

I think it brightened it up a lot because it came at a time when I was really, really struggling with it, and they kind of helped me make that decision that I was going to change my major. Because for the longest time, I didn't want to do it because I felt like I was paining myself. And they were also very good about also giving you the confidence and telling you, "Look, even though you're not doing well in this, you still got the time,

you're still very talented." And they kept reminding me, "You're here, you're at one of the greatest schools in the country for music, just the simple fact that you made it, speaks loud." And so, for that, I thank them a lot because I would come to them sometimes so defeated. And I also knew that I had the time and space, or they would allow me the time and space if I told them, "Hey, can I come talk to you right after class?" They were like, "Yeah, come on, let's go to my office." They were always very quick to lend a hand and hear me out. I remember one time, Professor Darby, she offered to take me and walk me to the counseling center. And I said, "No," I was kind of like, "Ah, I don't know if I really need all that." But to me, I think back I'm like that was way more than you would expect that of a teacher."

Eduardo's faculty knew he could achieve degree completion at UNT, but they also recognized that he was just a bit overwhelmed by the many responsibilities he had while in college. Thus his mentors provided him with that extra nudge to acquire a sense of belonging and sense of self-belief in himself in order to achieve degree completion, pointing him in the direction of resources and providing him encouraging words that would give him the strength to persist at UNT.

Alex also spoke about his experiences with faculty mentoring and their impact on his academic experiences in higher education.

So, it was a faculty who helped me. Some in sociology, some in American Studies and Ethnicity, some in the History department, some in the School of Education who took me under their wing, right? And then graduate students as well, who were in PhD programs in education, who were guiding me through the process. They served as mentors, and actually helped me navigate that process that was research or applying to conferences or applying to PhD programs. All of that was through their guidance.

Mentoring also life changing for participants because these males of color were offered guidance and caring by their faculty members. Specifically, Alex shared how:

At least three individuals that I mentioned, they really care about that. They showed care and passion to uplift those from the community. They went out of their way to try to support them. Right? I think it's showing that sense of care that makes them special in my eyes, or any people like them. There's many of them and then there's not that many.

Alex recognized the importance of caring and passion in their mentorship because it showed the Latino/x male that he was valued and that he was seen. Furthermore, it showed the student that he was not just one more student that he was helping. These mentors showed Alex that he mattered to them and that he was smart enough to succeed at this institution.

Also, it is important to note that participants also spoke about the academic empowerment that mentoring had on these Latino/x males. For example, Alejandro, spoke about the empowerment that mentoring created his academic growth not only as a student but as a Latino male in higher education.

A friend of mine told me, ""Hey dude, if you're not the one speaking up, who do you expect to speak up for you?"" And that was kind of the moment where I was like, damn, it's true. If I'm not voicing my opinions, if I'm not voicing my ideas and my background, no one else is going to do it for me. Some other person's going to come here and then write that story for me.

Therefore, this mentor provided Alejandro with that life changing agency and the voice that had been silenced for so many years but which enabled Alejandro to speak up for himself, understanding that if he did not, someone else would speak for him.

Kelvin, who is the mentee of Miguel, also spoke about the influence that mentoring had on his academic experiences at Pacific Lutheran University. Kelvin spoke in particular here about the career exposure that his mentor provided him:

And I kind of like mimics those things. I've been able to be successful in a way, through my academic journey, really. And I think, [Miguel] was able to provide that for me. I saw what he was doing. He was the one that asked me the question. He was like, "Have you heard of student affairs?" And I was like, "No." He was like, "Yeah, it's everything I do, you can get paid for it." I was like, "Oh, snap really?." Okay. I'm down. So he's been that formal-informal mentor/family/just everything.

Kelvin explained how Miguel was able to introduce him to the career field that he would later pursue upon his graduation from California State University Fullerton (CSUF). Without knowing, Ken amplified Kelvin's point of the positive influence that mentors provided Latino/x males in higher education in his own interview, by sharing how his mentors provided him with resources at Humboldt State University.

They provided me the resources that I needed in case I needed them. Such as improving my writing or any other course that I needed help with. And they wanted me to go to take my master's as well. You know, I was thinking about doing that when I was a Junior.

They provided me so much more doors that I never thought of before and I really appreciated that. Because that's how I was able to get my master's two years ago, was because of that.

Mentors served as agents of change for the Latino/x males. Furthermore, they opened doors for these males students of color that allowed them to further progress in their academic trajectory, achieve degree completion and even pursue a graduate education. Some of the participants even

spoke about how these mentors had been there since before they started at their university. For example, Daniel spoke about how his mentor:

That person got in contact with me, and they let me know that I was accepted into the program and then I continued visiting her in her office and she literally looked out for me. She helped me get back into [California State University]. She did so many things for me and I feel like she's the reason why I'm the way I'm right now.

Daniel spoke about how his mentor, a student affairs practitioner became like family for him because anything that he needed, she was there for him.

Pablo also provided some important feedback about the importance of mentoring and the influence of the mentoring he experienced at California State University Long Beach. In his interview, Pablo mentions how:

Oh, it was night and day difference, because in the beginning I didn't know exactly what I was doing. So, once I had that help, that support, it was completely different...For example [my] two bosses...one has bachelor's, the other one has master's, so they know what they're doing. And their daughter, I mean, she graduated college in four years. I saw it firsthand; she knew exactly from the beginning because they were so involved all the way throughout her school. So, she had that experience where her parents were the ones pushing her...And for me, once I got that guidance [from his bosses] then it made a big difference. It's what eventually helped me, pushed me through faster to get a degree, and get out a quicker way, or at a normal pace...once I got that mentoring guidance through them [his bosses] pushing me along the way, it helped me to actually get it [his degree] done, to get it completed.

Although his informal mentorship took place outside of campus, this mentorship played an integral role in their academic progress at CSULB. They knew that he could succeed, but they also knew that he could use a small nudge to keep him on the right track. Specifically, it allowed him to graduate from college; something that had taken him 8 years to complete. Overall that is the important role his bosses played as his mentors. They empowered these participants to succeed, and they provide students with the right tools to put them back on the pathway towards degree completion. This does not mean they feel they are their saviors. Rather, they serve as individuals who can help guide them in the right academic path towards degree completion. It also shows that participants like Pablo, have the capacity to be able to reach out to their networks to gain the necessary resources that they need to succeed in higher education. Thus, mentoring is that extra push that they need in order for the Latino/x male participants in this study to solidify their goals of degree completion as was the case here with Pablo.

Importance of Feeling Culturally Connected

In the interviews, virtually all of the participants talked about how it is not only important for a Latino/x male to have a mentor, but it is equally important for the mentor to have similar lived experiences or struggle(s) in order for the Latino/x male mentee to feel seen and validated. For example, Kike spoke about the importance of seeing someone who looked like him and spoke like him in the classroom at Cal Poly Pomona, by explaining that:

I feel like it's very important because it's just seeing... Not [just] mentors, [but] professors [who look like you]. I had...[an] English professor. I think he used to teach in UCLA. Hernandez was his last name...Jose...He was my professor there [Cal Poly Pomona] and it was cool because I was like, "Oh, shit. He's here. He's talking how I am talking, how I

talk. He's just a cool guy" ... Just seeing them [faculty] there, pushing it [you to] do it [to succeed academically] ...this just... really help[s]...seeing them there, [really helped].

Both faculty members that Kike spoke about had a strong impact in an informal mentoring space that provided the ability for Kike feel seen by their faculty. Although these faculty never mentored him directly, their presence in the classroom as faculty was enough for him to feel seen, validated and a sense of belonging on campus.

Beyond the visibility component of having someone that looked like the Latino/x males playing a positive role in their academic experience, Latino/x males also spoke about the impact that their mentors had when they shared their lived experiences with their students. The power of story really was instrumental to providing a Latino/x male with a more transformational experience. Alex for example, spoke about one of his professors at USC.

Manuel Pastor. Yeah. He was really dope. He helped me out a lot because he would talk about his experience. He grew up in LA and he understood. He was part of a working-class low-income community in LA, two immigrant parents, and he got it. He will talk about that in class. When I would hear that, my ears would light up and I was like, "Oh, wow." I would be hooked, and I will listen. Then, I would go see him after office hours, and I tried to learn more and connected to him. I couldn't get that a lot.

Alex recognized the high impact that having someone who looks like him, sounds like him, and even shares lived experiences, meant to his academic drive. He went on to talk about a second professor, another Latino male, who really motivated him in the classroom; this time at his former community college of LATTC.

When I was in community college, I did have one person. He was an English professor who was a mentorship and not so much in a formal setting. He would just [show he]

cared in class. He would ask me, how was my weekend? Well, he's living down in Southeast LA and it was cool to see a Latino man as an English professor, at LA Trade Tech who got it. He would talk about issues of identity, of language, of race in ways that I connected to. He was the only one that treats that. Roberto Mancía. He's an English faculty there at LA Trade Tech. Yeah. One of the things that I remember vividly from his encounter was he talked about the difference between he grew up in Guatemala, I think. He talks about being an immigrant, migrating to the US and having that sense where he can't speak English "properly" and feeling like he can't speak bad English, but then going back to Guatemala and not being able to speak good Spanish either. It's like you're in between. Your own people don't think you're Latino enough or whatever. In the United States, people don't think you're American enough or whatever. It was like talking about these issues in a way that I connected to in his class. It's an English class. That was cool."

These experiences provided Alex with the opportunity to understand that people like him, from racially stereotyped communities like South Central could go far in life and achieve degree completion. Such sharing of experiences was necessary in spaces that were PWI, like USC. Such spaces, although amongst a vast amount of Latinx people in the city of LA, were mostly inhabited by white people, or people who did not share their experiences. As many Latino/x males in this dissertation explain, just because you are Latinx, does not mean that you will have the same lived experiences. Panfilo, a Latino male who graduated from UCLA and is now at the University of Indiana Bloomington, spoke about these experiences with Latinx students who did not share the same experiences as Panfilo.

I mean, yeah, I guess that definitely that goes hand in hand with me not opening up about where I'm from, because I already felt like it was going to lead to even more of a sense of

not belonging, and it was funny because even, I remember this Latina girl that I met, I tried so hard to vibe with her, because just on the fact that we're like from the same ethnicity, but she was like really smart, bro. Like she talked really, really smart. And I mean, I like to talk smart too, but it was clear to me that she came from a different upbringing than my kind of upbringing. Maybe the second, third generation Latina parents, probably lawyers, I don't fucking know. But I remember trying to just be cool with her but it just... There was an economic class mismatch almost. It felt like... And it was just funny, it was interesting, because I'm like damn, you would think we would just instantly vibe on that, but nope, even within ourselves, there's levels of stratification and it doesn't always work out the way we'd want.

Therefore, having someone who shared the same lived experiences and spoke about them to their students brought that sense of belonging and visibility to students like Alex that allowed him to feel seen and gain a sense of belonging.

Beyond having mentors who look like you and who understand your lived experiences, another important component in the mentorship for Latino/x males was mentors being able to share their experiences with the mentee they served. This is critical because it allows the Latino/x male to understand where the mentor comes from, their life story, their experiences, while also opening the doors of trust between the mentee and mentor. For example, Alejandro mentions in his interview how:

Even just them sharing their own experiences, that really opened a little bit up to me.

Kind of gave me the courage and showed me how to navigate a lot of these situations. A

lot of my supervisors there were always very encouraging in case ... if I ever need

anything while I'm at work, they'd always be like, "Just let us know," and take the time and go.

Later in the interview, Alejandro further explained that:

Yeah, I think a lot of it has to do with them sharing their story, and then me realizing hey, I have the same story. You grew up in South Central, I grew up in South Central. We're both at UCLA, I know you're working, I'm working too. So I'm like, hell, help me out and build that mentorship with me. That definitely gave me the peace of mind, knowing that this person that I'm confiding in has the same experiences as I do. He probably understands exactly what I'm going through. Knows the struggle just as well as I do. It kind of created a system where I knew I can rely on him, because he knows the experiences that I'm living through.

Engaging with mentors who share their stories provides Latino/x males with the ability to see themselves in someone else. As Latino/x males shared in their interviews about their lived experiences coming from South Central, not many Latinxs who come from South Central, go on to college and become successful, because there are certain socioeconomic and racial issues at play that deter them from pursuing a college education.

Miguel also spoke about his experiences as a Latinx male being mentored and his experiences mentoring. Miguel spoke about the sharing their experience with Kelvin and in return, Kelvin shared his experience with them.

With me and my mentee with Kelvin, I think there's little snippets that we get to share because we're both from LA. We both went to small private liberal arts college. We both are in Student Affairs so there's a lot of little nuances that I get to employ in my mentorship towards him that I know that it's missing with some of my mentors, but

nonetheless, I know that it's so important to have somebody older telling you "Don't be a fucking knuckle head. Don't do that shit. That's stupid." That's very rooted not so much just in regards to being a mentor, but being where we're from. People always telling you, "Watch your back. You got to be ready. You got stay firm because no sabes lo que va a pasar [you don't know what will happen]" You need that in life. You need somebody to be like, "Hey," and I do that back towards him as well. It's not a one way, it's reciprocal. It's also me telling them and challenging them, "Yes, and you also have to consider..."

Miguel recognizes the importance of having someone who looks like him and shares his community roots but also recognizes the importance that it is to simply have someone who is there for you and who keeps you on track, because at the end of the day, it shows that that mentor cares for you and your academic progress. Nevertheless, he does highlight that because of not having a mentor from where he is from, it left a gap for connections based on lived experiences.

Now in my [mentoring experience of] Project MALES, in this new [mentoring program] program with Dr. Duran, he's the first officially mentor that matches my living experiences with me, [he is now] paired [with a] queer Latinx mentor. But he's from Arizona, so it's a very different experience. So, then there's this other piece that's missing.

It's always an incomplete.

Fortunately, his mentee Kelvin is someone he can mentor and provide those missing mentorship experiences that are not there for him (for Miguel). As such, Miguel now sees what is missing from his own mentorship experience and can provide a better mentorship to his mentee Kelvin.

The Struggle is Real: Mentor-Mentee Understanding of the Latino/x Student Experience

Latino/x male participants also highlighted the importance of Latino/x male mentoring not just for themselves, but as a tool of retention for Latino/x males in higher education.

Participants recalled the positive impact that allows them to build trust and to open up about their academics and other struggles when their mentor opens up about his or their life to his mentee.

For example, Franky mentioned in his interview that:

For me, it means the world. It meant the world to me because knowing Latino males are going through similar struggles and are openly expressing it, was a huge deal for me because it made me feel like, “Okay, you know what? Maybe it's okay for me to communicate my struggles. Maybe it's okay for me to say that I'm struggling.”

Franky spoke in his interview about the cultural norm that it was for Latino/x males to keep things to themselves. Unfortunately he also mentioned that happens too often and that is why you don't hear too many times about the issues that Latino/x males experience in college. Franky recognized how it was a cultural norm for him to keep quiet about things that would eventually make him seem weak in front of others. Nevertheless, the mentoring experience where his mentors opened about their own struggles, allowed him to hear these experiences, process them, and conceptualize those experiences as normal to be shared in order for others to do the same.

This gave Franky the understanding that it was perfectly fine for him to share his experiences in a manner that would allow his mentor to hear what he was going through in his academic experiences at UCLA and USC, connect with his mentor, and provide him academic and educational support accordingly.

Haro further added to this point in his interview, by sharing that this kind of mentorship, where both the mentee and the mentor opened-up about their individual struggles, allowed his mentorship experience to be even more successful.

I think for me, it was super important before because I felt like I was able to connect more or relate more. You have some of the struggles that I may have. That was my mentality, right. I think as I've gotten older and I feel more comfortable, it's not as important. However, that doesn't mean that it may not be important to somebody younger who's a younger version of me.

Specifically, Haro highlights how such mentorship experience is more crucial for the academic experiences of younger Latino/x males who need more help understanding the academic experiences they undergo in college. Nevertheless, while Haro recognizes that as an older Latino/x male college student he might know how to process experiences better, he still recognizes the overall impact of Latino/x male mentoring as transformational and empowering through the shared living experiences, especially in his academic trajectory at USC and CSUDH.

Latino/x males also spoke about how mentoring by Latino/x male mentors specifically meant stronger relationships between the mentor and the mentee. For example, Panfilo talked about the level of importance that having a Latino male mentor had on his academic experience.

[It is] Very important. Because I mean, how are they going to be able to relate to me or my experiences if we can't even talk about our experiences, like that guy, the first guy he was Latino and actually, I think I was able to like select now the nice, specifically requested a Latino male, because I want to talk about, this is the real shit I was going through and it was cool because apparently he knew someone who had gone to Manual Arts [High School] too.

Panfilo specifically addressed the importance of sharing things that specifically relate to Latino/x males that perhaps their Latina/x female counterparts don't experience. Franky provided a more nuanced explanation of the importance of Latino/x male mentoring on Latino/x male mentees in his interview by talking about how:

For me, what comes to mind through mentoring is just finding someone you know, ideally a friend that can help you with this situation. You always have a select small group of friends that you go to whenever you're getting advice. So to me, mentoring is receiving advice without judgment. I know when those spaces were breached by other things, something or someone that was not Latino male, the comfort levels that were there, go out the window, because you're no longer able to express yourself the way you would want to express yourself.

Here, Franky talked about how it is important for there to be a Latino/x male mentor for a Latino/x male mentee because it provides the ability for the mentee to feel a sense of safe space for the male of color to speak openly without the fear of being judged by someone who does not look like him.

When participants spoke about the impact that mentoring has on Latino/x male students, participants like Panfilo really summed up this finding well. In his interview, Panfilo spoke about the importance of mentoring but also the importance of researching the influence of mentoring on Latino/x male academic experiences in higher education. Specifically, Panfilo mentioned how: "I don't know where I would be without mentoring, bro. Honestly, mentoring is life and I'm glad that you're researching this topic because it's make or break without having the right resources there to pave the way for us." Daniel in his interview added to Panfilo's point on the crucial impact Latino/x male mentoring had on these students by explaining how:

[Mentoring is] Very, very vital. I genuinely think that a good mentor was the reason for my success because he knew the ways to go about things. He knew how to deal with it. My mentor shared with me his experience, his dos and don'ts, mistakes and errors. It's like having two lifetimes of knowledge being given to you. His lifetime and my lifetime. It just builds and stacks on top of each other, these experiences and it makes for better decision making and how to go about things.

Panfilo and Daniel in this portion of their interviews highlighted the importance of mentoring in fulfilling the gap that is left by higher education when these institutions of higher learning do not meet the academic and educational needs of the Latino/x male students. Additionally, the similarity in their responses is important because Panfilo identifies as a Latino male, whereas Daniel identifies as a Latinx male. This shows the importance of shared experiences between Latino/x males, regardless of self-identification in the mentoring process.

Paying It Forward

Another important aspect of mentoring experiences of Latino/x males in college is “paying it forward”. This was a recurring response from the participants was that you pay it forward being there for someone like those who were there for you. In this respect, Kelvin shares in his interview how:

But one of the things that they always told me was about paying it forward, and that has stuck with me forever. Ever since he said like, "We're doing all of this, we're doing all of that. Don't, don't trip about it, but always pay it forward, whenever you see a student, whenever you see someone struggling, pay it forward because we're doing that. Someone was there for us too, so we're paying it forward in this way." And that has stayed with me.

Kelvin recalls the importance of being there for others like others have been there for him. This is a mentoring technique that was instilled by Miguel, his mentor. In his interview, Kelvin recalls how Miguel has always pushed him to help those students he saw struggling because if he (Miguel), had not become his mentor, he could have been in the same spot as that struggling student Kelvin may see. That is why it is imperative that Latino/x male mentees continue the cycle of mentoring in order to support those that need it, especially of Latino/x males in higher education.

With regards to continuing this cycle, Pablo spoke about the importance of helping others so that others could do the same and before you know it, you will have created a support network that is essential towards the development of Latino/x male academic success in higher education. Specifically, Pablo mentions how:

Other friends who were Latinos or males, and both females as well that were going through the same situation. Then I got to pass that knowledge to them, telling them, ""Hey, this is what you have to do,"" to break that chain so that they're not going through the same situation. To try to get them somewhere. I would be the one pushing them like, "Hey, all right this is how it's done. Go talk to your counselor. Take these classes. Try to do something. Don't just go to school just to go to school." So eventually, that helped me help other people who were in the same situation that I was in... You're paying it forward because it's hard. It's hard to do something when you don't have that backing. You don't have that support in the back telling you like, "Hey, we have to do this." It's difficult to go through school with that if you have no prior experience, and nobody really pushing you in the right direction.

In this aspect, Pablo shares how imperative mentoring is not only when the Latinx students are in college but during the college access process as well, as it helps provide these students with a sense of belonging even before they get to college.

Finally, Eduardo also spoke about the importance of being there for others just as his mentors were there for him. Specifically, Eduardo mentioned how:

But those two teachers, they just saw it for what it was and I think they were also committed not just to being a great professor and educator, but also lifting up their own and their own community because it's a cycle. You do it so that in turn, I, one day will do the same thing. And I said unfortunately because I think it should be every teacher that does that, it shouldn't result that we're only going to help you because you have the same color as me. But for me, it came at a time I needed that push and that sense of confidence too. Prior to finding this finance career, I wanted to be a professor too and the idea was that I was going to go to music school too and be a professor there. And I wanted to help the people that needed the most, people like me, people that were struggling in music school because it just kind of came out of me that that's what I needed to do. And I was just so grateful for the mentorship, I knew that I couldn't just retain all that help, that at some point, I need to return it too.

Eduardo acknowledged that faculty at UNT had been change agents in his academic experience because they had helped him when he most needed it. In turn, Eduardo recognized that he had to be there for other Latino/x students because someone was there for him while he was at his worst. In doing so, he understood that others also might be experiencing challenging times in their academics and they need people like Eduardo who is a Latino male and who has probably

experienced the same trials and tribulations that another Latino/x male has experienced in higher education.

Ask for What You Need

The final category of the “Mentoring Experiences in College” for Latino/x Males theme is “ask for what you need”. Specifically, a recurring voice that Latino/x male participants shared with me was to not be afraid to ask for help. In this capacity, Franky mentions how it is ok to normalize your academic struggle.

...don't be afraid to ask for help. Struggle is going to come and it's okay. To not be afraid to make those mistakes and just to keep pushing forward. That's probably the one thing that I would still keep with me from my upbringing. Keep going, keep going.

Franky highlighted the importance of pushing through the challenges that presented themselves in the academics because without doing so, you will not advance academically. Even more critically though, he mentions the importance of asking for help that helps you push through your academic struggle or any struggle you might face in your higher education trajectory.

Additionally, Kike in his interview adds to Franky’s point about the importance of asking for help and explains the advice he would give to a Latino/x male seeking mentoring to overcome an academic struggle.

I would be like, “Don't be scared to ask for help.” That's number one. One thing I say, “No question is a dumb question.” Because I really felt like me asking for help was [dumb when he has in college] ... or asking, just basically just no question is a dumb question and to seek help if you need it or seek.

Kike explained in his interview that often, Latino/x males don't ask for help because they will be seen as ignorant or will be judged because they ask. That is why he stresses the importance of seeking help when necessary.

Latino/x males in this study also recognized the cultural norms that they had to negotiate when asking for help. Specifically, participants spoke about not falling into the cultural trap of feeling like they were any less of a man if they ask for help. For example, Miguel explained in his interview how they recognized the internal challenge that a Latino/x male experiences when asking for help because this subpopulation of students is not taught to ask for help and are even taught that seeking help makes them seem weak. Therefore, when it comes to asking for help in college, their cultural teachings kick in and they are forced to figure it out for themselves. Miguel further added how:

So sometimes that gets internalized into "I'm just going to figure it out. I'm just going to figure it out. I'm just going to figure it out." Some things you're not going to figure out yourself because you've never done it, you've never seen it, you've never experienced it. You don't know anybody who's ever done it, so at that point it's okay to say "Hey, I need help figuring it out."

Miguel stressed the importance of normalizing seeking help to overcome some of the cultural curses that haunt Latino/x male academic success. He also explains that Latino/x males need to come to terms with the fact that they will not always be able to figure out things by themselves, so it is crucial that they seek the help that they need to be able to academically progress.

Unfortunately, Latino/x males often do not seek any help when they are struggling academically and educationally. Consequently, this contributes to the huge gap in higher education degree completion rates in comparison to their Latino/x male counterparts (Sáenz, & Ponjuán, 2009;

2011; 2012). Fortunately Sáenz and Ponjuán do make the argument that faculty, administrators and student services must outreach to Latino/x males in order for these males of color to see that there are individuals who will support them if they seek any form of support while in college.

Finally, Kelvin also spoke about this issue by further examining the cultural issues that deter them from seeking help, like the desire to not seem uneducated in front of their classmates. He added that we must remain critical of such help seeking behaviors that prevent us from academically succeeding in higher education.

And really ask, again, we go back to those things that you feel like society, or your friends, or whatever we tell you not to do, like asking for help, asking for any type of assistance. No question is dumb. Seriously, you're going to be dumb if you just stay there and not answer questions, just stay ignorant. Right. So it's really that, make yourself, knowing that you have a question, make it known, and it'll be easier in that way. I think that's the biggest thing I can think of just put yourself out there, so people know, because if not, they're going to be suffering in silence. Nobody's ever going to know because no one's a mind reader here.

Kelvin recognized the negative implications of not asking for help when needed and further added that in not doing so, you are being the cause of your own academic downfall.

Theme 3: "Full Service Anti-Racist Mentorship"

Impact of Formal and Informal Mentoring

Latino/x males discussed their experience with receiving micro aggressive comments based on language during their collegiate experience. Specifically, Kelvin mentions how:

Race and racism – so just a quick brief example. My undergraduate school was founded by Norwegian immigrants, right? So we had a lot of Norwegian students study here at my

institution. And I remember a lot of the American students being like, "Well, they have such a great accent. Wow. That's such a beautiful language. Wow." And then me and my friends would speak Spanish and everybody would look at us like, "Oh, they're just Mexican." Or "Oh, they're the Spanish kids." Well, my wing was known as the Spanish kids. Right. Even though we just spoke Spanish, but we weren't from Spain or anything like that.

This was an example of how there were other factors that went into play when they experienced certain microaggressions on campus that went beyond race and sex. Additionally, Miguel also spoke about this in his recount of his experiences with racism in higher education. For example, they mentioned in their interview how:

I have had them [white people] when they know I'm Latinx they're like, *Hola como estas?* You know, they try to talk to me in Spanish. Like, "Girl, I speak English. Chill. I know how to speak English or like, "Oh yeah, I studied away at a Cantina." I'm like, "Great, I never asked you. I don't care."

The unfortunate reality that we are seeing with these two participants is that language is also a tool of oppression that racist students used against Latino/x males in their academic experiences. In the same facet though, it is important to recognize how these males of color use mentors to overcome these systemic oppressions in their higher education. For example, Miguel went on to talk about how:

I think I've had mentors who've helped me walk through those experience, who helped me also realize my agency because sometimes I'm like, "Can I say anything? What happens if I pop off, because then if I pop off am I going to be this intimidating Latino who's like, what the fuck are you thinking?" Like South Central comes out and people are

like, "Whoa, that's not..." It's like it's me, but you don't see it because there's no need for you to see it, but then if you do make me come out like that then I am going to come out like that, but then what are the implications of that and all those things? So they'd help me manage it and process it, but then also letting it come back to me where I still decide how I want to do it.

Participants recognized mentors as individuals who could help them overcome these unfortunate experiences, by helping them navigate the power dynamics that were often at play. This of course was depending on who made the micro aggressive comment, while also helping them rationalize the negative consequences of lashing out unprofessionally against their oppressors. The sad reality that participants like Miguel recognized was that even though they were the ones who were oppressed, they would be the ones reprehended more if they lashed out in a violent manner.

Other forms of microaggressions stemmed from staff members who had direct impact in students' academic experiences in the classroom. For example, Daniel talked about how he experienced racial microaggressions when he used the services of the writing center.

I guess I can go back to how I emailed my professor, but I didn't go at it as like, "Oh ..." I didn't think she was going to make me report it. I didn't think that was going to happen. I just thought maybe I should just tell her my experience because of how I felt. At that point, I wasn't judged for my writing. Yeah, I was criticized like, "Oh, you should change this comma. What if you do this?" But I was never told, "What is this? What are you bringing this?" I don't want to quote her but pretty much instead of giving me motivation to write something better, it made me feel like I was not worthy of being there. I didn't like that.

Later in the interview, Daniel spoke about how being able to talk to their mentor about this racist academic experience, helped him acquire the necessary support that he needed to reach out to someone at the institution that could remedy this incident.

Like I mentioned earlier, it [being able to talk to my mentor] just helped me get the resources that I needed. For example, I didn't know that we could've called and complained. I just thought I was just going to leave it as it is. I was just going to be, "That's it." I just thought, "Okay, well, she did that. That happened." I told my friends about it, so that's pretty much it. Shortly after that, when she helped me out I just felt like someone had my back and I wasn't wrong on what was going on.

Being able to provide their mentor with the details of this incident, allowed their mentor to not only point him in the right direction of someone who could help him out, but raise awareness of the issue at hand, so that it would not happen again. Such mentoring experience was necessary because although Daniel recognized that he felt it was not an experience that would have been detrimental to his overall degree completion, it did play a role in his sense of belonging on campus, a factor that often causes Latino/x males to be pushed out of higher education (Hurtado, & Ponjuán, 2005).

Other Latino/x males highlighted how mentors' availability helped them to process the racist incidents that they encountered and often times connecting with these available mentors, provided them with the tools necessary to overcome their racialized experiences as well.

Specifically, Kelvin mentions how:

I think so. I think I didn't necessarily seek it out, but just the fact that my mentor was a part of the... He was, I mean the staff who was responsible for our group, he made himself very available. We were able to talk to him about situations that had happened.

So again, that informal piece came into play where I was like we were able to talk about the situation, what had happened, and they were able to be like, "Oh, so you can deal with it this way?" And there would be these consequences, or they're just really expanding where people were coming from. I think that was great in terms of us processing, because these occasions are like microaggressions, and people like, just showing their ignorance, really. So we didn't really seek it out, we didn't feel that we needed to process it, but we were able to process it because of the way things were set up and the mentor was just available.

In this statement, Kelvin talked about how the informal mentoring he received from his mentor provided him with the space to share his experiences. In turn, his mentor listened to him and opened the opportunity for Kelvin to receive feedback on what was the best course of action for how to overcome this racist experience in college.

Other Latino/x males, like Haro, talked about how being able to talk with his informal mentors, like his brothers or cousins, provided him with the ability to process a racist incident and understand how it was indeed racism and not something normal that happens.

I've shared it [racist experience] with my brother... We always laugh about it. I don't know if it's just a way to cope with it or it's literally just funny because I mean a part of it is funny... Kind of like today, I dove into the conversation with my brother and my brother had a very different perspective. He was adamant. He's like, "That was racism." He's like, "And you didn't realize it at the time, but it really was." And I proceeded to tell him, to me, it wasn't full-on racism. Maybe I just look the part, right. And he said, "Well, why did you look the part?" I was like, "Okay, I like the challenge." I was like, "Well, my wardrobe. I was wearing a USC hoodie, Nike all the time. I'm always Nike'd out, for

whatever reason, especially in college. So maybe that." He's like, "Well, yeah. That in combination with what?" So he kept challenging me and I was like, "Yeah, you're kind of right."

Participants like Haro highlighted how they often do not understand the racist experiences that they encounter in their academic trajectory of higher education. As such, being able to speak about these experiences with people that they look up to as mentors, whether formal or informal, provides them with the space to understand the reality of the situation.

Another way that mentors helped students overcome racist experiences was by mentoring them in a way that these male students of color would be provided with the knowledge and understanding of their positionality on campus as brown males in a white system. Specifically, Eduardo talked about how his mentors helped him understand how to use his positionality to understand how he was not only seen on campus but how to overcome the racialized experiences he encountered.

I can't think of a time or situation where something like that happened, but something that does come to mind was where both those teachers that I mentioned before kind of just stressed the importance of as being a Latino or a person of color, you have to work twice as hard because your very first impression can sometimes be unfavorably biased against you, because people hold people from our communities to such low standards or low esteems. So basically, in the tone of, "Don't be one of those reasons for them. Make sure that you carry yourself proudly, make sure that you work super hard and you're just as reliable as anybody else."

Eduardo added how these mentors also helped him to own his successes and be self-proud of his accomplishments.

You know the kind of like in that same light where they tell you, you have to work twice as hard; they also emphasize that you have to be proud of who you are. Don't let the uncomfortability of others make you inconvenience yourself, especially as long as you get the work done. If my work can talk to me, then this should stop at that. And it shouldn't matter how I speak or how I might dress, what sports things I like; the point is that I was just as good as a musician, as anybody else in that music school. So them kind of encouraging me to be who I was and to feel proud of it, especially my Latino professor, I think those words of encouragement really, they pushed me to strive for much more and to just keeping that resilient person that I've always been.

This was an example of how mentors not only were necessary for helping Latino/x males overcome the racist experiences they experienced in higher education, but also to help Latino/x males celebrate their own successes too.

Having someone who just listens to them was also a relieving academic experience for these Latino/x male participants. For example, Alex shared in his interview how:

And we talked for 50, 45 minutes to an hour, and it was basically just her giving me the chance to share what happened and to process it. And it was nice to be able to reach out to someone, a superior, my faculty advisor who's by all means more senior than this person who did this on Twitter and then think about next steps and understanding what might happen in getting that kind of feedback.

Participants like David also spoke about how mentors who were able to listen to their experiences, helped him with his overall degree completion.

Yes, mentoring, it did help go through all of it. How did it help me? Just simply having someone to talk to about these problems was enough to take it out and put things to

perspective, gather my thoughts, hearing another person's thoughts about it. It's like just releasing tension, talking to somebody.

Ken, in his interview, complements what David and Alex mention in their interview.

Specifically, Ken recalls how mentoring was able to help keep him motivated in his academic success, even when his academics did not result very favorably in his collegiate education.

It kept me motivated even in the darkest times that everything is going to work out. So, as long as you still keep putting in the effort, because the moment you don't put the effort, it comes back to haunt you really badly. Let's say, you do bad on an exam and you don't pay attention to that, your grade drops from an A to a C and then to a D. So, having those positive mentors and all the positive environment definitely kept me on check.

Latino/x males recognized that mentors were integral towards their degree completion. This is specifically critical when you think about the large gap in graduation that exists amongst Latino/x males in higher education.

Mentoring Latino/x Males through Racialized Experiences In and Out of the Classroom

Participants were also given the opportunity to speak about the racism they experienced while in higher education, which inherently, influenced their collegiate experience. For example, Kelvin talked about his experience of working with campus security and the partnership that they had with the Sherriff's department at Pacific Lutheran University.

...one night actually specifically... I actually got stopped by the cops because I fit the profile of the person they were looking for...I was wearing the uniforms clearly saying campus safety, the school's emblem and everything. They still were like, "Hey, where are you headed? What are you doing?" I'm like, "I'm headed to work."...And that was one of those times, I didn't feel secure at all ...

Part of the importance of recognizing the racialized experiences Latino/x males come to college with, is because these lived roadblocks do not end outside of the university. They play a crucial role in both the sense of belonging at the institution and leave a sense of confusion in the lives of these male students of color as they go through their collegiate experiences. As a result, Kelvin also spoke about the importance of sharing these racialized experiences with his mentor on campus and the impact it had in overcoming this systemic issue.

I think I didn't necessarily seek it out, but just the fact that my mentor was...staff who was responsible for our group [resident assistant], he made himself very available. We were able to talk to him about situations that had happened...I think that was great in terms of us processing, because these occasions are like microaggressions, and people like, just showing their ignorance, really. So we didn't really seek it out, we didn't feel that we needed to process it, but we were able to process it because of the way things were set up and the mentor was just available.

In this experience, Kelvin recalls experiencing racism through being mistrusted as a campus security, even when the Sheriff's department knew that Kelvin was a campus security officer. Kelvin's mentor was instrumental in helping him make sense of the racist experience he endured on his way to work. While Kelvin would later go on to explain how this incident was not something he believed affected him at first, having a mentor who provided a safe space to process such issues to the residents of his dormitory, made a world of difference. Such availability provided Kelvin with a "community seal" that would later encourage him to "create [a] community, by creating the student organization called Latinos Unidos" which helped him provide that same space of community and mentorship for Latinx students, that his mentor provided for Kelvin during that racist experience.

Alex also recalled a racist experience he encountered almost daily. As a student at USC, Alex recalled being asked to identify himself on campus, whereas white males were not.

...there was moments where I would have to go back to campus for whatever reason, and I would get carded. These are the white kids that would come in before me, they wouldn't get carded. I would ask myself, "Why is that?" Right? It's because I look a certain way, because I'm dressed a certain way, because whatever. I was feeling bad, honestly very often where I felt like this university...

On another experience, Alex also shared his racist encounter with a white tourist at USC.

Another time it was when I was walking with a White student, a White male and a family went to ask for directions. And she asked us, she reached, "Hey, can you help me find this?" And so I gave the directions to this White woman who was with a son and a daughter and she doesn't look at me. It's like if I don't exist. It's like if I'm a ghost...And so I turned my head, I turned my head so I'm in her line of sight and I repeat the same thing. You go this way, you go that way, and there's where you need to get to. She doesn't answer. She keeps looking at the White dude for the answer. And then my friend, he goes, yeah, it's what he said. You go here and here and here. And then she goes, "Oh, okay. All right."...That experience, I remember feeling really frustrated and my friend didn't understand the severity of that. And I remember that day later on thinking, it bothered me...It was like if I was invisible. And it just translates to a lot of times how I felt at the university, really feeling invisible for moments like that or moments where I'm silenced in various ways in the curriculum or whatever.

Such experiences are necessary to be told because once again, Latino/x males like Alex are being characterized as dangerous, silenced, or ignored in subtle ways where white people can get away

with being racist. Alex recognized that he was being ignored because he was Latino. In the instance of him being carded, he recognized this happened because he was Latino as well and because he was male. In both instances though, he often felt a lack of sense of belonging on campus at USC, something that is not uncommon amongst Latino/x males in higher education.

Other Latino/x males at other campuses talked about how their racialized experiences contributed to their lack of sense of belonging. Specifically, participants like Kike, spoke about how their racialized experiences in the classroom provided them with a lack of sense of belonging in their college institution. For example, he mentions in his interview how "... [I] just don't feel comfortable there because you feel like they're not talking to you. They're [white professors] talking to the other part of the class [the white students]." He went on to explain how:

...since more professors were white, you would see professors talking to them and getting along with them and like, "Oh yeah, and they're like... "Talking more about life and with us they would see us they would see us as just like, "Oh, yeah. You finished your paper, cool."

Latino/x males are already known to experience difficulty in creating connections with their faculty. This problem is exacerbated when faculty members, whether they know it or not, emit racist behaviors by ignoring certain parts of the class (students of color), and only focusing on the white students of the class. In fact, Kike went on to explain in his interview how:

I think it's just they're not talking to us in a way that's... You could tell the difference when he would talk to you, people of color. I was talking about one professor because that's the one I see the most but in everywhere. You will see how they speak to white people. They talk to them in a more friendly, more amiable, just like a friendship. And then with us it was more just like, "Yeah, man. Your assignment, cool, okay." It wasn't

like a... You didn't feel like a friendship there, you felt more like of a just... You were there just because you were getting a grade basically and you could tell.

These experiences are crucial to the academic development of Latino/x males. In the case of Kike, Kike did not feel he belonged in the classroom because he felt that his professor was actively only talking with white students. This contributed to his experience of often feeling his Cal Poly Pomona college experience was overtly tiring and simply academically challenging.

Specifically, participants like Ken, talked about how they experienced feelings of inadequacy because of such disregard by white faculty.

Definitely heavy underestimation or why am I here or why am I in college when I could be working in the fields or a blue-collar job instead of focusing on something that I actually was trying to focus on. They try to put you in a specific group when you know you've been in a higher group, especially for all the effort that you've been fighting for since day one. That has definitely kept me motivated to prove them wrong. It's like, no, I can go higher, above and beyond and also stay ... Give them a response that's is more civil than the way they were treating me, uncivilly.

Ken recognized that he was undermined for being a Latino male, but also recognized that he had every right to be in the same space as his white student counterparts. That was actually a common attitude seen amongst all participants in this study. They recognized that they experienced certain racist academic experiences, but simultaneously recognized that they had every right to be in their college institution, something that helped them persist in college.

How Mentors Can Address the Racism Latino/x Males Endure in College

Latino/x male participants were also invited to provide in their own opinions on how mentoring would help other Latino/x males who might be seeking mentoring to overcome racial

incidents in their academic experiences in their college education. Specifically, Kelvin talked about how:

So it's just about making myself available for individuals who are going through that.

And depending on the context, lining them up with services, I really have those conversations about what are you going through. It can affect you in a very deep way.

But again, that action is not on that person who experienced it, but it's on the person who is actually protecting that, or actually the perpetrator of all of that.

Kelvin recognized that it was important to simply make yourself available. Latino/x males often experience cultural norms that play a role in their level of reaching out to faculty, staff, or administrators for mentoring support, especially in the form of guidance. Within the realm of availability, Latino/x males also recalled how needing someone to provide some sense of comfort when the affected Latino/x males outreached for mentorship was essential to their academic experiences in higher education. Specifically, Alex mentioned how:

...if somebody that I know experiences a racist incident, I would try to understand, obviously, first what happened? Who did this and what can be done? But also helping the person understand that it's okay, that these feelings that you're feeling, a lot of people feel. Comforting the person and trying to... I don't know if I'm making any... Not downplaying the racism at all, but helping the person, being there for that person, sharing similar experiences of both experiencing, coping and also what happened afterwards. Full service anti-racist mentorship, I guess, if that's a way to put it.

By a Latino/x male making himself available for mentoring and providing a sense of comfortability, it provided the Latino/x male prospective mentee with the ability to reach out to this mentor in order to establish a mentoring relationship on the basis of an open door policy. As

participants explained in their interviews, Latino/x males thrive in informal mentorships, especially when it comes to dealing with racial issues on campus. Therefore, providing this kind of mentorship through showing availability is crucial to Latino/x males who seek to overcome racism on campus.

Participants also talked about the importance of listening to Latino/x males who reach out to them for help. Participants explained that in doing so, you would be able to refer the Latino/x male in the right direction of what resources to acquire in order to overcome the racist experience that they had undergone at their college institution. Specifically, Pablo talked about what he believed was the best course of action to help out a Latino male who sought his mentorship in order to overcome a racist experience. In his interview Pablo mentions how:

I think first is, you have to listen. Let him speak and hear a person out. Don't just automatically say, "Oh man, that's nothing." Because the way something affects somebody might be different than the way another person gets affected. So, something you might not find racist, somebody else does find racist. So, I would always just, with listening somebody out. And then, taking the appropriate next steps... There's other ways of trying to get things corrected. Whether it was at a school something, try to speak to school police or some higher authority here. Somebody depends on what school it is.

Pablo recognized in his interview that a Latino male who experienced racism, undergoes a series of emotions that often can lead the recipient of the racist experience to engage in a response that will make the Latino/x male seem less favorable than the individual who committed racism in the first place. Thus, by listening to the Latino/ male seeking mentorship to overcome a racist incident he or they experienced, the mentor can provide solutions to the mentee in order to reach the best outcome possible without the possible negative implications for the Latino/x male

mentee in the future. Ken further added that by “listening to their story” and giving them your “complete attention”, you can “...offer them not just one type of solution but 1,000 types of solutions...” and in turn, “...have them be patient...” allowing them to:

Find a way to release all that stress because it's really hard to relieve stress especially as a male Latino because we're still not used to sharing our thoughts and whatnot like the way females do. So the way I got rid of all my stress was running and just giving back to the community and whatnot.

Ken, like Pablo, recognized the importance of addressing such systemic issues with reason, to ensure that the racial issues that the Latino/x male undergoes are properly addressed. He highlighted the importance of doing so because when this happens to you, all you want to do is address the issue, even if it is in a violent matter. Ken acknowledged that this is not the way to resolve these issues and thus having a mentor who can listen to the mentee talk about his or their racist experience, will allow them to vent and think more critically on what the best course of action to address the issue at hand.

Overall, Latino/x male participants summarized the importance of Latino male mentoring as a way of overcoming racist issues in their academic trajectory in three concepts. First, Eduardo mentioned how “I do think that the fact that they were male, kind of helped them be able to help me because that's how life works.” Eduardo acknowledged that having a male presence as a mentor gives Latino/x males like himself the ability to create connections that understand his struggles. Such connections are necessary to provide sense of belonging and really reassurance that they are not the only ones going through the same racial struggle. In fact, Kike mentioned in his interview how:

I think it's just the reassurance, you're not alone. That other people experience that, and other people are going through that and even though it's normalized which it shouldn't be. You're not alone in that and what you're feeling in that racism and that toxic environment. And that there are people that have gone through it and should try to overcome this. It's not just... Yeah, if it makes sense.

Second, sharing experiences was something that Latino/x males in this study really valued because in it, they would find commonality and community amongst their struggle of coming from South Central and going through the college struggle. Third, participants like Kike also spoke about receiving things as simple as: “Just words of encouragement, just knowing that he's not [one of them – racist person, and] that they're not alone in this [academic] experience. That I've been there, people have been there and just... Family simple, yeah, it's a hard pressure.” Such words are necessary to see themselves in these spaces and know that they are not alone even when they are seen as racially inferior or cognitively inferior, as we have seen through other participant's stories in this study.

Addressing Latino/x Male Racist Experiences by Diversifying Faculty and Staff

Beyond the many ways mentors can help their Latino/x male mentees overcome racism in higher education, Latino/x males also spoke about the need to diversify faculty and staff as one of the ways institutions could begin addressing racism that college-going Latino/x males experience. Specifically, Alejandro, spoke about how:

I would definitely say diversifying the staff, and the faculty that are on campus. Because oftentimes ... every time I'd meet someone new in the department, or in the UCLA administration, they were always white. So I didn't really feel that connection. Versus when I met professors and directors who were Latino, I always felt that connection

because I know that they can relate to my struggle, and I can relate to some of their struggles as well. Especially in academia where it was so new to me.

He further highlighted that in doing so, it would create a bridge between educators and students, something that he mentions is currently in separate silos and causes negative help seeking behaviors amongst Latino/x males who do not feel that a white faculty member would truly understand the student. Specifically, Alejandro further added how:

I'd definitely say diversifying the faculty and staff at UCLA would definitely try to bridge that a little bit more. Because there aren't that many faculty members that are persons of color that I would feel comfortable enough to go up to and ask for advice. Or essentially become a mentor, right? So, I feel like that's a really big factor, to me.

Alejandro acknowledged that having a diverse faculty pool in his educational trajectory would have made a huge difference in his educational trajectory, but now can only suggest that those students that come to UCLA for example. This is important because white faculty and staff do not always have the best interest of the student of color as he experienced during his time at UCLA in the Political Science department.

Other participants also spoke about diversifying their student base as well. Participants recognized that most of them attended a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) where they were not only the minority, but their idea of diversity was not necessarily one that actually meant being diverse, specifically when it came to how racially minoritized students on campus felt. Alex spoke about the importance of not only hiring “more diverse faculty...” at USC, but they could also do the following:

They can make sure that their students are not all the same group creating color and income level. It's a lot of different things, but I think it comes down to like who is there to

support the students and what is the culture of the institution? USC was always very, very white and what I mean by white is not only in the students who were there who attended the event or program, but also the kind of music that gets played and the sort of attitudes. Like, so when I would attend a networking event, what they would say about networking and the kind of things you should learn in order to network, all of that was very white centered, and it didn't create avenues for people like me to feel like, I had to give up a part of myself and learn something else, learn white customs and cultures and all of this, and leave a part of myself behind in order to make it or get a job or whatever.

Alex recognized that while it is important to hire diverse faculty and staff, it is also equally important to recruit and enroll a diverse student population as well because that helps to increase a sense of belonging on campus for students of color, like the participants in this dissertation. Such is necessary because while Latino/x males in this study all persisted in their academics and were able to achieve degree completion, a big component of their struggle in their academics was finding a community that they could outreach to and build connections with while in college.

Panfilo also spoke about this issue in his interview, but from a different perspective. He spoke about the importance of having transparency in school when a racist incident happens or in the institution's push to create social justice and equity-based initiatives, using his experience at Indiana University Bloomington.

Over here, I'm not going to lie, I'd noticed that they know this is a red state and it doesn't get the best rep. That's why they really are doing the most they can to make it welcoming and let us know. Because, I mean, it's not just Latino, we have Asians, we have Indians, we have all nationalities coming here, and these are all the same nationalities that Trump tries to evict, tries to kick out. So they're like, "We're going to do what we can." I

remember the whole online student things like, oh, if you're online then you shouldn't come back or whatever. They made it so that even though the students were taking classes online, they still were full time students. So they weren't going to get kicked out or whatever. They're understanding and they're proactive about it. I like that about this place... Whenever something does happen and I'll get a newsletter, email that there was an incidence of this on campus, and we're doing this, this, and that to address it. They're communicative about that stuff. And I was hesitant about choosing this area, but so far it's treating me well. I mean, nobody's even here, but also the specific town that I'm at is known to be a lot more liberal and just friendly to other people. But I do know I have heard other parts of the state is not as open to you and you should kind of be careful when you're trekking those uncharted territories.

Panfilo acknowledged the importance of having one's institution be communicative of the events that took place on campus even if they are bad in nature. He compared his experience at the Indiana University Bloomington with that of UCLA, where he often lacked the communication from the institution to become aware of what happened on campus. That is why he talked about his experience at the Indiana University in order to convey how important that was in his higher education academic trajectory.

Formal Mentorship Amongst Latino/x Males

Now that I have spoken about the most important themes that the Latino/x males shared about their academic experiences in higher education through mentoring, it is important for me to also speak about how formal mentorship was really not beneficial for these students. Latino/x males in their interviews did not really speak about formal mentorship in the interviews. They mostly spoke about informal mentorship relationships as the most significant towards their

academic success in higher education. As I interviewed these participants, I often heard them speak about faculty, administrators, parents, siblings, cousins, student organizations, and even fraternities. These were all examples of informal mentorship relationships (Inzer, & Crawford, 2005). An interesting finding was that Latino/x male participants would often speak about these mentorship experiences as formal, especially when talking about professionals who mentored them. This is exactly what Inzer and Crawford's (2005) talk about as an informal mentorship relationship. That is why it was important for me to highlight how this formal mentorship was clearly missing in the Latino/x males academic experiences recounted in this dissertation.

Furthermore, as research shows, formal mentorship programs "...are planned, structured, and coordinated interventions within an organization..." (Ehrich et al., 2004, pp.521), the organization here being higher education institutions, departments, and colleges. Unfortunately, Latino/x males in this study rarely spoke about institutional programs that allowed them to gain the formal mentorship experience that they needed in order to succeed academically in their higher education experience. On the contrary they saw these mentorship programs are non-present, or at the most, there, but not truly making an impact in their higher education lives.

Take Kelvin for example. Kelvin in his interview I think clearly spoke about this information in his interview. As Kelvin recounted in his story, he mentioned how:

in terms of that formal mentorship, right? At Cal State Fullerton, I was a part of... I was a graduate assistant of our success initiative...But I was never privileged enough to be a part of a program like that, but I can see having those programs there, how helpful they would be. Having cohorts, and having money attached to it, having spaces attached to it, it just essentially creates awesome model for success, retention and completion for young

men of color. [As such e]verything has been informal, but specifically this person that I'm talking about, [his mentor Miguel], he acts more, a lot of informal mentorship...

Here Kelvin speaks about how he did not get the opportunity to gain access to these mentorship programs. He does recognize the criticalness of such programs in higher education for student success, but the underlying meaning behind this is in fact that the traditional mentorship experience was not there for him. In his interview as shared earlier in the chapter, you can see why there was such a need to form such a space where Kelvin could get the mentorship that he needed, whether it was through Latinos Unidos or through his mentor Miguel.

Latino/x males did speak about certain mentoring programs that existed beyond the confines of the higher education institution that they attended and impact that they had on students like Alex. In his interview, Alex mentioned how:

My brothers, when they were in, I think high school, they became part of a program, A Place Called Home. And this program, their mission is to avoid youth from joining gangs and doing drugs and things like that. But that program, more than that, it offered different kind of mentoring services. And so, my brothers were a part that program, and they were paired with a mentor and it changed their life because they got to do things outside of South Central, which they hadn't done before. They got to go on like field trips. It was a formalized sort of program with a mentor.

As you can see these programs are essential in the higher education access, retention and degree completion of Latino/x males from South Central. Unfortunately, the underlying meaning of this story here, is that these kinds of programs are found outside of higher education, and as such many of the students who could benefit off of these academic retention programs, are unable to gain the benefits of a formal mentorship program. It is important to not discredit formal

mentorship programs. They are helpful, and they do serve a purpose, to help students persist in their life endeavors, and in the case of Latino/x male students in higher education, they serve to help these students succeed academically. Unfortunately there were not many present in the Latino/x male students' lives who interviewed for this dissertation study.

As such, in speaking about the level of impact that an informal mentorship relationship has on a Latino/x male, Kike provided a great explanation of this. In his interview, he resonated with a lot of participants when he shared why Latino/x males often seek informal mentoring more so than formal mentoring experiences. For example, Kike mentioned in his interview how:

I feel like for Latino males it's more... I don't know. It's just this thing where they don't ask for help. And it when it comes to our family, I feel like it works better. You become friends with someone and then the mentoring begins instead of like a mentoring program. It's rare to run... Latino to men to go seek for that because it's really stigmatized, "Are you sure you're going to ask for help?" You get more informal mentorship. I feel like they help more than actual professional...formal mentorships because it's more natural. I don't want to say natural but feels more like... You feel more connected with the person seeking for help because I think that's really stigmatized that you can't seek for help if you're... you're afraid. I don't know.

Kike's account provides an understanding for why is it that informal mentorship relationships are more impactful than formal mentorships on top of the fact that these formal mentorship relationships are often not present in the higher education experiences of Latino/x males. As such if there is a takeaway from these findings is that informal mentorship needs to be more institutionally supported, because these academic support mechanisms in higher education do work. Therefore, while this dissertation did not reveal many experiences of Latino/x males in

formal mentorship relationships, the findings did reveal an even more critical conversation of why informal relationships matter and should be more addressed when talking about mentoring Latino/x males in higher education.

Overall, this chapter was able to provide a background of the participants of this dissertation, as well as three themes that highlight how mentoring was able to support the academic experiences of Latino/x males in higher education: familial mentorship, collegiate mentorship, and “full-service anti-racist mentorship”. Additionally, this chapter was able to highlight significant findings about how formal mentoring was not as beneficial for the academic success of Latino/x males in higher education as informal mentorship. That is why it is safe to say that all sections above provided important context towards understanding that Latino/x males thrive with informal family oriented mentorship that does not always begin in higher education but rather prior to their college education. As a result, in the next and final chapter, I will analyze these findings using the literature on mentoring and higher education in general.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, INTERPRETATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF DISSERTATION

The research on Latino/x males reviewed for this dissertation study indicated two things. First, the research indicated that these males of color continue to be systemically pushed out of their P-20 education pipeline (Luis et al., 2020). Second, the research also revealed that more scholarly contributions are necessary to examine the efficacy of academic retention tools that can support Latino/x male academic student success in higher education, like mentoring (Hines et al., 2019). Even more critically, there was an evident lack of research that uses student voices to assess how successful mentoring is in supporting the academic success of Latino/x males in higher education who come from racially stigmatized communities like South Central Los Angeles, California (South Central). As a result, the two principal overarching research questions that guided this dissertation study were: (1) What role did formal and informal mentoring play on the academic experiences of Latino/x males in higher education? (2) To what extent do formal and informal mentors help Latino/x males overcome racism in higher education?

Based on findings from the data and the extant literature, it was evident that mentoring played a role in the academic retention and support for Latino/x males in higher education. The data showed that Latino/x males often rely on mentoring experiences to achieve a sense of belonging and to feel visible. Multiple participants reported feeling invisible in both the classroom and outside of it because they were Latinx. More importantly, though, the experiences that they encountered as a result of being a male of color outside of the classroom, coupled with the academic experiences in the classroom made their academic experiences in higher education more challenging. Nevertheless, it was mentoring that allowed them to both process these issues and experiences, as well as provide them with resources to help them make sense of these

systemic experiences while also helping them overcome them as well. Additionally, informal mentoring was specifically crucial for the academic success of Latino/x males in higher education. Latino/x males reported how faculty, counselors, and family members played a mentoring role in their lives. Simultaneously, as described in chapter four, formal mentoring was not as influential as one would hope, especially because Latino/x males often deal with the distrust that has been instilled in them by their racialized experiences across a P-16 or P-20 education pipeline.

The findings also revealed that Latino/x males often rely on mentoring to help them make sense of the racism they experience. Mentors validate Latino/x males experiences with racism in higher education. In fact, participants spoke about how mentors helped direct Latino/x in the right direction towards institutional resources that could help them overcome racism. In helping these males of color make sense of a racist experience, by validating their experiences, and directing them towards institutional resources, mentors help Latino/x males overcome the systemic racism that they experience in higher education. While Latino/x males recognized that mentors would not always be able to solve issues of racism for them, they did recognize that mentors did serve as a system of support for them in higher education. Through this support system, mentors provided that process of conversations that needed to be had to understand the racist experiences that some of these Latino/x males in higher education experienced.

Therefore, this chapter will be divided into seven sections. First, the chapter will provide more context of how college-going Latino/x male participants made sense of their mentoring experiences tying the findings to the literature. Second, this chapter will show how Tara Yosso's (2005) Community of Cultural Wealth can help provide an understanding of how Latino/x males come to college with certain forms of capital that help them succeed academically. Third, there

will be a discussion of how mentorship capital can be another form of cultural wealth derived from Yosso's Culture of Community Wealth model, using the data analysis provided in this dissertation. Fourth, a summary of themes will be provided to give one final overview of the themes discussed in this dissertation. Fifth, implications for future research will be provided. Sixth, this chapter will provide a comprehensive limitations section that discusses some of the challenges I faced when writing this dissertation. Seven, this chapter will close with concluding thoughts on the meaning of this dissertation and its contributions to higher education research.

Discussion of Themes in Connection to the Literature

Familia, Community, and Collegiate Mentorship

The first theme after analysis revealed that familia, community, and collegiate mentorship, as recounted by the Latino/x males in this dissertation, highlighted how familia, community, and collegiate mentorship was essential in this dissertation because there is still work that needs to be done to provide a stronger focus on how familia mentorship serve these males of color. It was not until I started researching Latino/x males between the years of 2017 and on, that I started finding a few articles that speak about the experiences of Latino/x males and familia mentorship. Some articles that come to mind are Sáenz et al.'s (2018) work, which discusses how Latino/x males who attend community college balance familial obligations, their employment, and academics. The findings of this article revealed that families play a big role in the academic success of these males of color who attend community college. An interesting contribution that this article particularly made towards the importance of familial mentorship was that it cemented the idea that families are not obstacles for Latino/x males to succeed academically.

While Saenz's (2018) work was speaking about these males of color in community colleges, this idea can be applied to all Latino/x males in higher education. Chapter four revealed that families, i.e., fathers, mothers, brothers, cousins, and even faculty members who were seen as family, were instrumental towards the academic success of Latino/x males in higher education. Families were a source of support for the academic success of these males of color and should be considered more often in the literature.

Additionally, it is important that in discussing familia mentorship, as scholars we help reshape the deficit argument that for many years, has painted Latino/x male families as an academic challenge due to the familial responsibilities and familial challenges they often place on the Latino/x male (Murphy, & Murphy, 2018). In fact, Sáenz et al.'s (2020) work is a perfect example of this push to change the narrative. In this scholarly work, Saenz and colleagues highlight the importance of how female family members play an integral role in the academic success of these males of color college education and beyond. As we saw with some of the participants, in particular Kelvin, his mother played an integral role in his academic success in college. This finding was crucial towards the expansion of what kind of mentorship best fits Latino/x males. While most literature has recognized the importance of Latino/x male mentor to Latino/x male mentee mentorship, Sáenz and colleagues along with Kelvin show that Latina/x women mentorship is as equally crucial to the success of Latino/x male academic success in higher education. That is why Miguel's recount about having scholar padrinos and madrinras (godfathers and godmothers) helps highlight this essential finding of familial mentorship. Familial mentorship helps us to understand that Latina/x women that are academics for example, are equally essential in the mentorship process of Latino/x males as Latino/x male mentors in higher education and can be seen as what Kelvin refers to as "chosen family".

Latino/x male participants in this dissertation also recounted having collegiate mentorship that was life-changing, culturally connecting, understanding, transformational, and necessary for helping Latino/x males ask for what they need. In the findings, participants revealed how mentoring was life-changing for some of them. Some of the Latino/x males mentioned that mentorship provided them with the ability to understand the importance of mental health as we see with Haro. Scholars have found that Latino/x males often do not talk about mental health (Mendoza et al., 2015). To make matters worse, it is a taboo subject in the Latinx community (Barrera, & Longoria, 2018), As such, when Haro shared how his mentor allowed him to talk about these mental wars he was experiencing, it was a liberating thing for him to be able to do that with someone who was not only a mentor but a Latino male like himself.

Other participants like Ritchie and Eduardo also spoke about having someone who is well respected in the community be there for them to support them in both their academic and even career endeavors. Scholars like Jackson et al.'s (2014) work found that when you show males of color love and care, you create connections with the males of color that can lead to fruitful mentorships that can transcend beyond the mentorship relationship. This is what happened with both Ritchie and Eduardo. Both of these males of color shared in their interviews how their mentors were both respected in their communities, Ritchie's mentor was a Latino male, respected in the South Central community as a police officer with many years of service. Eduardo's mentors were both respected professors at UNT's music department, one a Latino male and the other an African American female professor. Having these individuals provide each of these Latino/x males with the ability to hear them out and provide them with love and caring support was life-changing because they had someone be there for them unconditionally, and there was an added layer because they were highly regarded people of color as well.

Alex and Kelvin also spoke about having someone who supported them academically, this time with the graduate application process as a critical point in their mentorship. When these males of color received this kind of support, they understood it as their mentors were invested in their lives, because they were willing to teach these Latino/x males how to pursue a better future (Clark et al., 2013). As scholars find, Latino/x males seek support from faculty who can help them towards their future but are often deterred because they, in the case of this participant example, do not want to seem dumb (Keels, 2013). Therefore, having someone willing to support them through this process through their guidance, is a very meaningful support system that transcends the graduate application process and into their academics because it shows that someone is there for these males of color (Baker, 2013).

Culturally Understanding Mentorship

The second theme after analysis revealed that Latino/x males are also benefited by culturally understanding mentorship. Specifically, scholars like Watson et al. (2016) in particularly talk about this crucial cultural connection importance amongst mentoring Latino/x males. Specifically, the authors talk about how Latino/x males have a cultural connection where they connect to their mentors linguistically, ethnically, through similar lived experiences, or even through sharing similar phenotype connections with their mentor. Such connection provides Latino/x males with a sense of comfortability and the ability to open up during the mentorship process.

In the case of the participants for this dissertation study, virtually all of the participants spoke about having mentors that were Latino/x, who as a result of being able to connect with them from a phenotype or linguistic perspective, they were able to open up more to these mentors. Scholars have found that engaging with faculty, or other education practitioners who

look like Latino/x males in the classroom and outside of them causes an automatic gravitational pull to these males of color because they feel seen on campus (Castellanos et al., 2016). Given that most of the Latino/x males in this dissertation attended predominantly white institutions where they were the student minority, having someone who looked like them, talked like them, among other things allowed Latino/x males to feel energized to continue their pursuits of academic success. This was specifically true because, in their interviews, these males of color shared that seeing a person in front of the class teaching who looked like them or even engaging with a student affairs practitioner who looked like them, allowed these Latino/x males to visualize themselves as being able to succeed academically and achieve degree completion.

Participants also discussed how mentorship was essential in their lives because the mentors that they had all understood the struggle of being a Latinx in college. Some participants even spoke about the positive impact that having a mentor who understood the intersectionality of being a Latinx and a student from South Central or other racially stigmatized communities throughout Los Angeles. As recent scholarly work has found, having mentors who understand the lived experiences, and community experiences of males of color is an essential component of the mentoring process of Latino/x males. Doing this allows mentors to understand the intersectional challenges of being a Latinx, a male, and from a racially stigmatized community. In turn, Latino/x males can feel seen and understood (Brooms et al., 2021; Crenshaw, 1990).

Latino/x males addressed the need to have culturally understanding mentorship that can also help them overcome systemic racism in their higher education. For example, participants in this dissertation spoke about how their mentors helped them process racism in their educational trajectory at their schools. Having this kind of mentorship is essential for student academic success because as scholars have found, a student might not be able to comprehend right away if

they are experiencing a racial microaggressions. These mentors thus help these males of the color process the racist incident, make sense of it, and help them overcome such trauma as well (Brunnsma, 2017; Williams, 2018). By the same token, participants in this dissertation spoke about how their mentors also provided them with the ability to gain agency to speak up about their racist experiences as well. Being able to provide this kind of agency is essential to Latino/x male academic success because not only do Latino/x males often have a hard time reaching out for help, but they also have a challenge in speaking about racist experiences specifically because this will make them seem as weak, something that is very taboo amongst males of color (Cabrera et al., 2016; Levchack, 2018).

Anti-racist Mentoring

Finally, the third theme after analysis revealed that Latino/x males benefit from an anti-racist mentoring because this mentorship provided Latino/x male participants with the ability to feel like someone was there for them to provide support when someone made them feel like they did not belong (Huerta, & Fishman, 2014), in the same way that imposter syndrome makes it difficult for one feel a sense of belonging. Imposter syndrome is real. Nevertheless, we must move from imposter syndrome, where Latino/x males blame themselves through the act of feeling like imposters or like they should not be in a college seat, and move to a conversation that talks about how white supremacy makes the student feel this way. Doing this would remove Latino/x males' further systemic oppression of saying that these males of color do not belong on campus, and puts the system on trial for wanting to disenfranchise Latino/x males in higher education (Cannella et al., 2016). That is why mentorship is so critical to Latino/x male academic success in higher education. Without actually saying it, mentoring helps the Latino/x male understand the problem, shows you how to overcome the problem, and uses it to empower you as

a Latino/x male for you to have the critical lens necessary to criticize the system for being a system that not only was created for the social advancement of whites in the US (Thelin, 2011; Zuberi, & Bonilla Silva, 2008), but it continues to persist in focusing on the success of whites in the US (Feagin, & Ducey, 2018; Feagin, & Cobas, 2014).

Latino/x male mentorship is also necessary because it shows that there is someone available for these males of color. Going back to the idea of showing an ethos of care and love, Latino/x males thrive when they see that there is someone who cares for them and who is there for them when they need it (Jackson et al., 2014). Having mentors who are also available also helps Latino/x males in higher education by having individuals who can point them in the right direction. Take the example of Daniel, who spoke to their mentor and who pointed them in the right direction of someone who could help them at California State University with the racial incident at the writing center. In speaking about this incident, it is also very easy for someone to dismiss this incident as non-racial, but when someone is overcriticized for their writing as a Spanish native-speaking, first-generation Latino/x male, you are criticizing their language. This is important for us to recognize as a racial microaggression because for many years, writing as a derivative of language, has been highly criticized and used as a tool of oppression by people who look to oppress Latinxs based on language (Hartman, 2003; Rivera et al., 2008). Therefore, having this mentor who was there for Daniel, provided him with the ability to understand that what he experienced was indeed racist, and it warranted the attention of the leadership of the university to ensure that the writing center official did not do this to other students again.

Discussion of Themes in Connection to Yosso's Community of Cultural Wealth

Now that this chapter has discussed the connection between the themes of chapter four and the literature, this chapter will move to discuss how the themes of this dissertation connect to

the six forms of capital within Tara Yosso's (2005) Community of Cultural Wealth Framework. Familial mentoring is discussed in familial, aspirational, and navigational capital. Collegiate mentorship is discussed in social, and linguistic capital. Finally, "full-service anti-racist mentorship will be discussed in Yosso's resistance capital.

Familial Capital

Familia mentorship which connects to Yosso's (2005) Familial Capital because, through this form of cultural wealth, Yosso conveys to the reader that Latinx students come to higher education with the ability to succeed academically using their family ties as support systems for them to succeed. Family can be extended family and cultural connection within the educational connection. In fact, familial capital is a combination of various components that ultimately provide the Latinx student with a sense of understanding for what best fits them in higher education using their roots as their base to strengthen their academic persistence.

With respects to the familial theme, Latino/x male participants spoke about a time they experienced some sort of mentoring by either an immediate family member, an extended family member, and or a professional that they deemed close enough to become like family. Yosso's familial capital allows us to understand that mentorship can begin at the home with their mom, their dad, a cousin, a brother, or in the school setting with a faculty member because these individuals provide Latino/x males with mentoring through their guidance and wisdom that they pass on to their child or their student. These family mentors have been doing this throughout their entire lives, or in the case of faculty members who become like family, this mentorship could happen for years. Familial capital helps us understand how individuals who are considered family in the lives of Latino/x males can serve as integral support mechanism for Latino/x males higher education. academic success.

Aspirational Capital

In the case of Aspirational capital, Yosso tells us that this type of capital is the hopes and dreams of Latinx students that do not fade despite the challenges that may present themselves to these students. This form of capital does not just apply to the aspirations Latinxs have for themselves, but those that their parents have for them as well. As such, aspirational capital in conjunction with familia mentorship shows us that there are people within the families (both immediate and extended), as well as faculty and administrators who believe in these students and therefore their aspirations are fueled by these individuals. In spirit of the familial theme, Eduardo shared his experiences of being at UNT and how two of his faculty members, Dr. Aponte, and Dr. Darby, believed in Eduardo to the point that they would advise him how to behave in academic social circles or really in music circles that would benefit him in the future. The mere fact that they did this, showed that they cared and were invested in Eduardo's future.

Furthermore, participants like Felipe's parents believed that he could pursue a college education at one of the top institutions in the world, like Cornell University. Therefore, having that kind of support, really went a long way for Felipe and because of that, he was able to persist in higher education and succeed academically. Overall, all participants had high aspirations of themselves. While there were still challenges that deterred them from succeeding academically, the high aspirations for Latino/x male student success of family's members around them or "chosen families" as Kevin pointed out in his interview pushed Latino/x males to succeed academically.

Navigational Capital

Yosso also spoke about how Latinx students came to college with navigational capital. Navigational capital refers to the strategies that Latinx students use to maneuver themselves

through higher education. Yosso recognizes that Latinx college-going students are resilient and persistent in their academics when they face systemic challenges that present obstacles for them to succeed academically. Specifically, she recognizes that family, community, and individual support systems help these Latinx students to persist academically (Arrellano & Padilla, 1996; Yosso, 2005). As shown in the familia theme, Latino/x male participants of this dissertation study indicated how the deep commitment that their families made towards them, as well as those that helped them in college, allowed them to seek the resources that they needed to succeed academically. For example, Ritchie shared how he was able to find the resources that he needed to succeed academically at California State University Dominguez Hills (CSUDH) because faculty and administrators were very supportive of his academic success on campus. Eduardo's faculty members showed support of his academic success by providing him with deadline extensions on class assignments, because they knew he had to balance employment duties and academic duties as a music student at UNT.

Social Capital

Yosso's social capital also played a pivotal role in the academic success of Latino/x males in higher education and it was manifested through the culturally understanding mentorship theme. Social capital, according to Yosso, refers to the networks Latinx students use to succeed in higher education. These networks exist before and during the college experiences of these students of color. For example, Alex in his interview spoke about his experiences with his mentors at USC that helped him prepare for his doctorate education. Specifically, he recalls how these mentors helped him apply for his doctorate programs. He also recalls how these mentors showed availability and were a clear community for him as well. Social capital also deals with the ability to learn knowledge that will help socially empower your community and be able to

bring this information back to them to help them become socially aware. Kelvin mentioned in his interview how his mentor, Miguel, spoke about paying it forward with regards to mentoring other Latino/x males in higher education. Specifically, Miguel shared with Kelvin how he needed to give mentoring because they were all in this together; they (Miguel), Kelvin, and other Latino/x males in higher education. It's a cycle that keeps giving, and by Kelvin mentoring other Latino/x males, he is passing the information he knows to someone who looks like him, to his community.

Linguistic Capital

Culturally understanding mentorship can also be understood through Yosso's linguistic capital. Linguistic capital is the ability to both be able to talk in a different language, i.e. Spanish, and use that to connect to others who are bilingual, multilingual, etc. This is also applicable to the abilities that students of color bring to higher education that allow them to socialize with different groups, i.e., faculty, administrators, friends, etc. For example, in conjunction with the collegiate mentoring theme, Latino/x males participants recognized the importance of having faculty who spoke the same language, and the importance of coming to a classroom where the professor looked like them. In this aspect, there was an instant connection that was built from the start because there was an unspoken language between the faculty and the Latino/x male that automatically made them feel at home and mentored by them.

This organic gravitation was further enhanced when participants in this dissertation spoke about how they would connect with a faculty member who spoke in Spanish like these Latino/x males did. Additionally, other Latino/x males spoke about the importance of shared lived experiences with their faculty member because they were from similar communities as these males of color from South Central. These examples show that Latino/x males were aware of

what Yosso refers to in her linguistic capital as “vocabulary, audience awareness, cross-cultural awareness, “real-world” literacy skills, math skills, metalinguistic awareness, teaching and tutoring skills, civic and familial responsibility, [and] social maturity” (Faulstich Orellana, 2003, p. 6; Yosso, 2005).

Resistant Capital

Finally, the third theme in the findings, the anti-racist mentorship theme, can be further understood by Yosso's resistant capital. This form of capital talks about how students of color recognize the foundational and systemic racism deeply rooted in higher education and other systems throughout the U.S. Additionally, Yosso recognizes that students of color pass this social justice-oriented knowledge down to their peers so that they too are cognizant of the issues that hinder their social progress in the various systems of this country. Take Miguel for example. Miguel spoke about their experience with facing micro-aggressive comments as a result of being a Spanish native speaking Latinx male. Using the intersectional identities of Miguel as a Latinx and a male, micro-aggressors used cultural stereotypes and tools of oppression that have been created and used to oppress Latinxs for many years (Crenshaw, 1990).

In fact, the Spanish language has been historically used as a tool of oppression (Rivera et al., 2008) as well as racial stereotypes about Latinxs and alcohol use (Alamillo, 2009). These stereotypes were used to so-call connect with Miguel, which was something that Miguel did not know how to respond to professionally, even though Miguel knew that it was wrong. Therefore, when Miguel spoke to their mentors, these individuals explained to Miguel that it was perfectly fine to respond, but in a professional manner, while also showing them how to respond in such a way. This is what Yosso refers to as resistant capital. Latinx males like Miguel, come to college with the knowledge to understand when they are being racially micro-aggressed. Nevertheless,

the mentors who supported participants in this dissertation, guided these Latino/x male participants to not only validate their understanding that what they were going through was indeed racism, but they also taught them how to respond to it as well. Miguel is just one of the fifteen participants who shared their experiences about having resistant capital and it was through the mentorship they received that these males of color were able to make sense of how to better use the resistance capital that is deeply rooted within them.

Mentorship Capital as Another Form of Cultural Wealth

Beyond the six forms of capital, Yosso (2005) also spoke about how ethnic cultural capital was also a form of capital that can influence the academic success of students of color through the present ethnic roots background that one takes with themselves throughout their college education. This was particularly a contribution by Morris' (2004) work to depict how this conceptual framework could be used to explain how these students were capable of succeeding in higher education. As such, in the same spirit of contribution as Morris, I firmly believe that Latino/x males come into higher education institutions with a mentorship capital as well. While this chapter has discussed in length how mentorship was evident in each form of capital in this model, mentorship deserves to be a stand-alone, branched-off form of capital addition to Yosso's framework because of the evident level of impact that mentorship already has on Latino/x males even before they get to college. Based on the findings, it was evident that mentorship does not begin in the classroom but rather at home, through the lessons, support systems, and among other forms of mentorship that Latino/x males use to persist in the academics of themselves in higher education, which helps them achieve their degree completion. Therefore, by using these three themes that emerged from the data; familial mentorship, collegiate mentorship, and full-service anti-racist mentorship, this new capital I propose can explain how Latino/x males overcome

systemic racism in higher education, because they come with familial support, a college knowledge, and a social justice background, deeply engrained in their lives.

Therefore, Mentorship Capital as a form of cultural wealth could be an emerging contribution from this dissertation to Yosso's Community of Cultural Wealth. Just like cultural capital stems from an ethnic roots background that helps African Americans thrive in higher education, so does mentorship that stems from the Latino/x male mentorship experiences that these males of color come into higher education with. More research is needed to amplify this contribution, but I hope that in the future, mentorship can be considered a capital rather than an educational retention tool. Such form of cultural wealth allows researchers and education practitioners alike to understand that Latino/x males come to higher education with the ability to be mentored and more importantly, to mentor others that can ultimately contribute towards decreasing the Latino/x male graduation gap in their education pipeline.

Summary of Themes

In summary, there were three analytical themes that resulted from this dissertation writeup: 1) Familia, community, and collegiate mentorship, 2) Culturally understanding mentorship, and 3) Anti-racist mentorship. These three themes after analysis were essential towards discussing the mentorship experiences that help the academic experiences of Latino/x males in higher education. Specifically, theme one spoke about familial mentorship, and within it, Latino/x males spoke about how they experienced mentorship even before they got to campus. As a result, Latino/x male participants in this dissertation truly felt that mentorship was most efficient when it was offered in a familial way. Such mentorship could include in a literal sense, mentorship from family members, or it could include mentorship from their communities. Nevertheless, at the end of the day, familial mentorship offered Latino/x males in this

dissertation the ability to be able be prepared for higher education and succeed in it as well. In particular, Latino/x males spoke about having immediate familial mentorship. Such mentorship included mentorship from fathers, mothers, and even brothers. This mentorship was often the first form of mentorship that they experienced even before they arrived in college. Such mentorship is so essential because this kind of mentorship is as simple as setting a good example. Furthermore, this kind of mentorship often takes place as a support system that they receive in their college access processor as these Latino/x males are going through their college or graduate education. This particular finding shows that indeed parents were involved in these Latino/x males' lives.

Beyond immediate family members, Latino/x males also spoke about how extended familia also served an important role in the mentorship that these males of color experienced in higher education and beyond as well during their time in college. These individuals at times are also able to play a large role in these males' of color lives, especially while they are in college. Participants spoke about their positive experiences of being mentored by cousin for example. Often these mentors served as role models throughout the college access process and their college education. Some mentors were even able to take the first college classes with the participants of this dissertation. As research shows, your first classes in college shape your experiences in higher education (Moore et al., 2003). Such mentoring provided Latino/x male participants with a sense of understanding for the racism and overall created a space for them to feel like they belonged on campus. The findings for theme three also revealed that student organizations and fraternities also play an important role in familial mentorship. Specifically, participants spoke about how student organizations or fraternities, played a pivotal role in their sense of belonging in college. Some provided mentorship opportunities within the organization

that gave them a space to belong to on campus. The people within this student organization were their mentors and the participants, in turn, were theirs as well. So it was a cycle for them that gave them a sense of belonging.

Theme two dealt with culturally understanding mentorship and within this section of the participant interviews, Latino/x males spoke about the impact that mentorship that understood their needs had on their academic lives. For example, participants spoke about the level of accessibility that they had with their mentor while in college. This was essential for them to succeed academically, because having a mentor available when they needed meant they could open up to them about their academic needs and they could receive mentorship that was specifically tailored to their needs. Furthermore, faculty who understood the social and financial struggles of these Latino/x males was an integral component of the mentoring process for these males of color. Being able to understand their struggle was essential in mentoring because these males of color felt like they could relate to their professors. Relating to their professors provided Latino/x males in higher education with the visibility and understanding necessary for these males of color to feel that their mentors understood the hardships college-going Latino/x males face at this level of education.

Furthermore, participants in this dissertation also spoke about how mentorship is not always traditional, even within an informal mentorship relationship. It can manifest through small gestures of compassion and understanding. Examples of these small gestures were depicted by some participants who were helped by their professors when it came time to apply to their graduate programs. These kinds of gestures, once again, serve as an example of how participants were benefited even in the most non-traditional ways of mentoring. Such gestures recounted by participants included mere acts such as mentors sharing their experiences of growing up in

communities of East Los Angeles and/or South Central. Other examples recounted by participants included having the mentor speak in Spanish like all of the participants did, or even when the mentor who might be Latinx would take an interest in the student's day. While this may seem as small or irrelevant to the mentoring process, it was mentorship nonetheless for Latino/x males.

In theme three, Anti-Racist Mentorship, Latino/x male participants had the opportunity to talk about the type of mentorship that helped them overcome racism in higher education. In particular, Latino/x males spoke about the level of impact that formal and informal mentoring had in helping them address racism in their academics or throughout their college education. Participants spoke about how they sought help and some even interceded on their behalf, by reaching the proper office and reporting to that office the racist incident that had taken place. Other participants spoke about how their mentors served as individuals who could help them make sense of the racist experience they had suffered through in their higher education. In fact, some participants spoke about the normalcy that they experience with microaggressions that have become a part of their daily life. Nevertheless, through informal conversations that Latino/x males had with their mentors, they were able to understand certain comments made towards them, were in fact racist in nature. The clarification even allowed some of these participants to become more critical thinkers and how to pay closer attention to the underlying meanings that are used in subtle conversations that often continue to perpetuate systemic oppression of Latino/x males in higher education.

In general, Latino/x males were able to highlight three elements. First, informal mentorship was able to provide an understanding of what racism looked like in their academic lives. Second, mentoring in general provided Latino/x males in this dissertation study with

someone that could listen to the academic and even educational needs. Third, mentoring in general provided a direction for these Latino/x male participants to follow when they needed to seek services that could help them overcome a racialized experience that they went through in their academics while in higher education. In all, participants agreed that mentoring helped them overcome racism in higher education, and explained that without it, their higher education academic experiences as Latino/x male would have been much more difficult to navigate.

Overall participants spoke about their mentoring experiences from an informal mentoring basis more so than a formal mentoring basis. Virtually all of the Latino/x males interviewed for this dissertation felt that while both forms of mentoring were essential in the Latino/x male student experience, informal mentoring was more integral because it was born organically. Latino/x males are no stranger to formal mentoring programs that only mentor them out of a requirement, or with a set curriculum that is not necessarily made for Latino/x males. Therefore, informal mentoring is more effective because it grows out of a desire to help Latino/x males to succeed and without any restrictions or without having to fulfill any requirements or curriculums that were not structured to fit the needs of Latino/x males. Additionally, informal mentorships also grow out of academic connections that can be established in random places that are not academic. According to the participants in this dissertation, informal mentorships are more meaningful because both the mentee and mentor want to be there for each other and both gain something meaningful from the mentoring relationship.

Implications for Future Research

Given the findings that were provided in this dissertation, and as well as the literature review, I think there are three implications for further research that come to mind. First, there needs to be more literature that explores how mentoring can be familial. Second, there needs to

be more research that explores the mentoring experiences of Latino/x males from racially stigmatized communities like those of South Central. Third and finally, there needs to be an expansion of Tara Yosso's (2005) Community of Cultural Wealth that includes mentoring as a form of capital with which Latinxs (or in the case of this dissertation, Latino/x males) come to college.

Mentoring can be familial

One lesson that this dissertation taught us is that mentoring can indeed be familial. Unfortunately, much of the mentorship literature that scholars have written in the past, until recently, does not talk a lot about how mentoring begins at home. Let me reiterate that this does not mean that research on mentoring did not touch upon how families mentor Latino/x males in the past, but rather it does mean there needs to be more current research because these males of color often are perceived as individuals who are not thoroughly supported in their academic pursuit because of certain cultural expectations, among other things. Familial mentoring is essential in Latino/x male research because as scholars, we need to change the narrative that families play a large role in the detriment of college-going Latino/x male academic success.

Also, as scholars, we have a responsibility to change the deficit narratives that exist about racially minoritized students in higher education. Doing so can help us explore even deeper the high impact of families on Latino/x male academic experiences in higher education and move the narrative of them from being just parents who support and continue to further disregard these actions as unimportant, or even worse, that they often pose a challenge to the academic experiences of Latino/x males in higher education, to actual mentors. If we read the mentoring literature, we can see that there is a dearth of literature that portrays parents and family members as mentors. If we dive deeper into the literature that exists on mentoring, we will find that it has a

strong focus on mentoring from an academic perspective, which means that it is at the institutional level. This could be either informal mentoring (with faculty members, one-on-one administrator support outside of institutional support, student individual mentoring, student organization/fraternity mentoring), or formal mentoring (institutional mentoring programs on campus).

Therefore, as a measure for future research, it is imperative that we look at the academic experiences of Latino/x males in higher education through a familial mentoring lens, because as we have seen in this study with some of the Latino/x male participants in this dissertation, their first mentor was a father, mother, brother, cousin, etc. Therefore, people who are seen as part of the family might offer students the simplest of mentoring either through words of encouragement, or life advice. These simplest forms of mentoring carry much weight, often well beyond these Latino/x males' P-12 (pre-Kindergarten through 12th grade) education, their graduate school experiences, and even at times into Ph.D. programs.

Further Exploration of Mentoring College-Going Latino/x Males from South Central

As part of the implications for future research, there also needs to be further exploration of the mentoring experiences of Latino/x males in higher education who come from neighborhoods similar to South Central Los Angeles. As I mentioned earlier, Latino/x males are not a monolithic group, thus these males of color will have different needs based on the communities from which they come. Adding a focus to the individual experiences of Latino/x males from specific communities or parts of the country will provide an understanding of how to better support Latino/x males in higher education, especially through their success stories. Inherently, conducting this research can contribute towards narrowing the graduation gap amongst Latino/x males that persists today. Additionally, exploring the different mentoring

needs of these males of color will further provide a contribution to both the mentoring literature and to that of Latino/x male research.

Furthermore, one of the pieces of information that participants shared in their interviews was that it was tough for them to create communities of support on campus, even with other Latinxs at schools like USC for example, which is located in South Central. This particular detail is crucial to the importance of further understanding the experiences of Latino/x males in higher education from South Central because these males of color variation in their lived experiences even amongst other Latinxs because they come from these communities. Therefore, engaging in research that explores these particular communities could help provide more nuance regarding the Latino/x male experience and highlight the importance to explore every possible Latino/x male group in higher education. Ultimately this research can contribute to serving Latino/x males in higher education more efficiently.

Expansion of Community of Cultural Wealth to Encompass Mentoring as form of Capital

Finally, as I mentioned earlier in this chapter, mentoring also needs to be a form of capital within Community of Cultural Wealth because as the findings revealed, or at the very least alluded to, Latino/x males come to higher education with some form of mentoring. Virtually all participants spoke about how they came to higher education having experienced some form of mentoring at home, in college, or even outside of it. In the case of familial mentoring, Yosso's (2005) Community of Cultural Wealth can be strengthened when included as a form of capital with which these students come to college because it is an asset that they already come to campus with, knowing how to mentor and most importantly, how to be mentored. Going back to familial mentoring, this is an important component of mentoring with

which Latino/x males come to college. It is an asset that helps these males of color be able to seek the kind of mentorship that is best for them.

Additionally, having this new form of the capital added to Yosso's framework provides a significant focus on familial mentoring and is integral because, especially because it was a significant factor that got Latino/x male participants in this dissertation to achieve college access. To be sure, there was some mentoring that took place while in their P-12 education. Nevertheless, most of the participants spoke about some form of a familial mentoring event that took place before they transitioned into college. That is why further exploration of the impact that familial mentoring has on college-going Latino/x males is so integral in understanding the experiences that these males of color have once they are in college.

Furthermore, providing an expansion to the Community of Cultural Wealth model through a mentoring capital can show that mentoring is an asset that these males of color have, which can allow them to mentor others who look like them. A mentoring capital is essential in Latino/x male research because it can help end the common narrative that Latino/x males often refuse to seek help. After all, they do not want to seem weak and unintelligent and rather show how Latino/x males can support others in their academic success in higher education. Finally, a mentoring capital would provide Latino/x male research with the ability to apply it to their research because, as the research revealed in chapter two, there were not many scholars who utilized it in their research on Latino/x males. If we want to better support Latino/x male academic success in higher education, we must use the success stories of these males of color to enhance institutional practices that can better serve these students. In doing so, we can begin incorporating this framework more into Latino/x male research and provide a deeper understanding of how Latino/x males continue to experience challenges that play a role in their

successful academic achievement from higher education. In doing so, we can also acknowledge that Latino/x males are capable of succeeding with the help of successful mentoring partnerships, thus allowing scholars and practitioners to better understand the needs of these males of color in higher education.

Limitations

General limitations

While this dissertation explored extensively the academic experiences of Latino/x males in higher education through mentoring, this dissertation was not without limitations. As a result, some of the largest limitations in my dissertation were my connections to some of the participants that perhaps created an opportunity for them not to be completely honest about their experiences with regards to mentoring during their higher education experience (Queirós et al., 2017). Participants were aware of my scholarly work, as well as my background as they were either Latino/x males who knew me personally or knew people who knew me personally. Therefore, I often had to re-emphasize that this was a safe space and that I would use a pseudo name to protect their identity, and keep any information that they share with me confidential.

Additionally, the limitations of my dissertation study also stem from a few of my participants not being able to criticize the system of higher education. This happened because they either did not have exposure to critical scholarly background or their personal beliefs. Although they represented a small portion of the overall participants in this dissertation, these males of color were slightly dismissive in their responses towards questions that dealt with race and racism in higher education. It is important to note that participants were not required to have a critical background necessary to respond to some of the protocol questions in this study. Unfortunately, participants who were most affected by this came from majors in their college

education that required them to take very few if any classes that revolved around students of color racialized experiences in higher education. This is something that as scholars point out, is common, in particular because often race-based knowledge is mostly disseminated in majors that offer a critical race theory-based education (McGee, 2016).

Theoretical Limitations

A theoretical limitation was the unfortunate lack of theoretical frameworks or even conceptual frameworks that specifically fit the mentoring experiences of Latino/x males in higher education. In fact, in looking at the literature that exists on Latino male mentoring, it was tough to identify a specific mentoring framework that was used specifically for the academic experience of Latino/x males. It is important to note that the reason why Community of Cultural Wealth was used as a framework for this dissertation was based on its use by Sáenz et al.'s (2015) research on a mentoring program.

The difficulty in finding a theoretical or conceptual frameworks underscores the need for there to be a conceptual or theoretical framework on mentoring that speaks to the experiences of Latino/x males in higher education. That is why I believe that at the very least, a form of capital on mentoring should be added to the Community of Cultural Wealth model. Such a form of cultural wealth can explain the importance of mentoring for Latino/x males academic or educational experiences even as far back as before these male students of color enter higher education. Many of my participants spoke about mentoring as familial. Whether it was in the higher education setting or outside, it was evident through the findings that mentoring is a form of capital that Latino/x male students come to school with, and use it to succeed academically in their educational experiences. I think a further exploration of theoretical or conceptual frameworks is necessary when engaging in research on the mentoring experiences of any student

population in higher education, especially if the student population is part of a racially minoritized group. This dissertation was limited in scope and thus could not specifically explore the finding that mentoring is a form of capital; thus, future research is needed to expand on this finding.

Methodological Limitations

I think a methodological limitation was the fact that the interviews were conducted via Zoom during a global pandemic. A lot of the participants experience Zoom fatigue. Therefore, participants could have shared richer data or richer stories for that matter if they were interviewed in person. I think that would've helped tremendously the amount of data that I captured from my participants. Unfortunately, because these interviews were conducted via Zoom or via phone conversations when the internet was unstable, this created a challenge for a participant to share the whole story. Additionally, doing a dissertation during COVID-19 quarantine guidelines was tough. In particular, this was a challenge because Texas A&M University Office of Graduate and Professional Studies (OGAPS) had strict travel guidelines, that did not allow in-person interviews, and despite me conducting the majority of my interviews in California where my participants resided, I was still in quarantine mode and so were all of my participants. As a result, I felt that this was itself a limitation because a lot of my participants, while they were physically available at home, did not mean that they were available mentally while at home. Therefore, I strongly believe that if there had not been a global pandemic and I had been able to conduct interviews face-to-face, I would have been able to acquire even richer data because I would have been able to speak to my participants.

Interview Protocol Limitations

Another limitation I would like to address in this dissertation study is that the protocol questions could have provided more nuanced questions to allow participants to dive into a deeper conversation of their academic experiences as Latino/x male in higher education and how mentoring influenced their academic success. In particular, some of the most important questions that could have been better nuanced from the protocol questions were those that asked specifically whether Latino/x males experienced a formal or an informal mentorship and if they could provide an experience or an example of each one. Unfortunately, a lot of the time I had to read in between the lines from the data transcripts of each of my participants, to understand what kind of mentorship was most helpful for them. Had I outright asked them what form of mentorship was more helpful for each one, I think my participants would've specifically outright said "this kind of mentorship was more helpful to me".

Overall thoughts on Limitations Section

As a final thought on this limitations section, I want to reiterate what I said earlier; no study is without limitations. And this dissertation study is a prime example of this. No one tells you how to write a dissertation. You are left to do it on your own and you are left to use your imagination of what your dissertation will look like. Nevertheless, sections like this in the dissertation, allow me to reflect on what could've enhanced my dissertation study and especially what could have enhanced the conversations that I had with my participants. Such information will also help me navigate my future research projects on this topic. Nevertheless, at the end of the day, I do believe that my questions provided for a rich conversation between the participants and myself. That is why I feel that my protocol was great but it was not without the possibility to

become better. Therefore, the limitations that were found in this dissertation study will allow me to conduct more nuanced studies that will emerge from this dissertation.

Conclusion

While it is important to address the issues that cause Latino/x males to continue to be historically disenfranchised from their higher education pipeline, it is also equally important to address how these males of color persist in higher education. Using mentoring, this dissertation revealed that Latino/x males in higher education persist through a familial, community and collegiate mentorship, through a culturally understanding mentorship approach, and through anti-racist mentorship. Furthermore, this dissertation also highlighted how formal mentoring opportunities often do not work for these males of color as successful as informal mentorships. Therefore, the literature review, methodology, findings, and discussion information are essential to understand how to better serve these males of color in higher education, using their success stories. By applying an anti-deficit lens that specifically understands the assets that Latino/x students bring into higher education, researchers can further enhance their support systems to better serve Latino/x males at whatever level these males of color find themselves in higher education.

That is why I believe Tara Yosso's Community of Cultural Wealth not only was instrumental in providing a better understanding of the Latino/x male academic persistence in higher education through mentoring, but the critical qualitative inquiry approach to the qualitative methodology that this dissertation employed allowed me to critically analyze the system in which these males of color go to higher education in, and shift the focus from the student as the problem to the system. As a result, I hope that this dissertation serves as a

contribution to both Tara Yosso's work and Latino/x male research overall, which continues to be an imperative educational research focus in higher education.

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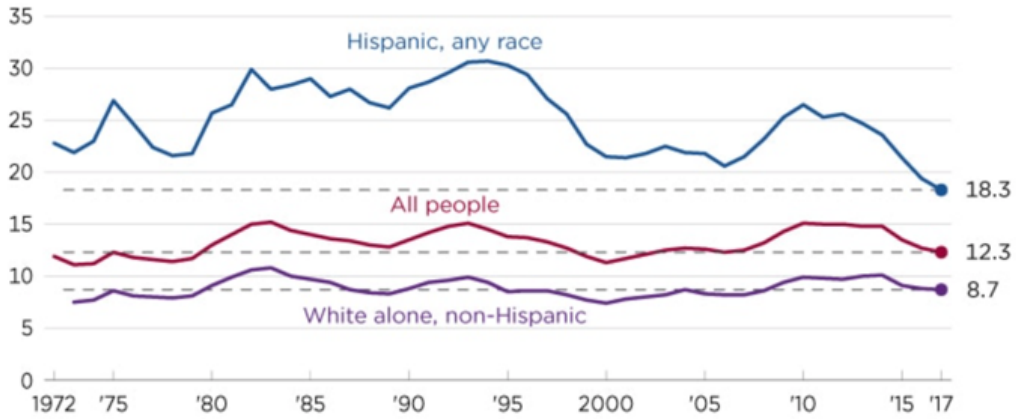
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APPENDIX A

Figure 1.
Hispanic Poverty Rates Over Time: 1972 to 2017
 (In percent)



Note: Beginning with the 2003 Current Population Survey, respondents were allowed to report more than one race. In the figure above, estimates for White, non-Hispanics from 2002 to 2017 are limited to those people who reported White and did not report any other race category. Estimates for White, non-Hispanic are not available in 1972. The data for 2013 and beyond reflect the implementation of the redesigned income questions.
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 1973 to 2018 Annual Social and Economic Supplements.

Figure 2.
Demographic Makeup of the Population: 2017
 (In percent)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2018 Annual Social and Economic Supplement.

<https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2019/02/hispanic-poverty-rate-hit-an-all-time-low-in-2017.html>

APPENDIX B

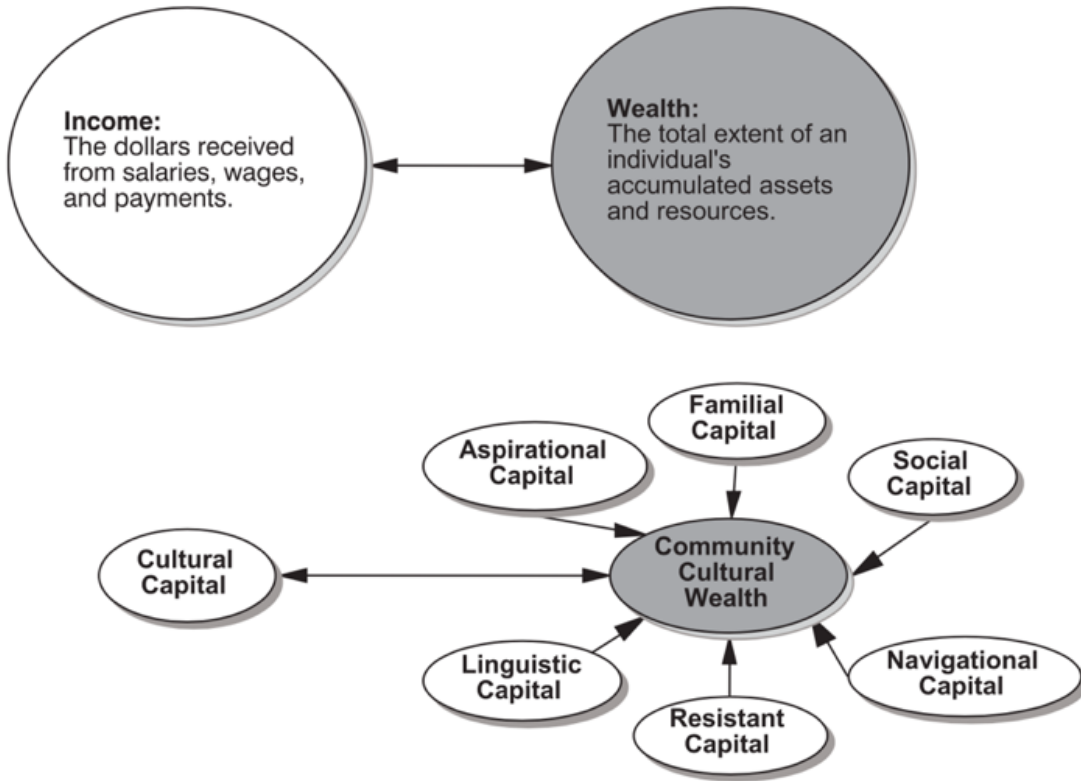


Figure 2. A model of community cultural wealth. Adapted from: Oliver & Shapiro, 1995

APPENDIX C

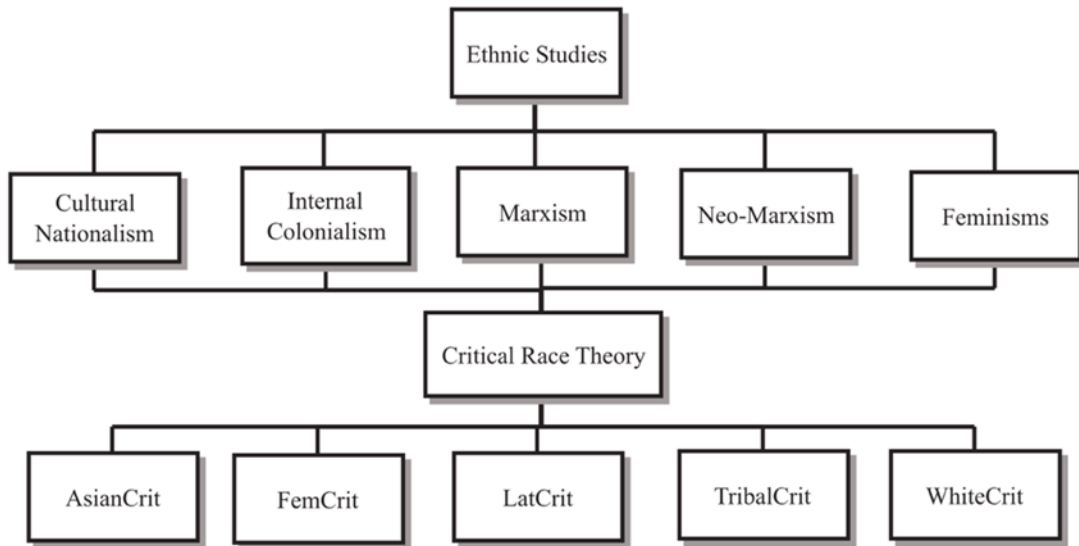


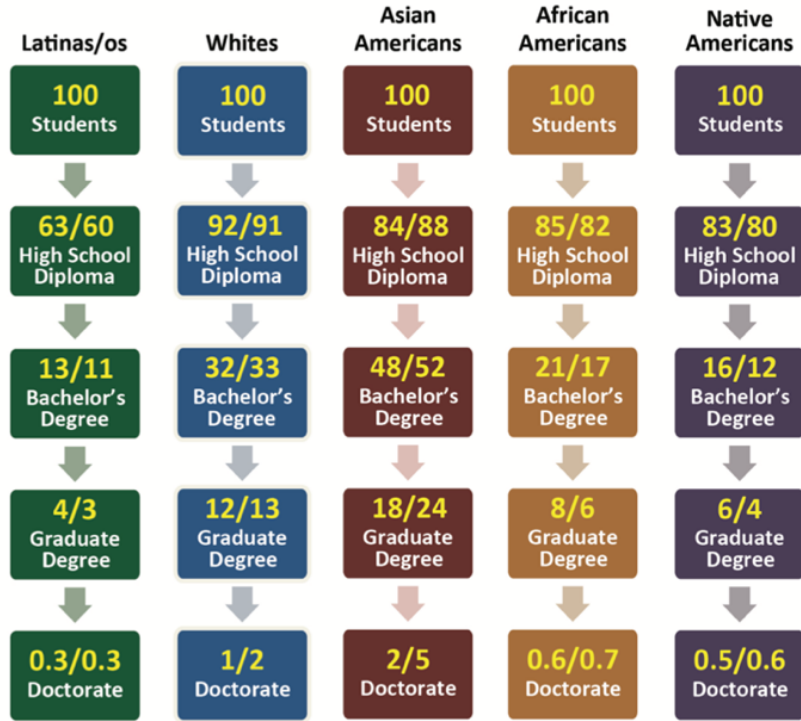
Figure 1. An intellectual genealogy of critical race theory

APPENDIX D

Male			
All races/ethnicities	White	Black	Hispanic
6.6 (0.36)	5.0 (0.43)	7.0 (1.08)	11.5 (0.95)
Female			
All races/ ethnicities	White	Black	Hispanic
5.0 (0.31)	4.3 (0.36)	4.4 (0.78)	7.4 (0.83)
Total			
All races/ethnicities	White	Black	Hispanic
5.8 (-0.26)	4.6 (0.30)	5.7 (0.66)	9.5 (0.67)
<i>Numbers are in percentage (numbers in parenthesis is either the dropping or raising of pushout rates amongst student populations between 16 and 24 years and are from data captured in 2017</i>			
Source: https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18_219.70.asp			

APPENDIX E

Figure 1. The US Education Pipeline, by Race/Ethnicity and Gender, 2012



Source: Drawn from American Community Survey (ACS) data for 2012, compiled by the US Bureau of the Census.
 Note: The first number represents females, the second, males.

APPENDIX F
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL QUESTIONS

General Protocol Questions

1. Tell me a little about yourself: What is your name? Where are your parents are from?
2. Growing up, what were some of your struggles of being born and raised in South Central LA? How did you overcome those struggles? It could be anything.
 - a. How did these struggles that experienced with growing up in South Central continue in your college education?
3. What college(s) did you attend or are currently attending?
 - a. What challenges did you encounter in these college(s)?
 - b. How did you overcome these challenges in these college(s)?
 - c. Please describe in detail your overall college experience (either undergraduate, masters and or PhD).

Mentoring Protocol Questions

1. When I say mentoring, what comes to mind for you?
2. How did you experience formal or informal mentoring in college, and who provided this for you?
 - a. How did this experience influence or impact your college experience?
 - b. How did this experience influence your perception of mentoring Latino/x males?
3. How important is having a Latino/x male as a mentor for you?
4. In your college experience, what could, or can colleges do to better support Latino/x male mentoring on campus?
5. What advice would you give a Latino/x male like yourself, from South Central LA, looking for mentoring in college?

Race, Racism and Mentoring Protocol Questions

1. What has been your personal experience with race and racism at your current or former college(s)?
2. How do you feel your college responded to racial issues on campus?
3. Could you please share with me an experience where you have looked for mentorship, (formal or informal-and could you please indicate which type) in helping you overcome a racist experience?
 - a. How do you think racism in college impacted your college(s) experience?
 - b. How do you think mentoring helped you overcome this racist experience?
4. As a Latino/x male, say a Latino/x male friend of yours shares with you that they are going through a racist experience in college. What mentoring advice would you give them on how to overcome this struggle?