MENTORING LATINX STUDENTS THROUGH CULTURALLY SUSTAINING PEDAGOGIES AT A PREDOMINATELY WHITE INSTITUTION

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MENTORING LATINX STUDENTS THROUGH CULTURALLY SUSTAINING PEDAGOGIES AT A PREDOMINATELY WHITE INSTITUTION

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ABSTRACT

Latinx students are enrolling in four-year higher education institutions (HEIs) at a rapidly increasing rate. However, an alarmingly low number complete their degrees. Institutional barriers such as racism, language discrimination, cultural conflict, privilege of citizenship, and lack of role models present challenges to degree completion for Latinx students. One important yet understudied mechanism of support is mentorship. Within a Latinx-dedicated mentoring program, this qualitative case study identified mentoring practices perceived by Latinx student mentees and their program mentors as facilitating degree completion. This study also determined the alignment of the identified practices with the framework of culturally sustaining pedagogies. Using culturally sustaining pedagogies as a framework can offer a theoretical base for mentoring programs supporting Latinx mentees’ persistence toward degree completion. Culturally sustaining mentoring based on the concepts from this study may be used to increase the graduation rates for Latinx students in other HEIs across the nation.
APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the School of Education, have examined a dissertation titled “Mentoring Latinx Students through Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies at a Predominately White Institution,” presented by Deanna G. Marx, candidate for the Educational Doctorate degree, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my husband, Ron, and my children, Mandea and Colton. Their love, support, and encouragement allows me to achieve more than I alone could ever have imagined.
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Latinx students comprise the fastest growing ethnic population in education in the United States (Holloway-Friesen, 2016; Rodriguez & Oseguera, 2015). Despite their increasing numbers, however, Latinx students, defined as, “a people [or students] who identify as of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race” (Delgado-Romero, Manlove, Manlove, & Hernandez, 2007, p. 36) remain alarmingly underrepresented in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) (Chapa & De La Rosa, 2006; Freeman & Martinez, 2015). Most Latinx students who pursue a four-year college degree enroll in Predominately White Institutions (PWIs) (Von Robertson, Bravo, & Chaney, 2014). Overall, degree completion rates for all colleges and universities indicate Latinx students trail behind other ethnicities, with 59% of Asian students and 37% of White students attaining a bachelor’s degree or higher, while only 18% of Latinx students reach that same accomplishment (U.S. BLS, 2013).

The first chapter of this study presents background information related to challenges faced by Latinx college students, particularly those attending PWIs. The statement of problem, study purpose, and research questions will be presented next, followed by the conceptual framework that guided this study. Study limitations and definitions of key terms are presented next. A chapter conclusion and overview of the upcoming chapters will end this first chapter.
Study Background

Latinx students face multiple challenges while attending HEIs. These challenges may be compounded when Latinx students attend a PWI because of the often negative racial/ethnic campus climates (Bridges, Holmes, William, Morelon-Quainoo & Nelson Laird, 2007). Multiple barriers for Latinx students, as well as for many underrepresented minority college students, include financial difficulties (Long, Stulberg & Weinberg, 2011), academic issues (Rios-Ellis, Rascón, Galvez, Inzunza-Franco, Bellamy, & Torres, 2015), first-generation status (Cerezo & McWhirter, 2012), questions of citizenship (Ballinas, 2017), hostile campus climate (Gregory, 2003), and lack of knowledge of institutional processes (Rios-Ellis et al., 2015). Four challenges for Latinx college students consistently appear in literature and were selected for this research study: racism (Baker, 2013; Ballinas, 2017, Bonilla-Silva; 2014), linguicism (Cavazos, 2016; Dantas-Whitney & Waldschmidt, 2009), cultural dissonance (Bickel & Jensen, 2012), and lack of role models (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009; Saladino & Martinez, 2015).

Racism on college campuses may be overt. For example, in the fall of 2015 the University of Missouri (MU), the largest university in the state, made national headlines when protestors blocked President Tim Wolfe’s car during a Homecoming parade (Edwards, Knott, & Haigh, 2015) and the creation of Concerned Student 1950 (Kovacs, 2015) staged a campus walk out supported by the football team’s boycott of practices and games until President Wolfe resigned (Knott, Baugh, & Kraft, 2015). These protests were in response to racist actions and speech and a perceived
lack of response from MU administration and system administrators, including racist speech disrupting the Legion of Black Collegians 2015 Homecoming Royalty Court Rehearsal (Loufti & Knott, 2015), an alleged feces swastika symbol in a residence hall (Sherwin, Edwards, & Wortman, 2015), and racial slurs being used on campus (Stolze, Knott, & Colville, 2015). Despite resignations of key administrators, students left MU in droves, leading to a 22.9% decline in enrollment over the next two years, particularly for students from underrepresented groups (Bradley, 2017).

It is difficult to attribute student persistence to overt racism due to its social - rather than biological - construction and therefore the difficulty to universally define (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Gillborn, 2006; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Instead, overt racism is viewed as individual racism (Sue, 2010), the actions of a singular person by a largely color-blind society (Bonvilla-Silva, 2010) that denies such overt racism is acceptable or even exists. Though underrepresented students have verbalized the impact of overt racism on persistence and retention decisions (e.g. McClellan, 2005), scholars commonly conceptualize racism as racialized microaggressions (Minikel-Lacocque, 2013) in studies on underrepresented (McCarty, 2002; Patton, Harper, & Harris, 2015) student groups.

Racialized microaggressions are subtle forms of racism, such as behaviors or verbal remarks that demean a person’s ethnic identity and/or assign a lower degree of intelligence to a person based on his or her race or ethnicity (Minikel-Lacocque, 2013). For Latinx students, this may include being asked, “Where are you from?” followed by “No, where are you from originally?” which implies an “other” status in American society, or lesser value. Racial microaggressions are perpetuated by those with power, influenced and rooted in the
perception that non-white persons, such as those identifying as Latinx, “have less value than … whites” (Feagin, 2014, p. 1). Therefore, racialized microaggressions are more likely to occur at a PWI where those with more power and influence have greater presence and dominance on campus (Feagin, 2014).

For many Latinx students on college campuses, their racial and ethnic heritage may set them apart from their predominantly white peers; however, other aspects of their culture may also influence their experiences on campus. Linguicism is linguistically-based racism or discrimination based on how a person speaks, writes, or signs (Chen-Hayes, Chen, & Athar, 1999). Common examples of linguicism include assessments written with a bias for Standard American English (SAE) (Mahboob & Szenes, 2010) and the expectation of mastery of SAE in academic writing (Cavazoz, 2016). Even the use of the word ‘Standard’ in SAE implies that all other languages are substandard (Scott & Venegas, 2017). Language has been identified as a “target for prejudice and discrimination” (Murillo & Smith, 2011, p. 147). Multiple college students, identifying as members of underrepresented groups in which English was a secondary language, shared their stories of language discrimination: being laughed at due to mispronunciation, ridiculed for having an accent, told to speak English, and denied services due to the lack of availability of an interpreter (Hungerford-Kresser & Vetter, 2012; Seltzer & Johnson, 2009; Oropeza, 2015). These experiences deterred students from speaking in classes and volunteering to participate, further isolating them from other students.
**Intersectionality of Racism and Linguicism**

Latinx students face racism and linguicism broadly within society, but also intently within the educational systems that underserves and underprepares them for higher education (Hyesun, 2016; Malsbary, 2014). First, racism manifests itself overtly through systemic and individual acts (Liggett, 2013) while microaggressions and stereotype threat are demonstrated in subtler ways. Latinx students are placed on a racialized continuum that is defined by their perceived proximity to whiteness (Liggett, 2009; 2013; Malsbary, 2014). Second, Latinx students face linguicism where they are immediately placed on another continuum when they enter the school system: one defined by their proximity to SAE (Hyesun, 2016; Liggett, 2009). Students are judged by the order in which they have learned their multiple languages, their accents (Rosa, 2016), and their use of Spanish—often being labeled English language learners or low income based solely on these factors (Malsbary, 2014). These labels become self-fulfilling prophecies, often reflected in the statistical data on Latinx students persistence and graduation rates (Baker, 2013). Additionally, bi- and multi-lingual students are rarely seen through a strengths-based perspective and given credit for their intercultural competencies (Malsbary, 2014); instead, these strengths are viewed as a bilingual product that is marketable in a neoliberal, globalized society (Flores, 2013).

Third, the intersectionality of racism and linguicism (Hyesun, 2016; Ruecker, 2011) cannot be overlooked as Eurocentric first or additional languages, such as French or German, are treated differently than those languages associated with racial and ethnic groups further from whiteness, such as Spanish, Swahili, or Urdu (Chen-Hayes et al., 1999; Rosa & Flores, 2017). The intersection of racism and linguicism is most vividly born out in laws that
systematically marginalize and limit Latinx students’ educational attainment where linguicism is used as a cover for racist policies and ideologies (Hyesun, 2016; Liggett, 2013; Malsbary, 2014; Rosa, 2016). Race and language are linked (Hyesun Cho, 2016), and Liggett (2009) calls this the “racialization of language.”

There is a hierarchy of language and race (Hyesun Cho, 2016; Liggett, 2009; Phillipson, 1992) with White and English at the top – the ideal which “others” must strive for. This is reinforced through policies and mandates for English only (Liggett, 2009) “school-based language policies that focus on brown and black immigrant youth learning Standard English at the expense of their native languages is contemporary white supremacy” (Malsbary, 2014, p. 386). This intersectionality creates systemic barriers (Hyesun Cho, 2016) for Latinx students from early schooling into college and reinforces the silent and accepted norm that non-English speaking people are deficient; therefore, power remains with white, native English-speaking folks, to sustain the current status quo (Rosa, 2016; Rosa & Flores, 2017).

Students often experience cultural dissonance, defined as discrepancies among cultural values, worldview beliefs, and behaviors (Bickel & Jensen, 2012), as the conflict or friction that arises from “not understanding the expectations, discourse styles, and modes of school-based ways of thinking and learning in U.S. educational institutions” (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015, p. 357). One study on cultural dissonance (Ybarra, 2012) found Latinx students struggled with writing requirements based on the structure of English being different from the discourse patterns of Spanish. Ybarra (2012) also described the struggle Latinx students encountered when asked to
write about their identity but felt their self-perceptions would be misunderstood. DeCapua and Marshall’s (2015) study of students, identified as English Learners, found cultural dissonance increased feelings of confusion and alienation. In DeCapua and Marshall’s study, the formal learning, representative in most U.S. schools, is disorienting to students coming from a more informal, oral schooling design “in which mentoring and apprentice learning are the basis for instruction” (p. 359). The differences in educational learning experiences and styles between formal expectations of academic writing (Ybarra, 2012) and evaluation systems based on individual participation (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015) created barriers for Latinx students.

These barriers are often exacerbated by the lack of role models for Latinx students, especially at PWIs. While it is not essential for role models to be Latinx themselves, research has shown there are positive influences when Latinx students are able to see themselves in the faces of faculty and student service personnel on the campuses of the colleges they attend (Treviño, Hite, Hallam & Ferrin, 2014). As of 2011, Latinx faculty accounted for barely four percent of faculty nationwide (Ponjuan, 2011; Rios et al., 2015) and “very little research has focused on the labor market activities and accomplishments of Latino faculty members” (Martinez & Toutkoushian, 2014, p. 567). Data often fail to distinguish between different types of institutions, full or part-time status, or professorial ranks, which depicts an incomplete picture of Latinx faculty (Delgado-Romero et al., 2007). The data on the number of Latinx student service personnel working at PWIs does not appear in literature at this time. Latinx’ are not the only student group affected by lack of representation; “researchers have discovered that students of color in predominantly white
institutions (PWIs) are more likely to persist toward degree completion when they have faculty members of color as role models” (Ponjuan, 2011, p. 100). The low numbers of Latinx professionals at PWIs makes obtaining a degree more challenging for Latinx students due to the lack of same-ethnicity role models (León & Nevarez, 2007; Martinez & Toutkoushian, 2014; Ponjuan, 2011; Treviño et al., 2014).

To increase academic performance, persistence and degree completion of Latinx students, many PWIs have created Latinx-dedicated mentoring programs (Bond, Cason & Gray, 2015; Crisp, Taggart, & Nora, 2015). While mentoring programs for Latinx students can offer much needed assistance and guidance (Magdaleno, 2006; Phinney, Torres Campos, Padilla Kallemeyn, & Kim, 2011; Saladino & Martinez, 2015; Schueths & Carranza, 2012), scholarly attention identifying why and how these programs improve academic performance and college retention is surprisingly scarce; thus, the need for such research is high (Gershenfeld, 2014; Harris, 2012).

In response, this study contributes to mentoring program literature by presenting lessons learned through examining practices used within an established mentoring program designed for Latinx students at an urban-serving PWI. This program was created in 2011 and as of 2016 had a retention rate of 94%. After identifying mentoring practices program mentors and student mentees perceived as facilitating persistence to degree completion for Latinx students, this study examined the extent to which identified mentoring practices aligned with the culturally
sustaining pedagogies (CSP) framework, which is designed to sustain students’ linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism (Paris, 2012).

**Statement of Problem**

Mentoring has a long and well-documented purpose in education (Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Crisp et al., 2015; Dahlvig, 2010; Gershenfeld, 2014; Holley & Caldwell, 2014). Crisp and Cruz (2009) found over 501 definitions of mentoring in a critical review of mentoring literature and offer three characteristics of mentoring as a consensual concept of mentoring. First, mentoring relationships focus on growth and accomplishment of an individual and include several forms of assistance. Second, mentoring includes support and assistance with professional and career development, role modeling, and psychological support. Third, the relationship is personal and reciprocal (p. 528).

Broadly speaking, mentoring benefits within educational settings include increased academic success (De La Cruz, 2008; Phinney et al., 2011; Roland, 2008; Sáenz et al., 2015; Schueths & Carranza, 2012), enhanced social and emotional competence (Kaplan, Turner, Piotrkowski & Silbert, 2009; Ruiz, Rodriguez & Zavala, 2007), and may facilitate students’ persistence in college (Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Girves, Zapeda & Gwathmey, 2005; Santos & Reigadas, 2002). As related to Latinx college students, mentoring holds specific benefits (Cox, Yang & Dicke-Bohmann, 2014; Saladino & Martinez, 2015), including encouraging high academic aspirations (Santos & Reigadas, 2002), building strong social networks (Cox et al., 2015), enhancing academic and social competence (Kaplan et al., 2009), increasing sense of belonging (Phinney et al., 2011) and possibly increasing Latinx college graduation rates (Sáenz et al., 2015; Treviño et al., 2014).
While extensive research supports the positive outcomes associated with mentorship broadly, limited research exists that addresses Latinx mentoring programs (Gershenfeld, 2014; Girves et al., 2005). Studies focused on Latinx students reveals specialized and targeted knowledge about their unique mentoring needs. For example, Saladino and Martinez (2015) focused on the ways Hispanic serving institutions (HSIs) specifically support Latinx students, noting the importance of a strengths-based approach, garnering support and commitment within institutional leadership, drawing on Latinx aspirational capital, and specific directives for strengthening collaborations that support Latinx success. The narrow focus on one underrepresented population resulted in specific and tangible findings that have the potential to inform and support the work of other HEIs (Saladino & Martinez, 2015).

Given the usefulness of studies that target specific student groups, it is surprising that “most studies have not explored cultural issues for minority students in mentorship” (Cox et al., 2014). In fact, the lack of research is complicated “as the existing literature tends to collapse racial and ethnic minorities and at-risk groups into one encompassing category” (Schueths & Carranza, 2012, p. 567). This does not give the needed attention to the experiences of Latinx students, as they experience college differently from other underrepresented groups (Holloway-Friesen, 2016; Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005; Sanchez, 2013). However, given that “the need for research on this population [Latinx college students] is ever important” (Trevino & DeFreitas, 2014, p. 294), and that the number of Latinx-dedicated mentoring
programs implemented by HEIs continues to expand, especially at PWIs (Harris, 2012), research on programmatic mentoring practices is sorely needed (De La Cruz, 2008; Girves et al., 2005).

This study explored mentoring practices within the context of four areas identified in the literature as institutional barriers for Latinx college students: racism (Urbina, 2016; Von Robertson et al., 2014), linguicism (Cavazon, 2016; Chen-Hayes et al., 1999), cultural dissonance (Allan, 2003), and lack of role models (Treviño et al., 2014). These barriers may decrease the likelihood of Latinx students reaching degree completion (Baker, 2013; Page, 2013; Rios-Ellis et al., 2015), and as a consequence, limit opportunities for social and economic mobility. This study identified practices in one Latinx mentoring program perceived by program mentors and student mentees as facilitating Latinx students’ persistence to degree completion at a PWI. These identified mentoring practices were examined to explore the alignment with the framework of CSP.

Two notable deficits in mentoring literature are the lack of research on mentoring practices specifically designed to support Latinx students in PWIs (Gershenfeld, 2014) and the absence of the use of theoretical foundations (Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Miller, Barnes, Miller, & McKinnon, 2013). This study utilized the framework of CSP (Paris, 2012) and examined the alignment of its principles with the mentoring practices that mentees and mentors perceived to be as supportive for Latinx students at the PWIs. The theoretical framework of CSP utilizes and emphasizes the strengths diverse students bring to educational settings. These strengths (i.e., cultural knowledge, multilingualism, abilities to learn) are leveraged to increase academic achievement and cultural competencies,
encouraging success in educational institutions where norms and standards may
differ from their own (Holloway-Friesen, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Paris, 2012).
Significantly lower rates of degree completion for Latinx undergraduates (Sólorzano,
Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005) calls for researchers to investigate and identify
mentoring practices that can encourage and promote academic persistence for Latinx
students.

**Study Purpose**

The study purpose is threefold. First, the study identified mentoring practices
used within the program that were perceived by program mentors and student
mentees as facilitating Latinx students’ persistence toward degree completion at a
PWI. Second, the study determined the extent to which identified mentoring
practices aligned with the CSP framework. Third, to provide data to the director for
programmatic use. Case study research methods were the primary means of data
collection and analysis. A high-quality case study is a “continuous interaction
between the theoretical issues being studied and the data being collected” (Yin,
2013, p. 58). This case study examined mentors’ and mentees’ perceptions of
mentoring practices used within a current mentoring program, which Yin (2003)
would consider a contemporary event that could best be explored through
observations and interviews. Keeping with an action oriented, humanizing
perspective (Paris & Winn, 2013), this study sought to create useable data to support
the Latinx mentorship program. A central purpose was to collect data that supported
the infrastructure, budget negotiations, and development of programmatic materials
for the program that would directly impact Latinx students’ persistence and retention within
the PWI.

This study was conducted at a Midwest urban-serving PWI. The unit of analysis was
mentoring practices used within one mentoring program designed specifically for Latinx
students at a PWI. As described further in Chapter III, the majority of Latinx students were
invited into the mentoring program as part of a scholarship given by a community
organization. Other students were able to join the mentoring program by self-referral. Data
about mentoring practices were collected through individual interviews with student
mentees, program mentors, program director, one focus group, and through the mentoring
program’s documents. Data were analyzed to identify mentoring practices that mentors and
mentees perceived as facilitating success for Latinx students. After the identification of
practices, the extent to which the identified mentoring practices aligned with the CSP
framework was explored.

**Research Questions**

The study’s research questions aimed to help fill the void in the literature for
mentoring practices specifically designed for Latinx college students.

1. What mentoring practices do mentors and mentees perceive as supporting Latinx
   students’ persistence toward degree completion at a PWI?

2. To what extent do identified mentoring practices align with the framework of
culturally sustaining pedagogies (CSP)?
**Study Significance**

This study is significant in four ways. First, as noted earlier, Latinx students are the fastest growing population in education in the U.S. (Cerezo & McWhirter, 2012), and research that elicits a deeper understanding of their academic achievement experiences is needed (Bordes & Arredondo, 2005; Cavazos et al., 2010; Girves et al., 2005). Second, research is needed on mentoring programs specifically designed for Latinx students to support their unique challenges and needs within HEIs (Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Graff, McCain, & Gomez-Vilchis, 2013; Schueths & Carranza, 2012). Research on mentoring programs in general is plentiful (e.g., Nora & Crisp, 2007; Schueths & Carranza, 2012) and the majority of literature for underrepresented groups pertains exclusively to African American students (Harris, 2012). This leaves a void for HEIs, specifically for PWIs, in addressing the needs of the most undereducated demographic group in the U.S., Latinx (Cerezo & McWhirter, 2012; Harris, 2012). Third, more exploration of theoretically-based mentoring practices is called for in the literature (Gershenfeld, 2014; Tsolidis, 2002; Von Robertson et al., 2014). Nora and Crisp (2007) state, “mentoring programs devoid of a substantive framework guiding program activities is nothing more than throwing money at a problem or hoping that something might stick from an array of actions” (p. 338).

Finally, the economic workforce needs college graduates to keep the U.S. in the competitive global market (Paris & Alim, 2014; Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009; Schueths & Carranza, 2012). Facilitating the four-year college degree completion of this rapidly increasing population so they can join the professional workforce is imperative (Girves et al., 2005; Saladino & Martinez, 2015; Tsolidis, 2002; Schueths
& Carranza, 2012). Colleges and universities must strengthen their ability to attract, retain, and graduate racially and ethnically diverse students reflective of the national population (Renn & Reason, 2013). Plainly stated, the ability to leverage the diversity of current and coming generations of college students is an essential strategic priority for the survival of our nation’s universities – and the survival of the nation itself (Intemann, 2009).

This study provides insights for PWIs that desire to support Latinx undergraduates through the development of mentoring structures and practices. HEI administrators may use information gained in this study to design mentoring programs or other educational support systems for Latinx students. Administrators of other mentoring programs outside of PWIs may also find study results useful when working with Latinx students. This research generated new knowledge needed by exploring the application of CSP theory, originally developed within the K-12 educational field (Paris, 2012), to a mentoring program designed to meet the needs of Latinx college students. As the CSP framework was perceived to be effective in supporting Latinx mentees’ persistence toward degree completion, the concepts from this study may be used to increase the graduation rates for Latinx students in other HEIs across the nation. This research may also be a call for other researchers to explore specific practices that may be essential in supporting other culturally diverse student groups.

**Study Conceptual Framework**

As Latinx college students face systemic inequalities both in and outside of the classrooms (Long et al., 2011; Madkins & Mitchell, 2000; Rios-Ellis et al., 2015), the theoretical framework of culturally sustaining pedagogical (CSP) offers insight into effective mentoring practices to combat these inequalities. While a full description of CSP is
offered in Chapter II, this section provides an overview of the conceptual lens that framed this study.

**Culturally sustaining pedagogies.** Brief history of CSP as (a) reaction against deficit views of cultural groups and (b) built on the foundations of other asset pedagogies that view culture as a strength (e.g. Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Paris (2012) designed CSP with explicit goals of “sustaining the cultural and linguistic competence of [students’] communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence” (p. 95). Educators using CSP frame curriculum to center and sustain language, literacy, and cultural pluralism an active and vibrant part of every students’ education. CSP requires that educators “support young people in sustaining the cultural and linguistic competence of their communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence” (Paris, 2012, p. 95). While the CSP framework was developed in PK-12 educational settings, its principles are applicable to both higher education and mentoring. Applying the CSP framework in HEIs presents a foundation for asset-based practices that may support the academic success of Latinx students. A brief overview of each of the five CSP are presented here, while a more in-depth examination of the tenets can be found in Chapter II in the literature review.

**Student and community agency and input.** The first tenet of CSP situates the student and community as important contributors to the task at hand (Paris & Alim, 2017). Paris and Alim (2017) posit that schools should be “a site for sustaining the cultural ways of being of communities of color rather than eradicating them.” This tenet reframes the focus to include the strengths students bring from their own cultural ways of knowing and being as
an alternative to the historical practices of requiring students to conform to the “standard” norms of schooling (e.g., English only, assimilation).

**Critical centering.** The second tenet in CSP is the critical centering on dynamic community language, valued practices, and knowledges (Paris & Alim, 2017). Identifying who has the power in the group, and why illuminates whose languages, practices, and knowledge are being centered. Within a PWI, the white middle class values and practices are traditionally what is being taught and sustained; in CSP this is reframed to center values and practices from nondominant groups (Holloway-Friesen, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Paris, 2012; Rosa, 2016).

**Capacity to contend with internalized oppression.** Historically, colonial practices based education on race, privileging whites and stereotyping other groups as less intelligent, capable, and valuable (Paris & Alim, 2017). The systemic racism sent a powerful message from the dominant group about who is valuable; creating a survival versus liberation intergenerational transferring of knowledge for marginalized groups. The capacity to contend with internalized oppression is knowledge that is vital for the survival of today’s diverse students.

**Historicized content and instruction.** Historically, teaching has been based on the model of white supremacist ideas (Paris & Alim, 2017). Pedagogies prepare teachers for generic students, but reality in America’s classrooms is very different. School practices build upon assimilative assumptions that privilege those who conform to the white standards (Paris & Alim, 2017). Recognizing and understanding the history of education, and the still present systemic monocultural and linguistic heteropatriarchal practices, is essential to
provide opportunities for change in both PK-12 and university classrooms (Paris & Alim, 2017).

**Ability to curricularize all for learning.** In this last tenet of CSP, educators are asked to reimagine schools as sites with diverse heterogeneous practices that not only values, but sustains, a critical vision that redirects the objective away from students and ceases to view students as “flawed or broken” and refocuses on the flawed system of education (Paris & Alim, 2017). Paris and Alim (2017) offer this final tenet as the key feature, and require all four previous tenets to be present, to having pedagogical practices that disrupt current practices and sustain culturally diverse students.

This study explored how CSP aligned with and provided insight into the nature of the mentoring practices that program mentors and student mentees identified as facilitating students’ persistence toward degree completion.

**Study Limitations**

One limitation of this study was the setting of the research site, an urban-serving PWI located in the Midwest. The mission and vision of this PWI focused on serving its community’s needs in health sciences, visual and performing arts, collaboration with the professional workforce, and addressing the urban issues surrounding its city and region. The university’s commitment to social justice and geographical location may limit the application of findings to other PWIs. However, Yin (2013) recommends selecting a typical case to test a theory. The mentoring program at this PWI fit Yin’s definition of typical as it specifically targeted Latinx students; though that occurrence within the broader landscape of mentoring practices
is a deviation in and of itself. The balance of typical and atypical in this respect made the program a telling case (Mitchell, 1983, 1984) because it could generate a theoretical understanding missing in the literature while developing an illustration of a Latinx mentorship program (Andrews, 2017). Mitchell (1984) described this as selecting a case “to make previously obscure theoretical relationships suddenly apparent” (p. 239).

**Definition of Terms**

The following terms are defined as they pertain to this study:

**Cultural dissonance.** Stress and anxiety that stem from the new/different set of non-verbal codes, language, gender meanings, family structures, manner, behavior patterns, and cognitive processes occurring between a known culture and a new culture (Allan, 2003).

**Cultural pluralism.** Sustaining the competencies of one culture while simultaneously accessing competencies in an additional culture (Paris, 2012).

**Culturally sustaining competencies.** Knowledge or skills that seeks to preserve and nurture linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism (Kumagai & Lypson, 2009; Paris, 2012).

**Latina/o.** Describes a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race (US Census Bureau, 2012). The U.S. Census Bureau does not provide an opportunity for persons of Latinx descent to select a race category to identify themselves, limiting the choices to only Black or African American, Asian, American Indian or Alaska Native, White, or Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. The census does ask about ethnicity but with only two choices, Hispanic or Latino and Not Hispanic or Latino, and implicitly instructs respondents that Hispanic/Latino origins are not races (Delgado-Romero et al., 2007; Krogstad & Cohn, 2014).
Latinx. A more inclusive term representing all gender identifications, as opposed to the traditional use of Latino or Latina/o (de Onis, 2017; Scharrón-del Rio & Aja, 2015).

Linguicism. Discrimination due to the way a person speaks, writes, or signs; linguistically related racism (Chen-Hayes et al., 1999).

Mentoring. A relationship built on trust with bidirectional benefits between the mentor and mentee in regards to intellectual, social, and career advancements (Stanley, 2015).

Predominantly White institution. Higher education institutions where 50% or greater of the student enrollment consists of white students (Brown & Dancy, 2010).

Racism. A system of power, domination, and oppression based on white supremacy which assigns values to real or imagined differences in order to defend the rights of whites to dominance (Pérez Huber & Sólorzano, 2015).

Conclusion and Organization of the Study

Inadequate research exists on mentoring practices specifically designed to support Latinx students through degree completion at PWIs (Gershenfeld, 2014). This case study posed two research questions to explore Latinx students’ and their program mentors’ perceptions of effective mentoring practices and how the CSP framework aligned with the identified practices to provide support for Latinx students. Qualitative case study methodology was employed to collect and analyze data and provided an in-depth understanding of one urban-serving university’s
mentoring program’s practices that support Latinx students during their pursuit of a degree.

Chapter II presents the historical and current perspectives of the institutional barriers of racism and discrimination, linguicism, cultural dissonance, and lack of role models. An in-depth look at the benefits of mentoring for Latinx students is presented, as well as a review of the historical development and current application of CSP. Chapter III includes the rationale for the selection of case study method, overview of case study research, design of the study, data collection and analysis, and methodological limitations and ethical considerations.
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter begins with an overview of oppression, racism, and the colonizing history of education in America. This overview is followed by the social and structural constructions of oppression. Next, the decolonizing of HEIs that includes culture, mentorship, and asset based pedagogies. An in-depth look at the historical development and current applications of CSP, the conceptual lens used for this study, will conclude the literature review section.

History of Oppression

Alexander (2011) describes racism as highly adaptable and asserts that governmental initiatives create a cyclical process of discrimination. According to Alexander (2011), each governmental form of oppression bases discrimination on race and continues to evolve different forms of discrimination when the current system goes under reform. New systems of oppression will emerge again, under a new name, with new rules, with the same objective – to keep power in the dominant culture by creating a means to control those outside the desired group (Leonardo, 2007).

Racism. Racism is an ideology, often an “unacknowledged force shaping the way we learn to understand the world and our deepest beliefs about race and equality” (Urbina, 2016, p. 143). While many individuals resist acknowledging their own racism, Urbina (2016) states it is an integral part of Americans’ understanding of society, intelligence, meritocracy, rights, and citizenship. Although many Americans would like to deny its existence, racism continues to “dominate the landscape of social life in the United States” (Urbina, 2016, p. 149). Many claim the election of President Obama in 2008 was proof that
racism has died (Muro, 2016; Museus, Ladesma & Parker, 2015), but the evidence points to just the opposite (Muro, 2016). The banning of ethnic studies by the Governor of Arizona in 2010 was a catalyst for national protest (Museus et al., 2015). In 2011, a University of California, Los Angeles student posted a YouTube video of racially charged rants mimicking and denigrating the languages of Asians and Asian Americans (Museus et al., 2015). Changes in the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program (Siemons, Raymond-Flesh, Auerswald, & Brindis, 2017; VanHulle, 2017), white supremacist groups on campuses (Henderson, 2017), and the political unrest since the 2016 elections (Rosa & Bonilla, 2017) are current examples of the racism that still exists in the everyday life of Americans (Burt, Simons, & Gibbons, 2012; Pérez et al., 2015; Rosa & Bonilla, 2017).

These examples point to social (e.g. individual racist acts) and structural (e.g. laws, policies) constructions of oppression that influence the construction of HEIs and the experiences of Latinx students within them on college campuses.

**Social and Structural Constructs of Oppression**

Racism is a social construct (Leonardo, 2007; Osei & Kofi, 2012) developed through a series of processes that happen through social and institutional structures. Race is a social process of becoming a racial identity or perceived as a race (Perry, 1997).

**Black/White binary.** Racism does more than create a continuum of status based on skin color (Leonardo, 2007). It is a complex, fluid scale of discrimination with multiple rankings that determines who gets to be called White (Leonardo, 2007) and “White becomes the pivot point around which all groups are defined” (Alcoff, 2013, p. 10). Scholars call this Black/White binary (Lozano, 2017). This conception of racism allows for only two
constituent racial groups, Black and White (Alcoff, 2013; Ortiz, 2012), effectively ignoring other racial and ethnic groups. Alcoff (2013) contends that issues raised by the black/white binary fails to acknowledge the “significant radial and class variety within each of these large amalgamated groups” (p.19) and leaves the Latinx population out of the racial discourse. Ortiz (2012) posit this perpetuates the marginalization of Latinos, as it “omits their history and struggle for equality. These non-black, non-white Others are, therefore, rendered racially ambiguous” (p. 33).

**Racialization of Latinx languages.** Diversity of races within Latinx identity; phenotypical markers or racial identities are diverse. Therefore, oppression occurs at an intersecting identity marker: language. The link between race and language (Hyesun Cho, 2016) is what Liggett (2009) calls the “racialization of language.” Language is “a powerful marker of individual and collective identities, including membership in families and other groups” (Murillo & Smith, 2011, p. 147). Because language is so “central to our lives, linguicism is closely related to discrimination based on other forms of identity, such as race, ethnicity, and nationality” (Murillo & Smith, 2011, p. 147). Linguicism is defined as “discrimination against someone because of how s/he speaks, writes, or signs” (Murillo & Smith, 2011, p. 147). Linguicism may start as soon as students enter the educational system and holds lasting implications for “children’s emotional well-being and academic development, as well as their access to higher education, healthy relationships, and meaningful employment” (Murillo & Smith, 2011, p. 147).

In a study of anti-Spanish education prevalent in the southwestern United States from 1920-1970, Murillo and Smith (2011) relayed students’ stories of being slapped, caned,
having their mouths washed out with soap, and denied privileges for speaking Spanish in school. Today, the abuse is less physical but just as devastating. Many Latinx undergraduates enter college having already experienced linguicism (Murillo & Smith, 2011; Scott & Venegas, 2017). Students are singled out by other students, staff, and/or faculty who publicly comment on their “use of language in a negative way” (Murillo & Smith, 2011, p. 148). Experiences such as these encourage parents to raise their children to be monolingual with English as their only language (Reyhner, 2007). However, doing so robs children of the family connections as younger children move to English only and lose the ability to communicate with older, Spanish-dominant members of their families (Murillo & Smith, 2011).

While substantial research supports the benefits of bilingualism (Cleveland, Laroche, & Papdopoulos, 2015; Moskina & Gruževskis, 2014; Wilson & Gonzalez Davies, 2017), K-12 education in the U.S. provides only a handful of education opportunities that foster or promote bilingualism for Latinx students (Martinez, 2016; Scott & Venegas, 2017). Flores (2013) claims that preparing students to be bilingual lends to a neoliberal view and only further marginalizes people from underrepresented groups by making them into economic assets that serve the wealthy. The neoliberal view of multiculturalism values culture as a bridge to somewhere better, while asset approaches have traditionally believed a balance between access to the language and resources of power and students’ cultural competency can support systemic change from within.

Flores (2013) warns against accepting the economic argument for multilingualism, as it is based in economics and devalues the person for themselves. The purpose of education
becomes creating workers to benefit transnational corporations and economic elites, but
does not see inherent value of a culture, person, or personal identities. Bilinguals valued for
the economic aspect of their dual language, not for the person they are, is one more form of
discrimination.

**Racism and linguicism on campus.** Urbina (2016) posits the first socialization of
children in formal and structured settings begins in schools and linguicism remains prevalent
in society, K-12 schools, and on college campuses (Cavazon, 2016; Urbina, 2016). For
example, Latinx students are stereotyped as ‘under qualified’ and ‘lacking intelligence’ by
many PWI personnel (Baker, 2013; Ballinas, 2017; Von Robertson et al., 2014) and students
with an accent are often assumed to be unintelligent and/or illegal (Ballinas, 2017; Chen-
Hayes et al., 1999). PWIs wanting to increase the number of Latinx graduates must
intentionally consider the importance of language on their campuses to ensure students who
speak languages other than English do not face discrimination based on any aspect of
language (Cavazos, 2016; Gregory, 2003).

**Structural linguicism.** Linguicism is also structural. This means linguicism
becomes an ordinary part of life, particularly for an English language learner (ELL) or
persons with accents. Structural systems of racism and linguicism intersect within education,
such as English Only policies or cuts in bilingual education programs embedded in NCLB
when the Civil Rights Act prevented cuts in funding based on race alone (Liggett, 2013).
This intersectionality creates systemic barriers (Hyesun Cho, 2016) for Latinx students from
early schooling into college. Restrictions such as English-only within ELL programs deny
students the opportunity to learn in their first language and gain academic knowledge until
they reach English proficiency (Murillo & Smith, 2011). Malsbary (2014) stated, “school-based language policies that focus on brown and black immigrant youth learning Standard English at the expense of their native languages is contemporary white supremacy” (p. 386). These systemic practices reinforce the silent and accepted norm that non-English speaking people are deficient, so power remains with white, native English-speaking folks, to sustain the current status quo (Rosa, 2016; Rosa & Flores, 2017). Malscary (2014, p. 376) states:

> Power, in the Gramscian sense, is at its most powerful when it is completely invisible, so as to be thought of as normal and even ordinary. That all immigrants and children of immigrants, who are brown and black, need to speak English (only) in order to attain (white) success is a deeply entrenched discourse.

These structural constraints remain in classrooms and educational policy maker boardrooms across the nation, both in PK-12 and in higher education. But policies that maintain the status quo are not the only form of structural linguicism in current educational settings.

**Gatekeeping.** Within the walls of U.S. K-20 classrooms, students are continuously evaluated on their abilities to speak and write in English, as well as their English language-related pronunciation, handwriting, vocabulary, syntax, and diction (Cavazos, 2016; Murillo & Smith, 2011; Scott & Venegas, 2017); evaluation of this magnitude makes classrooms a prime site for continuous linguicism (Freire, 2000). Historical restrictions in schools resulted in punishment for students who spoke a language other than English. Still today, several states mandate English-only policies for academic instruction, state literature, and official government documents, creating mandated discrimination based on language (Holeywell, 2016; Murrillo & Smith, 2011; Reyhner, 2007; Scott & Venegas, 2017). Many PWIs are actively recruiting Latinx students who are both the fastest growing ethnic group in U.S.
education and the least educated among all major ethnic groups (Kim, Rennick, & Franco, 2014; Rodriguez, Rhodes & Aguirre, 2015; Von Robertson et al., 2014), yet few structural components are enacted to support Latinx students in any language other than English.

**Isolation.** As Latinx college students struggle with the dissonance created in moving between home and campus cultures, many experience a sense of isolation (Harris, 2012; Lopez, 2005). Often, Latinx students are the only Latinx in their classrooms (Baker, 2013) and have little opportunities to take classes with Latinx faculty members (Gregory, 2003; Page, 2013; Ponjuan, 2011). Having peers or mentors who share ethnic identity decreases the feelings of isolation and can increase the likelihood of Latinx students completing their degrees (Baker, 2013; Harris, 2012; Rios-Ellis et al., 2015). The presence of co-ethnic peers, as well as staff and faculty members, is also a support for Latinx students as they face microaggressions within the PWI environment.

**Microaggressions.** Although PWIs are recruiting Latinx students (Madkins & Mitchell, 2000), these institutions’ culture often remains unwelcoming and even hostile (Reynolds, Sneva & Beehler, 2010). Efforts to change racially hostile campus cultures into inclusive collegiate environments require institutional-wide efforts (Harris, 2012; Saladino & Martinez, 2015). Latinx students often face racial microaggressions, defined as “unintentional and intentional insults in the form of verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities” (Minikel-Lacocque, 2013, p. 435). Bias and stereotypes are so “integral to social life that they became part of the unseen logic by which everyday people organize their social thinking and behaviors” (Urbina, 2016, p. 147). They report being treated as outsiders, being stared at by white students, feeling isolated, and targeted for racism (Ballinas, 2017; Jones,
Stereotype threat. Even in the absence of racial macroaggressions, the risk of stereotype threat impacts underrepresented students’ academic performance due to the fear of confirming a negative stereotype about one’s racial or cultural group (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Stereotype threat suggests that Latinx students’ academic performance can be affected and undermined by negative campus cultures and may cause dis-identification with college life (Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005). Latinx students may be especially vulnerable as PWIs “have negative cultural stereotypes about the intelligence of Latinx students” (Baker, 2013, p. 634). This type of racism can be mitigated by positive diverse student interactions that increase the belonging for all students. Baker (2013) states faculty support is vital and helps reverse or prevent the adverse effects of stereotype threat.

Lack of role models. Having role models who share an ethnic identity can be transforming (Saladino & Martinez, 2015; Zurita, 2005). Research indicates that connection with faculty members who share ethnicity and a cultural background can have a profound influence on Latinx students (Gregory, 2003; Ponjuan, 2011; Zurita, 2005). Baker (2013) found that Latinx students taking courses with Latinx faculty had a strong effect on grades, positively influenced academic performance overall, and contributed to the persistence of Latinx students. Within the same study, mentoring relationships were strongest for “students with a co-ethnic faculty mentor” (p. 636). This was attributed to the students feeling more connected to university culture and feeling that they had an increased ability to navigate it due to the support of their faculty mentors (Baker, 2013).
Latinx mentors and role models play a significant part in retention of Latinx students (Bond et al., 2015; Cavazos et al., 2010; Saladino & Martinez, 2015). When mentors and students share “common beliefs and values through similar ethnic or racial or cultural backgrounds, this likeness may enhance a sense of trust, familiarity, and supportiveness” (Bordes & Arredondo, 2005, p. 121). Although Latinx represent 11% of 4-year college students, there are few Latinx role models; only 5% of institutional administrators and fewer than 4% of faculty are Latinx, making the pool of available mentors and role models shallow (Saladino & Martinez, 2015). The presence of Latinx leaders “is key because these role models and mentors emulate the power of education” for Latinx students (Saladino & Martinez, 2015, 105).

As Latinx students seek mentors and role models, yet find few institutional leadership who reflect their own ethnicity, they may feel “unvalidated” (Saladino & Martinez, 2015, p. 105). Students at PWIs who can see themselves in the faces of their role models and mentors are more likely to persist toward degree completion (Ponjuan, 2011). Mentoring throughout a student’s program is essential and the need for diverse faculty is crucial as they “can serve as excellent mentors and assist in making hostile environments manageable” for Latinx students (Von Robertson et al., 2014, p. 719), and recruiting teachers and administrators who are bilingual and bicultural, hiring and retaining Latinx faculty (Pérez & Saenz, 2017; Ponjuan, 2011; Von Robertson et al., 2016), Mahaffy and Pantoja’s (2012) study found Latinx students still face substantial barriers due to language (lack of bilingual staff and faculty) and an absence of institutional programming specifically designed to engage and retain Latinx students. As PWIs begin to address the needs of Latinx
students, Hurtado and Ponjuan (2005) posit that “substantial gaps in our knowledge base and institutional practices when it comes to understanding and serving Latinos in higher education” still exist (p. 250).

Decolonizing Higher Education Institutions

Explicit attention must be paid to the barriers facing Latinx students to truly affect change and create a positive experience for Latinx students (Minikel-Lacocque, 2013; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Scott & Venegas, 2017). While discourse on social justice and equality is common among educators, Domínguez (2017) states that “little has changed in the schooling experiences of youth of color” (p. 229). To truly affect change, educators must disrupt the traditional (colonial) practices that are deeply embedded in White, Western European origins. Paris and Alim (2014, p. 86) challenge educators to ask:

What if … the goal of teaching and learning with youth of color was not ultimately to see how closely students could perform White middle-class norms but to explore, honor, extend, and, at times, problematize their heritage and community practices?

Attention to cultural dissonance, mentoring, and asset based pedagogies may provide strategic strategies aimed at decolonizing HEIs.

Cultural dissonance. For students from cultural backgrounds commonly found on PWI campuses, largely Anglo-American, the prevailing norms and values of collegiate culture share many similarities to their own (Allan, 2003; Kiyama, Museus & Vega, 2015). This cultural similarity results in little cultural dissonance, or conflict, and for these students the transition is relatively smooth (Allan, 2003; Bickel & Jensen, 2012; Kiyama et al., 2015). Students identifying from non-dominant cultures, such as Latinx students, may not have access to insiders’ knowledge of the “expectations, discourse styles, and modes of
school-based ways of thinking and learning...leaving them feeling confused and alienated” (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015, p. 357) and experiencing considerable cultural dissonance (Allan, 2003; Baker, 2013; Ybarra, 2012). This dissonance can be severe enough for students to withdraw and move to another institution (Contreras & Contreras, 2015) or decrease persistence and degree completion among Latinx students (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015; Gonzalez & Morrison, 2016; Kiyama et al., 2015).

Latinx students often come from a rich variety of cultures (Gonzalez, 2013) that may be substantially different from the campus culture of PWIs and may face challenges in learning to navigate through this unfamiliar culture (Kiyama et al., 2015; Sanchez, 2013). While no one set of cultural expectations and experiences can encompass all Latinx students (Gonzalez, 2013; Gonzalez & Morrison, 2016), many find the individualistic expectations of PWIs disconcerting. Many students come from oral cultures and home learning environments “in which mentoring and apprentice learning are the basis for instruction” (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015, p. 363). PWIs may hold expectations that Latinx students will assimilate into the established culture, placing the burden of resolving the dissonance on the shoulders of the students themselves (Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005; Kiyama et al., 2015; Madkin & Mitchell, 2000).

Cultural dissonance, and the friction it creates, layers stress to an already complex mission of earning a college degree (Allan, 2003; Bickel & Jensen, 2012). But PWIs are not powerless to reduce the cultural dissonance for their students. Initiatives such as creating cultural centers for students (Jones et al., 2002) and mentoring programs have been instrumental in decreasing cultural dissonance for Latinx students (Crisp, Baker, Griffin,
Lunsford, & Pifer, 2017; Gregory, 2003; Gross, Zerquera, Inge, & Berry, 2014). Mentoring program have a long history as an effective practice in higher education, yet, little research of mentoring for Latinx college students is available (Gershenfeld, 2014; Girves et al., 2005).

**Mentorship.** Mentoring for college students is well documented over the last 30 years, but the majority of research studies have focused on traditional White students and most at PWIs (Crisp & Cruz, 2009). This indicates most mentoring practices are steeped in the coloniality of White values. Domínguez (2017, p. 227) explains coloniality as:

> Long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations … It is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience.

The lack of studies that explore cultural issues in mentoring for underrepresented students, i.e., Latinx, (Crisp et al., 2017) may be a reflection of the lack of mentoring program designed to support Latinx students (Rhodes, 2008), not just in assimilating into the PWI culture, but programs that sustain Latinx culture in spite of the PWI culture. However, studies that have focused on Latinx students, do indicate that mentoring can be an important component to their success.

Studies support the positive impact of mentoring on several education outcomes (e.g., academic performance, retention; Cerezo & McWhirter, 2012; De La Cruz, 2008; Gershenfeld, 2014; Kaplan et al., 2009). The benefits of mentoring for Latinx college students begins the first year of post-secondary education, extends through graduation, and holds implications for career advancements (Treviño et. al, 2014). Studies also support the
need for more mentoring programs, starting at the undergraduate level and extending through doctoral training (DeAngelo, Mason, & Winters, 2016; Miller et al., 2013; Paglis, Green, & Bauer, 2006; Rhodes, 2008). Mentoring programs specifically designed for Latinx college students are essential as they assist students in making adjustments needed for academic success, moderate the effects of social stress, and serve as a form of social support (Von Robertson et al., 2014). Latinx students who share common values with culturally sensitive mentors gain significant benefits from the mentoring relationship (Cox et al., 2014). If important values are not mutual, the relationship loses effectiveness (Saladino & Martinez, 2015; Schueths & Carranza, 2012). Many PWIs that create Latinx mentoring programs seek to capitalize on the benefits of these programs, such as increased student retention and graduation rates, networking and career opportunities, and cultural appreciation (Moberg & Velasquez, 2004; Treviño et al., 2014; Wright, Titus & Cornelison, 2008). Mentoring can provide individual support and empowerment for Latinx students, and it is essential for Latinx students to know that “an equitable opportunity for an education awaits them on campus” (Madkins & Mitchell, 2000, p. 486). This equitable opportunity for Latinx students is essential and may be supported by asset pedagogies (methods and practices of teaching).

**Asset Pedagogies.** Multiple scholars have explored and developed theories for asset, also known as resource, pedagogies in response to the inequity found in education (e.g., Hollins, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 1995; McHatton, Smith, Brown, & Curtis, 2013; Paris, 2012). One of the first and most notably recognized asset pedagogy is Ladson-Billings’ theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) based on her research with African American
students. This pedagogical approach utilizes the students’ knowledge of their own cultural to “help them create meaning and understanding of the world” (Ladson-Billings, 1992, p. 110). Ladson-Billings (1995) challenges educators to design curriculum and instructional practices that support students’ academic achievements, increase students’ cultural competencies, and enhance students’ understandings of existing society.

Gay (2002) added the theory of culturally responsive pedagogy to the field of asset pedagogies. Similar to CRP, culturally responsive pedagogy utilized the cultural knowledge of diverse students to support academic achievement. Gay and Ladson-Billings (1995) both based their research on pedagogical practices of teachers with proven success working with students from underrepresented groups and came to similar conclusions. CRP and culturally responsive pedagogy requires teachers to use the students’ cultural knowledge to support new learning. Furthermore, both require teacher and student to be aware of systemic inequalities that exist in the current educational system.

While both pedagogies are similar, Gay (2002) highlights the teachers’ responsibilities to build relationships with students and intentionally research the cultural and ethnic assets of students, bringing those strengths into the learning environment. As research in the field continued, both models were used and became the foundation for others to extend and expand. Educational researchers acknowledge that asset pedagogies have positively influenced learning environments particularly for students within underrepresented groups. Paris (2012) posit that culturally relevant and responsive pedagogies are not just reactions to deficit-based theories, but a step towards systemic change: he offered the next step as culturally sustaining pedagogies (CSP).
Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies

While many educators value asset pedagogies, these pedagogies still place academic achievement as reaching a white, middle class standard. Paris (2012) pushed the field of asset pedagogies forward with cultural sustaining pedagogies (CSP) which refined the goal of education: to keep linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as an active and vibrant part of every student’s education. CSP offers resistance to current value systems and encourages educators to move towards a more fluid acceptance of and value for a multiethnic and plurilingual society. Ultimately, the long-term goal of CSP is to foster linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism so different cultures are valued and remain alive, while students learn how to change what counts as the language, literature, and culture found in dominant society (Paris, 2012). To do this, educators must understand the premises and research-based practices that build linguistic, literate, and cultural knowledge of students’ home and dominant cultural (Sanchez, 2013).

Many students enter the educational system speaking a language other than Standard American English (SAE), such as Spanish, African American Language, Navaho, or Samoan (Paris, 2012). These students need to sustain and increase the knowledge and fluency of their home languages and add to their skills a fluency and mastery of SAE. Both sets of skills and knowledge are important to maintain, and build, for students to be prepared for the pluralistic society which Paris (2012) foresees. Paris (2012) states a “pluralistic society needs both the many and one to remain vibrant” (p. 95). Built upon the premises established in culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995), CSP extended the concept to include other components. CSP acknowledges that pedagogy shifts, changes,
recycles, and recreates instructional spaces as students become subjects in the instructional process, not mere objects (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Other research continues with other demographic groups of students, such as critical culturally sustaining/revitalizing pedagogy and Indigenous educational sovereignty (McCarty & Lee, 2014) and CSP within monolingual language policy (Michener, Sengupta-Irving et al., 2015). The five principles, or tenets, of CSP are outlined below.

**Student and community agency and input.** In this tenet, the focus is on the contributions of both the student and their community. Gutiérrez and Rogoff (2003) defines the cultural community as “a coordinated group of people with some traditions and understandings in common, extending across several generations, with varied roles and practices and continual change among participants as well as transformation in the community’s practices” (p. 250). This concept of community is not stagnant, having one set way of being, but continues to change and reimage itself as new customs and traditions are intertwined within the fabric of the culture. “People participate in various ways, overlapping, but practices and ways shift and change, are transformed over time, lifetimes, historical change in the community’s organization and relationships with other communities” (p. 250).

Communities for Latinx students often center around the concept of familismo, the “belief in the importance of maintaining strong family ties, the expectation that family is the primary source of support, an emphasis on loyalty to family, and a commitment to the family over individual needs” (Kiyama et al., 2015, p. 31). Familismo contributes to a student’s perseverance and is one of the most significant factors in Latinx student degree completion (Kiyama et al., 2015; Von Robertson et al., 2014). Students view their success as
honoring their family and the sacrifices made to get them through college while capitalizing on the family as a collective group for positive reinforcement (Von Robertson et al., 2014, p. 719).

Due to the importance of family and the concept of familismo, PWIs who recruit Latinx students “must work to assist parents in understanding the nuances of US higher education” (Von Robertson et al., 2014). Treviño and colleagues (2014) disclose that many Latinx students have parents facing work shortages or displacement, younger siblings in need of care and supervision, and/or are expected to work to financially contribute to their families. Family concerns may affect students’ ability to study, impacting grade point averages, which influences opportunities to earn college scholarships (Treviño et al., 2014). Family support is a crucial component to Latinx students’ success (Magdaleno, 2006; Cavazos et al., 2010; Graff et al., 2013). Yet few universities have made the changes to include and capitalize on this support system through bilingual literature or invitations to include family members (Graff et al., 2013).

**Critical centering of dynamic community languages, valued practices, and knowledges.** Within educational settings, students are often measured on their abilities using White values and ways of knowing as the standard (Allan, 2003; Kiyama et al., 2015). This tenet of CSP requires educators to “move beyond sustaining languages and cultures, to sustaining the people who speak and enact those languages and culture” (Wong & Peña, 2017). This requires that educators decenter the traditional ways of teaching and learning, and re-center the focus on the children they are teaching, using the students’ ways of knowing and learning. This type of critical centering is deeper than learning about the pop
culture or holidays of a group of people, it requires a commitment to “reading, observing, and engaging in conversations with people who are a part of the culture” (Ladson-Billings, 2017, p. 152).

Paris and Alim (2014) state, “Multilingualism and multiculturalism are increasingly linked to access and power in U. S. and global contexts” (p. 87). As students progress through the educational system, the need increases to prepare them for a more globalized workforce. The cultural and linguistic flexibility needed for a global market is important for all students to interact successfully in the future (Paris & Alim, 2014). Reflecting the shift in demographic group populations in the U.S., a shift in the culture of power is also happening. All students will need to interact effectively in multiple cultural settings to be successful (Paris & Alim, 2014). Teaching students that Standard American English is the only way to enter the culture of power may serve as a deterrent. Being monolingual may reduce access for any and all students, regardless of racial or ethnic affiliation. This should serve as a wakeup call for educators to teach and maintain multilingual and multicultural classrooms for all students (Paris & Alim, 2014). CSP offers resistance to the systematic march towards a monocultural and monolingual educational system and encourages educators to move towards a more fluid acceptance and value of a multietnic and multilingual society (Paris, 2012). For PWIs, this means that all individuals should be working to support students, including Latinx students, to reach their full academic potential as the goal of education in a pluralistic and increasingly global society.
**Capacity to contend with internalized oppression.** Many students have negative experiences in school, but attribute those experiences to a person (i.e., specific teacher) or administration. Students often are unaware of the “systemic nature of their marginalization” (Irizarry, 2017, p. 72) and fail to see the structural oppression in education. By viewing students’ knowledge as a valuable form of capital that informs teaching, rather than teaching informing the students’ knowledge, learning can be built on “their systems of meaning-making, and provide students with the skills and confidence to advocate for themselves – indeed to sustain themselves and their communities” (Irizarry, 2017, p. 97). As historically underrepresented groups of people face systemic oppressions, ways of coping and knowing are handed down from older to younger generations, evolving and changing as new systemic practices fight to maintain the power of the status quo (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Urbina, 2016).

Historicized content and instruction. Historical views of culture both extend and constrain how “we conceptualize cultural communities and their members and practices” (Gutiérrez & Johnson, 2017, p. 247). There remains in education the common practice of measuring all events and accomplishments against the scale of whiteness. Gutiérrez and Johnson (2017) caution educators to recognize the “long history of research that has essentialized members of cultural communities by flattening or diminishing differences that are consequential to learning and to living resonantly, fully, and with dignity” (p. 249). This requires educators to be conscious of how they “describe, analyze, and make sense of communities’ practices” (p. 249) and examine them against the power they provide to understand the people, both locally and historically.
Curricularized for learning. The four tenets of CSP are not stand-alone principles, each tenet intertwines and cannot be separated into separate practices. Paris and Alim (2017) speak of the fifth tenet, the ability to curricularize all four previous tenets into learning, as the key feature of the CSP framework. The goal of CSP is to create learning environments, based on the students in that environment, as opposed to the students conforming to a preconceived curriculum. These five principles are a conceptual and empirical project (Paris & Alim, 2017) and will be explored as a framework for mentoring Latinx students in Chapter IV.

Conclusion

Exploring alternative frameworks that provide structure for supporting the success of Latinx students at a PWI are called for in previous literature (e.g., Crisp & Cruz, 2009). Previous research shows the complex components essential to changing a campus culture and supporting diverse students such as including faculty, staff, and students engaging in discussion, analysis, and debate around the concepts of race, racism, and racial stereotypes (Reynolds et al., 2010; Sólorzano, 1997), institutional commitment to the recruitment and retention of diverse faculty (Pérez & Saenz, 2017; Von Robertson et al., 2014) and support for undergraduate mentoring programs (DeAngelo et al., 2016). Involvement in mentoring is well documented as a mechanism to counteract the challenges of racism, linguicism and cultural dissonance (Bordes & Arredondo, 2005; Crisp et al., 2015; Girves et al., 2005; Magdaleno, 2006; Phinney et al., 2011; Schueths & Carranza, 2012), yet the lack of mentors for Latinx students creates its own challenge. As HEIs turn to mentoring programs to provide support, the lack of research of programs specially designed for Latinx students is
evident (Von Robertson et al., 2014). This study will address the gap in the literature by providing an in-depth exploration of one mentoring program designed specifically for Latinx students. The following chapter provides a description of the study’s methodology. Chapter III begins with a rationale for qualitative case study, followed by the study’s design. A description of my positionality is next presented and is followed by limitations and ethical considerations.
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGIES

Each year, an increasing number of Latinx students enroll and begin their college journey at numerous institutions of higher education across the country (Baker, 2013). For many Latinx students, the challenges of racism, linguicism, cultural dissonance, and lack of role models obstruct and/or delay degree completion (Bordes & Arredondo, 2005; Crisp et al., 2015; Girves et al., 2005; Magdaleno, 2006; Phinney et al., 2011; Schueths & Carranza, 2012). Chapter II reviewed the existing literature that described these four challenges and the impact they have on degree completion (Bickel & Jensen, 2012; Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Cavazos, 2016; Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009; 2008). As PWIs explore ways to support students through to degree completion, mentoring programs are often considered a solution to the dismal graduation rate of Latinx students (Crisp et al., 2015; Girves et al., 2005; Redmond, 1990). While research validates mentoring as an effective method to support students (e.g., Bordes & Arredondo, 2005; Cox et al., 2014; Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Magdaleno, 2006), few studies directly address the mentoring needs of Latinx college students (Gershenfeld, 2014).

This study responded to the need for additional research into Latinx-dedicated mentoring programs by identifying mentoring practices that were perceived by mentors and Latinx mentees as facilitating perseverance to degree completion and the alignment of those practices with the framework of CSP. Two research questions explored the mentoring practices of one program and the alignment with the framework provided by CSP.

1. What mentoring practices do mentors and mentees perceive as supporting persistence toward degree completion at a PWI?
2. To what extent do identified mentoring practices align with the framework of culturally sustaining pedagogies?

The following section provides an overview of qualitative research and justification for use of case study methods in this research. The study’s design includes descriptions of the setting, participants, and data collection followed by the description of data analysis, limitations, and ethical considerations.

**Overview of Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research encompasses the world of lived experiences, “where individual belief and action intersects with culture” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 11). For this reason, I selected qualitative research as the methodology for this study. Qualitative research lends itself to discovery and to opportunities to learn about people, connect with people, and make sense out of the chaos of the world (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). It also “allows researchers to get at the inner experience of participants, to determine how meanings are formed through and in culture, and to discover rather than test variables” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 12) which made it the appropriate method for this study.

My decision to focus on mentoring for Latinx undergraduates aligned with Corbin and Strauss’ (2008) perception that “persons choose to do research because they have a dream that somehow they will make a difference in the world through the insights and understandings they arrive at” (p. 15). The current educational system in the U.S. offers little in the way of a sense of belonging, historical representation, or heritage pride for Latinx students (Jones et al., 2002; Kiyama et
al., 2015). Feelings of isolation and invisibility prevail, leaving multitudes of Latinx students yearning for a space to call their own, sharing it with others who look, sound, and think, like they do (Baker, 2013; Harris, 2012; Rios-Ellis et al., 2015; Salas, Aragon, Alandejani & Timpson, 2014). Utilizing qualitative methods offered the opportunity to present the voices of Latinx students and their perceptions of mentoring practices. By engaging in qualitative case study research, I provided a rich, descriptive understanding (Yin, 2013) of mentoring practices that Latinx students perceived as facilitating perseverance to degree completion.

Case Study

For this study, an instrumental, single case study with embedded subunits was used (Yin, 2013). Instrumental case study was selected to “provide insight into an issue” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 123) which, for this study, was mentoring practices. This case study was descriptive as the purpose was “to describe a phenomenon (the “case”) in its real-world context” (Yin, 2013). The phenomenon, mentoring, was described as it occurred in the daily lives of the mentors and mentees, its real-world context. In the following section, details of this qualitative case study are presented. The setting of the study, participants, data sources, analysis, and ethical considerations complete this final section.

Study Design

Setting. This case study was conducted on the campus of a four-year PWI. This public research university boasts a mission and vision focused on urban issues. As of 2015, the total student population was 16,699. Of these, 50% were undergraduates. Diversity of the student population reflected 3% Multiethnic students, 7% Asian students, 7% Latinx students, 11% Black/African-American students, 12% Non-resident International students,
and 60% White students. Students came from all fifty states and over 80 countries.

Eighty-eight percent of first-time freshmen received some type of financial aid.

This university sponsored a Latinx mentoring program that was established in 2011. The mentoring program was a partnership shared between a community organization and the institution’s division of diversity. The community organization, started in 1983, was a Latinx philanthropic organization whose mission was to build stronger communities through grant making and scholarship support. The partnership was designed as a matching scholarship between the university and the community organization for Latinx students who graduated from the local area high schools. The mentoring program was designed to support scholarship recipients through programmatic offerings and mentoring to achieve their academic and career pursuits. While the community organization did not have any governance over the mentoring program, the two organizations collaborated on many initiatives to support local Latinx students. The mentoring program was financed through multiple grants and matching university funds.

In 2017, the mentoring program served 70 student mentees campus-wide in both undergraduate and graduate programs. Mentors were volunteers from the university (faculty and staff members) and from local community organizations (i.e. community services, young Latinx professionals’ group, women’s council). When the mentoring program was first established, mentors were actively recruited from staff and faculty who advocated for Latinx students. The community organization also actively recruited Latinx professionals who wanted to give back to their
community. Currently, many mentors recruit new mentors by sharing their stories and inviting others to join the mentoring on campus. In the 2016-17 school year, 43 of the 53 mentors identified as Latinx, three identified as Black, and four identified as White, and the remaining three declined to identify. The mentors were all volunteers and no compensation was offered except for the comradery and friendships built throughout the mentoring program.

I joined the comradery and friendship of this mentoring program and have served as a mentor for the past three years, which gave me direct personal experience (Patton, 2015) and an understanding of the program’s mentoring process. This allowed me to establish rapport with mentees and mentors quickly, as I am identified as a member of the group (mentoring program). The complexity of insider and outsider identities within my own positionality was far more complex, however, than my experiences within the mentoring program due to my own history and experiences as a white researcher and mother of a bicultural family. Born and raised in a rural community in the Midwest, I moved to Arizona after college and married a first generation Latino. Our community was rich in Mexican values and culture due to its location on the Mexico and Arizona borders. As an educator, I also engaged in our community on a professional level teaching students and engaging with their families who predominately self-identified as Mexican-American or Latinx. Seeking to offer culturally engaged education for my students, I returned to college and completed a Masters’ degree in Bilingual and Multicultural education.

In my immediate family, much discussion and negotiations surrounded the conscious decisions we made as parents to give my children access to the rich cultural heritage of both
sides of their families. Moving from Arizona to the Midwest was a significant change in culture and access to some traditions that had always been an intimate part of our family life. As my daughter entered college, she applied for and received the community scholarship with the invitation to join the mentoring program. Watching her benefit from the mentoring experiences encouraged me to volunteer as a mentor. These opportunities allowed me to experience the mentoring program from both the parent perspective and a mentor’s perspective. In my dual role as mentor and researcher, I participated in the mentor training and some of the programmatic offerings, which assisted in understanding references to things specific to the program as they were discussed in the interviews and focus group.

During the summer, mentees, mentors, and families were invited to attend different sessions of the Summer Enrichment Program, a two-week academic-focused preparation program offered by the university’s mentoring program director, Celeste Burk (Burk, 2016). The session topics ranged from study habits to undergraduate research opportunities. Sessions offered for families focused on the inner workings of college and how parents, aunts, uncles, guardians, grandparents, etc., could support their college attendees. Mentors were involved in training and social activities with their mentees.

**Participants.** Case studies require a general definition of the case (Yin, 2013). In this study, the case was the mentoring program. Once the case was established, “other clarifications -sometimes called bounding the case - become important” (Yin, 2013, p.33). In clarifying who and what was explored, determining
who was involved as the participants was important. In this study, participants included undergraduate and graduate students, mentors involved in the mentoring program, and the program director, Celeste Burk. Active participation, defined as one year or more experience as a mentor or mentee with the program, guided selection of mentoring pairs. This selection criterion of at least one year of active participation was important because both the mentee and mentor needed experience in the mentoring program before being able to speak to the questions of what mentoring practices were supportive and why.

The director, who has been with the program since its origination in 2011, served as an “informant” (Patton, 2015, p. 403) due to her insider knowledge of mentoring pairs. The director self identifies as a white female and in our first interview, disclosed the tension of her racial identity and her role as the director of a Latinx mentoring program. She talked of the importance of partnering with Latinx professors to provide context to Latinx students’ experiences, culture, and history, stating:

I am a white woman, this is not my lived experience … so I can’t help them [Latinx students] with that. It is much more powerful if it comes from … our Latinx faculty but is also combined with the expertise of the Latina/Latino studies program to provide the context and understanding the experience.

While she clearly acknowledges her whiteness, she actively interrogates and problematizes her position within the program by acknowledging her race, privilege, and thoughtfully considering how she can better position mentors and mentees to have their voices and experiences heard and acknowledged within the PWI. She leverages her privilege to amplify the voices of the program participants, recognizing it is important but difficulty, complex, and ongoing work. I meet with her prior to the study’s initiation and sought her help in identifying mentor-mentee pairs who met consistently and engaged frequently in events and
workshops offered by the program. Fifteen pairs of mentors/mentees were selected for invitations to interviews, described below, based on recommendations from Celeste Burk. An effort to balance the pairs among gender and content areas was made to provide a breadth of representation. While no formal guidelines exist regarding the number of participants a qualitative study ‘should’ include, I selected the number 15 because it appears to be a reasonable number at which saturation will occur (Charmaz, 2014). Patton (2015) defines saturation as the point when nothing new is being learned. The saturation point for this study occurred around the seventh interview for both mentors and mentees. In total, 11 mentor interviews and eight mentee interviews were conducted, as well as an additional interview with the program director.

**Data Collection: Interviews, Focus Groups, and Documents**

Case study data collection can be gathered from multiple sources, including, but not limited to, “documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation, and physical artifacts” (Yin, 2013, p. 103). Yin (2013) states, “a major strength of case study data collection is the opportunity to use many different sources of evidence” (p. 119). An analysis of case study methods found “case studies using multiple sources of evidence were rated more highly, in terms of their overall quality, than those that relied on only single sources of information” (Yin, 2013, p. 119). This qualitative case study used interviews, one focus group, and program documents to provide the multiple perspectives needed (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Each of the three data sources were used to ratify and strengthen data collected from the other two sources. Triangulating the data, checking consistency of
different data sources within the same method, “can be used in determining the strength of
evidence in support of a finding” (Patton, 2015, p. 572).

**Mentor and mentee interviews.** Creswell (2013) recommends that interviews
occupy a “central role in data collection” (p. 162). Yin (2003) agrees that interviews are one
of the most important sources of information and are essential when conducting a case
study. Patton (2015) states, “The purpose of interviewing … is to allow us to enter into the
other person’s perspective” (p. 426). Defining the purpose of interviewing in this manner
focused data collection on understanding Latinx students’ and mentors’ perspectives on
institutional issues, mentoring relationships, and strategies to overcome challenges faced
while earning a degree.

Interview questions were designed to gain understanding of certain occurrences
(Maxwell, 2013), give insight into a participant’s experiences and perceptions (Grbich,
2013), and offer a basis for further inquiry (Yin, 2003). The interview protocol for this study
included questions focused on mentoring practices, challenges to persistence, and value
added by the mentoring relationship. Semi-structured questions were prepared ahead of time
but allowed freedom to probe or follow the lead of the interviewees (Patton, 2015). The
mentee interview protocol is in Appendix A; the mentor interview protocol is in Appendix
B.

As noted earlier, the selection of mentor-mentee pairs for the interviews was based
on recommendations from the program director, Celeste Burk. Prior to the beginning of this
study and as part of a course assignment, I interviewed Celeste to gain information on the
development of the program, overview of policies and procedures, and her thoughts on the
plan for this research project. The interview was audio recorded, transcribed, and sent to her for review. At the end of data collection, I returned to Celeste for a second interview to utilize member checking and clarify programmatic questions. Both interviews were included in the data analysis for this study.

For this study, each participant mentor or mentee was interviewed separately, in a location of the interviewees’ choosing. Each participant was invited to a follow-up focus group. Interviews followed semi-structured interview protocols and questions were open-ended to allow for rich exploration of topics (Creswell, 2013). Interviews were conducted one-on-one, approximately one hour, and audio recorded. Recordings were transferred immediately to a secure hard drive, and stored according to university IRB protocols (Patton, 2015). Recordings were transcribed and stored on university secured servers. To ensure accuracy, transcripts were emailed to each participant to review and make corrections. This practice addressed credibility as it ensured accuracy of data collected through member checking (Creswell, 2013).

**Focus group.** The second data source was a focus group. Once mentee and mentor interviews were completed, participants were asked to attend a focus group. Focus groups provide a forum for diverse perspectives, clarity of information, and “can even facilitate greater mutual understanding” (Patton, 2015, p. 447). Thus, the focus group was a dedicated space and time to gain a deeper understanding of mentee and mentor perspectives on the mentoring processes and practices. In addition, the focus group discussion elaborated on and
extended the discussion of the mentoring practices that emerged in the initial individual interviews (Yin, 2013).

Following Patton’s (2015) guidelines, the focus group was an hour per group, and had 10 questions (mentee focus group protocol is presented in Appendix C; mentor focus group protocol is presented in Appendix D). Because focus groups are collective, rather than individual, they provide an opportunity for participants to feel empowered and share experiences they might not share in one-on-one interviews (Patton, 2015). The use of focus groups compliments the individual interviews as each type will result in somewhat different information (Patton, 2015).

**Mentoring program documents.** The third data source for this study were documents related to programmatic design, offerings, and collected evaluations. As Yin (2013) notes, “The most important use of documents is to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources.” The mentoring program’s documents relevant to this study were housed in Celeste’s office. A written request was submitted to the director, and permission was obtained to make copies of program promotional materials, program evaluations, and retention and graduation rate reports. I obtained the original research that was used to design the program to form a historical understanding for how the program was developed (Creswell, 2013).

Program promotional materials included brochures, newsletters, and the program website. These materials were relevant to the study’s research questions because they documented the mission, vision, and promotional materials. Program research included the scholarly articles, plans, meeting minutes, and initial drafts of program design. Program
research material were relevant to responding to study questions because they demonstrated the intentionality of building the mentoring program with a specific audience, Latinx students, in mind and demonstrated the process of structuring the program to address their needs.

Program evaluations included feedback surveys from programmatic events and year-end surveys. Program evaluations were relevant as they provided insight from participants’ perspectives. Program reports included graduation and retention reports and were relevant to responding to study questions because the data showed the number of students who persisted to degree completion.

Data Analysis Procedures

Yin (2013) encourages researchers to follow four principles for high quality data analysis. First, all evidence must be evaluated and included in the analysis, including rival hypotheses. For this study, all documents, field notes, and interview transcripts were evaluated and included in the analysis. Analytic strategies were employed to “exhaustively cover” key research questions (Yin, 2013, p. 168). The strategy used in this case study relied on theoretical propositions (Yin, 2013). In this case, my theoretical proposition included examining if the framework of CSP was a useful guide in the mentoring of Latinx students in their pursuit of a college degree.

Second, the analysis must cover all plausible rival interpretations. Yin (2013) offers two types of rivals; craft (null hypothesis, threats to validity, and investigator bias) and real-world (direct, implementation, super, and societal). Within the three
types of data collected, I explored each type of rival interpretation and included the presentation of each type in the analysis.

Third, the analysis needed to focus on “the most significant aspect” (Yin, 2013, p. 168) of the case study. I expected the most significant aspect of this study to surround the parts of the mentoring relationship which aligned with the principles of CSP. Actual alignment of CSP and the mentoring practices is presented in Chapter IV.

And finally, the researcher’s prior, expert knowledge in education and experience as a mentor, must be engaged in the analysis of the case study. My previous experience as a teacher and administrator served me well in this area. With 20 years as an educator of Latinx students, I was experienced in the details and nuances of CSP and how it influenced students. This knowledge was useful in each step of the analysis process. Each of Yin’s (2013) principles were utilized to guide the development and implementation of the data analysis used in this study.

The trustworthiness and credibility of the data collected required careful attention. Patton (2015) stated that time at the research site, time spent interviewing, and time building sound relationships with participants were important components to the trustworthiness of data. As I worked at the research site, I had intimate knowledge of the campus. I volunteered at the Summer Bridge program in July which allowed me to interact with mentees and many of the mentors, making me a familiar face when I asked to interview mentee/mentor pairs. After Celeste and I identified the pairs of mentees and mentors, I asked that she introduce me (electronically) to lend her influence to my credibility. During interviews, I was respectful of mentee/mentors’ time commitments, but cognizant of taking the time needed to
make connections before starting the interviews. To ensure accuracy of the transcriptions, I asked each participant to review his/her transcript and make any needed corrections. This process also addressed credibility as it ensured accuracy of data collected through member checking (Creswell, 2013).

The conceptual framework guiding this study had three main components; linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism (Paris, 2012) and five principles: (1) student and community agency and input, (2) critical centering on dynamic community languages, valued practices, and knowledge, (3) a capacity to contend with internal oppressions, (4) historicized content and instruction, and (5) curricularization for learning. Using these principles as a guide in this study was essential to determine if CSP was an effective framework to structure mentoring programs and practices that supported persistence and degree completion for Latinx students.

As data are gathered from the three different sources for this study, they were coded and organized. Mentoring practices were first identified, the organized into categories reflecting common themes. Three themes of practices were defined through organizing identified practices into similar categories. My knowledge of CSP was essential to keep the data aligned with each of the principles and analyze the appropriateness and applicability of each CSP tenet. This follows Yin’s strategy of using the theoretical orientation to organize the entire analysis, “pointing to relevant contextual conditions to be described as well as explanations to be examined” (p. 136).
Pattern-matching logic (Yin, 2013) compares “an empirically based pattern with a predicted one” made before data collection (p. 143). In this study, pattern-matching analysis focused on identifying the programmatic details and offerings that modeled the CSP principles and then examined if mentoring pairs recognized the principles as relevant components of the mentorship practices. During analysis, expectations were examined to see if the patterns matched. All three sources of data were analyzed with this technique.

**Analytic technique.** Pattern-matching logic (Yin, 2013) compares “an empirically based pattern with a predicted one” made before data collection (p. 143). In this study, pattern-matching analysis focused on identifying the programmatic details and offerings that modeled the CSP principles and then examining if mentoring pairs organically recognized them as relevant components of the mentorship. As data were collected, cross-case synthesis (Yin, 2013) was also employed for each of the sources of data. In cross-case synthesis, each of the subunits were treated as a separate unit. Each unit had a word table (Yin, 2013) created that displayed the data. Word tables contained categories or features derived from the data. After each word table was created for each document, interview, and focus group, a cross-case synthesis was used to determine if data confirmed or disconfirmed the connections made prior to the research. Yin (2013) states, “an important caveat in conducting this kind of cross-case synthesis is that the examination of word tables for cross-case patterns will rely strongly on argumentative interpretation, not numeric tallies” (p. 167). This was important for me to remember in reviewing the data for interpretation, not frequencies, because CSP as a framework views statistics and numbers as dehumanizing.
In this study, word tables were created by carefully reviewing each source multiple times. Once I gained a good understanding of the document or transcript, development of the word table began with writing each thought that seemed important, and then reviewing and refining each table until it represented concise and descriptive categories. This process was repeated with each source of data, then the word tables were compared one to another. As each word table was compared, notes of those with similar categories were documented and any incidents of a contrasting categories were noted (Yin, 2013). This process continued until all word tables had been compared and the original expectations were confirmed or disconfirmed and connected to prior research which was included in the original design of the study (Yin, 2013).

**Limitations and Ethical Considerations**

As noted in Chapter I, study limitations included one urban-serving PWI located in the Midwest. The geographic location of the university provided a rich support system from the community, which was instrumental in starting the mentoring program. This same situation may be difficult to replicate at other PWIs and transferability would need careful evaluation (Pearson, Parkin & Coomber, 2011). The mentoring program in this study originated as support for scholarship recipients. While this provided a base for this study, it must be recognized that students in this mentoring program have already shown academic competencies in order to be awarded the scholarship. Exploration of mentoring programs without the scholarship award requirement may offer different findings. The selection of CSP

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and Latinx students were vital to the clarity of the findings for this study but limit the results to only mentoring programs for Latinx students.

**Ethical considerations.** Assurance of privacy, confidentiality and avoidance of harm were at the core of this ethical study (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Careful adherence to the institutional IRB procedures included informed consent, disclosing the purpose of the study, handling of recordings and storage of information. In this study, an audio recorder captured the interviews, and a pseudonym was assigned to protect each participants’ privacy. Consent forms (Appendix E) detailed the use of pseudonyms, audio recording, right to withdraw at any time without fear of reprisal, transcription procedure, confidentiality standard, storage of transcripts and recorded data as prescribed by the institutional review board. The consent form was reviewed with each participant orally before the interview started and an opportunity for clarification was given. If no questions were posed, and the participant agreed to continue, the interview was conducted. To ensure accuracy of the transcription, participants were emailed the transcript, asked to review it, and made any needed corrections. This addressed credibility as it ensures accuracy of data collected through member checking (Creswell, 2013).

**Conclusion**

The need for culturally sustaining mentoring to support Latinx students is illuminated by the statistics that show a rapidly growing portion of U.S. college students as disproportionately undereducated (Jones et al., 2002; Santos & Reigadas, 2002; Phinney et al., 2011). PWIs are responding by creating mentoring programs (Baker, 2013; Cerezo & McWhirter, 2012). This research study adds to the literature needed to inform decisions by
program directors. By providing a framework, based on the principles of CSP, mentors and programmatic offerings may be able to sustain, foster, and perpetuate cultural pluralism and competencies (Paris, 2012). As Latinx students are supported, earn their degrees, and mentor other younger students while pursuing their own graduate degree, they have the potential to break the cycle that keeps Latinx in the lower socioeconomic and less-educated categories. By supporting and sustaining our Latinx undergraduates, we are in essence supporting and sustaining a more equitable education and society for all.
CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

Latinx students are entering college at a rapidly increasing rate (Cerezo & McWhirter, 2012; Holloway-Friesen, 2016; Rodriquez & Oseguera, 2015) and institutions are creating programs to support their degree completion. Within the mentoring literature, little research has addressed mentoring practices identified as supportive for Latinx students (Gershenfeld, 2014). The strengths of Latinx students, (i.e., cultural ways of knowing, bilingualism) are often neglected at PWIs where the historicized norms and standards are based on Anglo-American culture (Allan, 2003; Kiyama et al., 2015). Within this study, I identified practices that mentors and mentees who participated in a Latinx mentoring program situated at a PWI perceived as supporting Latinx students’ college degree completion.

The purpose of this study was first, to identify mentoring practices perceived as supportive by mentees and mentors for degree completion, and second, to examine the alignment of these practices with the framework of Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017). I used a case study research method to collect data and structure the analysis (Yin, 2013). I collected data through 20 individual semi-structured interviews, one focus group, and program documents. All study participants self-identified as Latina/o, Hispanic, Mexican American, Columbian American, or Guatemalan. Of the 20 participants, five were male and 15 were female, and 19 identified as first-generation college student/graduate. All participants had two to six years’ involvement in the mentoring program. I conducted interviews at a location of the participant’s choice. With interviewees’ permission, I audio recorded each interview. I then had each interview transcribed and sent
to the respective participant for member checking, or soliciting participants’ views on the emergent findings (Creswell, 2013). Once I had collected and analyzed all data, I organized the 10 identified practices into three overarching themes.

These three overarching themes represented mentoring practices that: (1) build intentional structures, (2) develop the mentoring relationship, and (3) offer academic knowledge and professional connections. Each theme contains individual practices that I identified, based on the mentees’ and mentors’ perceptions, to be supportive of degree completion (see Table 1). In the following sections, I provide an overview of the themes, individual practices, and supporting details from the interviews of both mentors and mentees. Following the explanation of the three themes, I offer the alignment of the mentoring practices with the principals in culturally sustaining pedagogies (CSP).
Table 1.

_Themes and Practices Perceived as Supportive by Latinx Mentors and Mentees for Latinx Mentees' Degree Completion_

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<th>Overarching Themes</th>
<th>Practices Supportive of Mentee Degree Completion</th>
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**Theme One: Practices that Build Intentional Structures**

Mentoring programs can be organized and structured in many different ways that influence how the program operates (Cox et al., 2014; Saladino & Martinez, 2015). Structures are like grade point average or ethnic identity in that they may determine who participates and who is excluded. In this study, I found three practices that the mentees and mentors perceived as supporting mentee degree completion: (1) Recruit a defined group, (2)
Devote resources for programmatic needs, and (3) Create membership into an identifiable group.

**Recruit a defined group.** Mentees in this study were first identified and invited into the mentoring program through a Community Organization (CO) scholarship. Scholarship requirements were that students identify as Latinx, be a graduate from a local area high school, and be accepted/enrolled as a full-time student in an accredited college or university (Program website, 2018). After a student received the scholarship, s/he was invited to join the mentoring program. Gabriele (mentee) described how she became part of the mentoring program:

> I received the [community organization’s] scholarship and I got an email … that July and [program coordinator] contacted me told me about the summer program. We talked on the phone and she was telling me more about it [the summer program] and how I would benefit from it, and it sounded really interesting, and so I did the program that summer … and it helped me a lot.

Lucia’s (mentee) experience was similar:

> Two months before I started my freshman year … [program coordinator] reached out and I received a couple of letters in the mail speaking on behalf of [mentoring program] and what their objective and missions were. When I met with [program coordinator] … she was very welcoming and invited us to the [mentoring program] welcoming reception with family and friends.

Both Gabriele and Lucia were introduced to the mentoring program by the program director and engaged in an initiation activity. These initiation activities, summer program participation for Gabriele and welcoming reception participation for Lucia, represented the purposeful recruitment of a defined group. The mentoring program recognized that Latinx students are often first-generation and may need additional supports to successfully
complete college, such as these initiation activities. Further, because the program was designed to support Latinx students as a defined ethnic group, the inclusion of families becomes an important programmatic component. Previous research confirms that family support is crucial for Latinx students’ success (Cavazos et al., 2010; Graff et al., 2013; Magdaleno, 2006) and multiple mentees and mentors in this study spoke to the importance of including family members in program activities, from the initial invitation to summer bridge programs to the final celebration at graduation.

Mentees valued the practice of including families in major events. Families were invited to sessions in the summer bridge program to learn more about the college experience. Sessions were offered for family members in both English and Spanish and ranged from general tips on how to support their college student to specialized sessions (e.g., financial aid, study schedules). Inclusion of families continued with a welcome dinner for all mentees, mentors, and their families, through to an end-of-the-year/graduation celebration. Program materials were printed in both Spanish and English, and audio support through an interpreter was available so all verbal programming could be listened to in Spanish, and the use of all languages was widely accepted (Burk, 2017). Families, both immediate and extended, were invited to the celebrations. Sofia (mentee) described the benefits of the inclusion of families at a year-end/graduation ceremony:

It [year-end recognition ceremony] was a chance for my family, my mom, to go and we always had some nice speaker that could relate to our cultural background and heritage. It was just kind of nice to celebrate culture and everyone's accomplishments.

This celebration of culture and others’ accomplishments served as inspiration and motivation for both students and their parents. Practices that honored the cultural values of
the group of mentees being targeted, such as inclusion of families, provided positive support for this purposefully recruited group of students. But targeted recruitment of mentees and inclusion of their families were just the beginning of the practices Latinx mentees and mentors deemed as supportive; devoting resources for programmatic needs also served as a symbol that the university was purposefully investing in the success of its Latinx students.

**Devote resources for programmatic needs.** As noted above, when students were recruited into the mentoring program, they were first invited to an event or Celeste’s office. This practice required physical space to be available, in the form of both a program director’s office and program meeting spaces. Both mentors and mentees perceived that the assignment of physical spaces for programmatic needs indicated an institutional commitment to the mentoring of Latinx students. This dedication of space signaled that the program, and the students it served, were valued by the institution.

Physical space dedicated to the mentoring program included an office space for the program director and meeting spaces for program participants. These physical spaces were located in the Multicultural Student Center, situated in the Student Union, a building that sits at the center of campus. This location lent easy student access and close proximity to the university book store and food court frequented by most students. The office space was intentionally decorated with items representing many diverse cultures. This physical space for the program became an anchor for students in search of information, guidance, and/or assistance with institutional challenges. Sonia, a faculty mentor for six years, spoke of the mentoring program as a place for students to go when overcome by the vastness of the university:
Many times, those students who I found were lost, didn't realize that there were different programs that could assist them in being successful here on campus. So, it's just that when you're outside of your comfort zone, you're always looking for a friendly face, for someone that can support you. And obviously not every Latino feels that way, but those who need it are always looking for someone who can welcome them and help them through.

This physical space was often the first place students made a connection to mentoring, usually through meeting with Celeste Burk. Mentees and mentors both spoke of meeting with Celeste, usually in her office (physical space) and the support they felt through those meetings. Sofia (mentee) described Celeste as that “go to person” who answered any questions and spoke of the mentorship experience as “absolutely priceless for me.”

The program’s workshops and events were often in the same physical building (Student Union) in surrounding meeting rooms. This created another perceived support for mentees as they saw prominently located university buildings being used for workshops and events designed to support their success. Multiple workshops and events were provided throughout the school year for mentors and mentees. In addition, the summer workshops included mentees’ families. Mentors led sessions and interacted with mentees and their families. Mentees discussed the importance of attending the summer sessions, such as Maria, who stated:

It’s [attending college] been a great experience since the beginning, and especially at the beginning since I was a freshman, I didn't know a lot stuff, especially on campus. And things that they provide, the events and the workshops that they provided during that summer before me starting in the fall, they helped out a lot.

Maria recognized the importance of the mentoring program’s sessions as preparing her to more easily succeed as she began her college career.
Other mentees described different workshops that helped them be successful their first year. Gabriele (mentee) stated, “We listened to a lot of people give presentations about time management and how to keep yourself organized during the school year.” According to the program website and mentor and mentee descriptions, other various workshops were offered on cultural intelligence, test-taking and study skill, college survival and self-care tips, leadership development, academic terminology, as well as writing and math skills enhancement opportunities. These sessions required the dedication of physical spaces, plus human resources, including personnel, planning, and time to support mentees. As mentees used both physical and human resources to gain knowledge applicable to their academic lives, they came to value the dedication of resources as an indication of the institution’s commitment to their success. The clearly defined spaces and resources also created a recognizable group that offered membership to Latinx students.

Create membership into an identifiable group. As students were recruited and attend events or workshops in the physical spaces provided by the university, they were offered membership into a defined and recognizable group. Each event was designed to welcome new mentees and offered opportunities for other mentees and mentors to reconnect and network. Banners hung on the walls and flyers were distributed, all displaying the name of the mentoring program. This attention to detail created the “group” that invitees were encouraged to join as full-fledged members.

As Latinx students engaged in the mentoring program, Celeste referred to them as “scholars.” Her choice of term was conscious and indicated her expectations of academic accomplishments; but it was also a verbal cue that a student was accepted into the mentoring
program and thus belonged in the organization. While other terms (e.g., mentee, student) were accurate, Celeste consistently used the term “scholar” as a means of encouragement to pursue academic excellence and as an identification of belonging in the mentoring program (Burk, 2018). Cristina (mentor) spoke of the importance of belonging as a factor in successfully navigating through college; she stated, “We know the research shows it's important to have a sense of belonging within the first few weeks.” Thus, she encouraged her mentee to be active in all the mentoring program activities. Monica (mentor) talked of the empowerment that came with belongingness for her mentee. Once her mentee became active in the program, she told Monica “I belong in this space.” Sofia (mentee) also described the mentoring program as instrumental in helping her find “a sense of belonging at college.”

Mentoring, as reflected in this study’s data and previous research (Jones et al., 2002; Phinney et al., 2011) increased the sense of belongingness for Latinx students. Latinx students may face a lack of belonging as they look around an institution and find no one who looks and sounds like they do; this deficit can lead to a sense of isolation. Lucia (mentee) stated:

Some people do feel very excluded, almost isolated, because they are the only Latinos in their courses. And unless there is a [mentoring program], you won't be able to connect with students who might be feeling the same way, or might have some advice with that.

Connections with others through the mentoring program helped combat the isolation many mentees experienced as it offered time and space with others who identified in similar ways. Diego (mentee) appreciated the structures provided by the mentoring program and stated, “It's nice that [mentoring program] even exists in [current institution] just because it kind of played a role of, hey, don't hide, don't just be a number, you have a community here.”
community of mentors, mentees, and program personnel created a space where Latinx students did not feel they had to explain their perspectives or experiences.

The mentoring program offered several events throughout the school year that focused on Latinx culture and heritage. The program sponsored a lecture series with various renowned speakers of Latinx descent and a variety of cultural events to recognize the internal diversity within the program and highlight the differences in ethnic and racial heritage within the Latinx identity (Burk, 2017). A close partnership with the professors from the university’s Latinx and Latin American Studies (LLaS) also allows participation in multiple sessions on Latinx history and current events throughout the year. The LLaS program offered a minor in Latinx and Latin American Studies as a means to prepare all students to be more professionally effective and competitive by learning about Latin America and Latinxs in the U.S. (LLaS website, 2018). While sessions were open to all students, according to Celeste, the mentoring program intentionally encouraged all mentees to attend each session as a means to keep or deepen their connection with their home cultures. Javier (mentor) stated:

I think [current institution] has a lot of venues and a lot of opportunities for all students in [mentoring program] to learn more of about their own culture because I think that sometimes part of the escalation …is you're there or first generation or second generation is here, or their parents are Hispanic and they are more American than from the countries because they live here and they grew up here.

Gaining new knowledge about Latinx achievements, culture, and heritage helped build confidence and decreased isolation for Latinx mentees. As mentees joined others in a physical space they could claim as their own, these affinity spaces contributed
belongingness and became safe spaces for mentees to connect in ways they hesitated to do in other spaces.

Mentees described many workshops as safe spaces, environments where they could engage with one another with honesty, sensitivity, and respect (Arao & Clemens, 2013). Mentees spoke of the relief they felt when they were among other college students who shared similar backgrounds. It gave them confidence to ask questions that they were not comfortable asking in other places. Sofia (mentee) stated the workshops provided “opportunities for us Latino students to learn, to gain confidence and be in a safe group to ask those questions you don’t want to ask anyone else.” These questions included, “Is it okay to code switch?”, “How can I be a proud Latina and still be a professional?”, and “How am I even supposed to look in a professional setting?” Sofia gave a series of questions that she felt most Latinx students ask:

Who can I go to who understands me? Who understands where my parents come from? Who understands these strong expectations and pressures that I feel day in and day out? Who can understand what it feels like to have an accent or to try to feel you belong into American culture versus your Latin culture?

The questions Sofia posed exemplified the need for mentees to have safe spaces, where questions could be asked and answered with respect and honesty. The creation of safe spaces, along with affinity groups and the sense of belongingness, encompassed the membership of this defined group. Membership, along with the dedication of resources and purposeful recruitment, were the practices that built the intentional structures of the mentoring program. Moving from overall programmatic practices into the more intimate
practices between the mentee/mentor pairs, practices that developed the mentoring relationship were identified as supporting Latinx students’ pursuit to degree completion.

**Theme Two: Practices that Develop the Mentoring Relationship**

As mentees were introduced to the mentoring program through interactions with the program director and summer programs, Celeste paired mentors and mentees. She was careful to match mentee career aspirations and personality with mentor career achievement and personality (Burk, 2017). Once pairing was established and introductions were made (usually at the Welcome Back dinner in August) the pair would focus on developing the mentoring relationship. Five practices that mentees and mentors felt nurtured the development of the mentoring relationship were: (1) establish roles and responsibilities within the partnership, (2) build the mentee/mentor relationship, (3) model ways of being and knowing, (4) validate experiences, feelings, and decisions, and (5) expand the relationship to include others. Each of these practices built and then extended the mentoring relationship, which was then perceived as a foundation from which mentees could draw support when faced with challenges in obtaining their degrees.

**Establish roles and responsibilities within the partnership.** After the mentees and mentors were paired, the program director offered guidance through trainings and orientations to inform both mentees and mentors about their roles and responsibilities in the mentoring relationship. This guidance was provided separately in the form of professional development for mentors and orientations for new mentees. After trainings and orientations concluded, Celeste offered additional opportunities for the mentees and mentors to join together and learn how to create and sustain their own mentoring relationship.
Professional development for mentors occurred in July and was led by Celeste. The workshop consisted of two parts, one for brand new mentors and one for both new and returning mentors. The first ninety minutes was dedicated to new mentor training, followed by an additional two-and-a-half-hour session in which returning mentors joined the new mentors for continued professional development. The new mentors’ training consisted of introductions, a program overview, a listening challenge, and an explanation of the role of a mentor (Mentor Training Agenda, 2017).

Returning mentors, those who had already undergone the initial professional development session in previous years, joined the new mentors and introduced themselves and their length of time as a mentor. The director gave program updates and then led the group in a discussion on barriers to student persistence. After a brief break, a presentation on the implications for families impacted by the DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) legislation or with diverse citizenship statuses was given, followed by a dialogue with a DACA mentee. Two more sessions were delivered on building mentor capacity and clarifying the mentor/mentee roles. Time was given at the end for a mentor roundtable that provided a form for questions and answers among all mentors (Mentor Training Agenda, 2017). Jorge (mentor) appreciated the ideas shared by other mentors and found that by attending the professional development with fellow mentors, he learned tools that “makes me improve and think about how I can better serve our mentees.” By engaging in mentor training and attending program-sponsored events, mentors gained knowledge and increased their reservoir of mentoring-related ideas, which expanded their understanding of ways to support their mentees.
Mentors were not the only ones who dedicated time to learning their responsibilities to the mentorship relationship. Mentees also received instructions from Celeste on their responsibilities to the mentoring relationship at orientations. Sessions offered at orientation in July included: (1) how to finance your college education, (2) living the college life (led by a recently graduate of the mentoring program), (3) campus resources, and (4) how to be a responsible mentee. As mentees spoke of their responsibilities for being good mentees, and they focused on how to engage with mentors and their contributions to the relationship. Mentees and mentors were prepared to begin the mentoring relationship through the orientation and professional development opportunities offered at the beginning of the academic year; however, additional workshops were offered throughout the year to facilitate the continued development of the mentoring relationship.

One workshop session discussed by more than half of all mentors and mentees interviewed was a mid-year session focused on building an effective mentoring relationship that both mentees and mentors could attend together. Sofia (mentee) described her experience in this workshop:

I remember going to another workshop and it was how to be proactive with your mentor. How to be the best mentee… I think that's one of the first workshop my mentor and I attended together. It definitely helped us just better communicate and set those expectations, those ground rules, as far as how we're going to move forward in the program.

Sofia felt the information gained in the workshop was vital to her and her mentor building a more effective mentoring relationship. This workshop provided both her and her mentor with communication skills they needed to take full advantage of the opportunities presented
through mentoring. As mentees and mentors both gained knowledge about their own roles in the mentorship, they began to put that knowledge into practice.

**Build the mentee/mentor relationship.** As each mentee/mentor pair began meeting on a regular basis, many recognized the importance of consciously devoting time and effort to gain knowledge about each other as the foundation for a strong mentoring relationship.

Investing time and effort into building this foundation needed to be personal. Isabella (mentee) described it this way:

> Getting to know the mentee is not a cookie cutter type of process. Everyone has their own life situations, life stories, and even though we're all Latinos, we all have a different story, different goals in life, and so I think really digging into a relationship between the mentor and the mentee, even before starting an advice type of process, before starting to help them out in whatever area that they need, just get to know them first. Then that's going to be easier for them to realize that you don't have an agenda in mind and that you actually do want to help them out with whatever it is that you can help them out with.

Each pair of mentors and mentees engaged in this learning process in different ways, but all recognized the time committed to developing the mentoring relationship was of prime importance. Lucia (mentee) spoke of her mentor’s commitment to mentoring and how the devotion of time signaled the importance of the relationship:

> She's [my mentor] offered to help so much and it's just one of those things, she makes time for me. That's one of the things I appreciate and I know that means a lot to her because she has a lot on her plate. So, for her to make time for me … I feel like she does appreciate my worth.

Taking time and investing effort to get to know the each other laid the groundwork for a solid relationship and gave opportunity for building trust that facilitated a meaningful mentoring relationship. Alejandro, Diego, Gabriele, Lucia, Sofia, and Victoria, (mentees) all stated that their favorite part of the mentoring program was the relationship they had with
their mentor. Victoria (mentee) described the effort her mentor devoted to developing their relationship as empowering. She illustrated the impact of this type of relationship:

[My mentor] became the reason I was so involved. She just gave me so much, I don't think I've ever met anyone in the higher education world, whether it was in [university] or when I was in graduate school, who invested that much time on someone. And on me. I've never had an experience like that.

Investing time into the relationship provided a strong foundation to build future practices that were valued by both the mentor and mentee. While the mentoring relationship was initiated by Celeste, building it into one that was personal and meaningful was the responsibility of the mentor/mentee pair. As the relationship developed and trust became established, the mentee would often turn to the mentor for guidance. This guidance often took the form of modeling ways of being and thinking.

**Model ways of being and knowing.** As mentees navigated through their multiple roles and responsibilities within the campus environment, they occasionally faced situations that were unfamiliar, unsettling, and/or uncomfortable. Often, mentees sought guidance from their mentors. In response, mentors modeled ways of being and thinking based on their accumulated knowledge and experiences. They used their knowledge and experiences to offer insights and understandings that could facilitate mentees’ decision-making process, offer mentees with stress-relief, or provide inspiration for mentees.

Mentees often turned to their mentors for assistance with making decisions (e.g., what type of volunteering to engage in, changing majors, or dropping a class). Sonia (mentor) stated that her most effective practice with mentees was “asking questions instead of giving the answer on different things we talk about.” She continued by saying that asking
questions was “a great opportunity to help guide … a (mentee’s) decision-making process, not tell her what to do, but things to think about.” There were simple questions mentors asked their mentees to prompt reflection on the issue at hand, such as; “You’re on time for work, right? Get your projects done on time?” (Antonio, mentor), “What's plan B if it doesn't work?” (Sonia, mentor), “What is it you want? … Why is this what you want to do?” (Irenia, mentor). Mentors used these types of questions to engage the mentees in exploring options and evaluating which would be appropriate for the mentee’s situation.

Deconstructing complex decisions often required longer conversations facilitated by the mentor to recognize and evaluate a range of options that would result in a resolution. For example, striving to decide between living on campus or staying at home, Sara’s mentee came to her for advice. Sara (mentor) recounted the conversation they had to weigh the advantages of staying at home and saving money versus the advantages of living on campus and being more involved in college life. Sara recalled the questions she asked her mentee in order to facilitate the processing of options:

[I asked her] ‘Do you stay at home and you don't have those budget concerns and really work on getting into [professional] school, or do you want to explore life a little bit but know that that comes at a price, also?’ So, we had some really long conversations about that and really played out some real-life scenarios of what if this happens, and what if this happens? How would you react to that? Are you going to be okay reacting to those kind of really hard life things that happen?

Analyzing choices, weighing options, examining the consequences of different choices, and exploring the mentee’s feelings about each choice allowed Sara to assist her mentee in critically thinking through a variety of options, and reaching a conclusion based on thoughtful, well-informed decisions.
Modeling decision-making also included offering information that mentees did not have or did not know where to obtain. Laura (mentor) demonstrated this practice when her mentee came to her and said he had to drop out of school to help financially support his mother. Laura summarized the situation:

He was half a semester [from graduation], and he was like “I think I need to take a break” and I was like, ‘No! It's only going to get harder, let's figure this out.’ So, I directed him to some community resources for his mom, some contacts, and different things like that to help out a little bit. Through Laura’s knowledge of community resources and contacts, she and her mentee were able to devise a plan and find the resources needed to help his family, which allowed him to stay in his courses and complete his degree. Laura’s ability to model problem solving skills, as well as her dedication to keeping her mentee focused on graduation, allowed the pair to support both family and individual needs.

Deciding on one career, out of a vast variety of options, was another topic that caused mentees to seek advice from their mentors. Sara (mentor) described her strategy of modeling her own thought process for her mentee and how to put decision-making into a manageable perspective:

There are so many careers that you can explore and if you make the decision to switch to a different major, and worst-case scenario, that doesn't work out … the whole world isn't going to fall apart. Gosh, I do this myself, too, when we're so into it and we feel so overwhelmed by whatever pressure in life, we just can't see past that sometimes and we feel like gah! It's all or nothing. [Mentees need] a constant reminder that it's not all or nothing. There's always a solution to whatever situation is going to come up.

By drawing from her own experience, Sara was able to model how to decrease the anxiety of the decision-making process and find a realistic perspective. By acknowledging the shared
feelings of being overwhelmed and providing assurance that there is a solution to every situation, Sara modeled a perspective that supported her mentee.

Multiple mentors talked with intentionality to their mentees about the stress that comes with college. Jorge (mentor) explained his perception of the stress students feel as they enter college:

You (mentees) come to a four-year institution and realize that sometimes you're behind and so it just elevates your anxiety level, you start stressing out a bit. You're grasping for assistance and you're hoping that you can find it but many times you don't know how. So I believe mentorships assists with the networks and the contacts and the conduits that we can be a part of, as well as [mentoring program and institution] immediately allowing students to know that there is assistance when needed and sometimes some students don't know that or they're blinded to it. They may not be aware.

As a mentor, Jorge worked with his mentees to reduce anxiety and connect mentees with other supports that could decrease their stress levels. Marta (mentor) also took the initiative and worked with her mentees on different ways to reduce stress. She relayed one conversation she had with her mentee:

We talked about how to relax and how not to stress. I gave her some strategies in relaxation … on how to center yourself and de-stress and breathe deeply and do kind of a bit of a meditation so that way when the difficult times come, she can calm herself.

Marta utilized her own experience with stress and the techniques she found useful to guide her mentee with strategies to aid in relaxation. These types of skills and sharing of techniques were common practices among the mentor/mentee pairs. Lucia’s mentor shared multiple techniques on finding healthy ways to deal with stress. Lucia related the tips she gained from her mentor:
That [stress] is the one thing I would always talk to my mentor about and she would always give me different methods and I would try them all and the one that helped the most was starting to run. Just run in the afternoons whenever I felt really stressed out. And she does gardening, and then ... I started also having some houseplants and just having those little things can be a relief thing.

Gathering new techniques, such as running or gardening, provided mentees with ways to decrease the stress that comes with earning a college degree. Armed with improved decision-making skills and techniques to reduce stress, mentees sought role models, in both fellow mentees and their own mentors.

Mentees had multiple opportunities to interact with others, besides their own mentor, who became role models. The mentoring program invited graduates to come back and speak to mentees at multiple workshops (Burk, 2017). Sofia (mentee) shared her thoughts of listening to a panel of recent graduates: “... hearing it [successful graduation stories] from a lot of Latino professionals because they can relate to you, they've had some of the same struggles, they kind of give you tricks and dos and don'ts.” Sofia gained confidence through listening to the presenters and appreciated that they had faced the same struggles she was facing. Being able to see someone with whom she could identify helped her internalize the possibilities of success. Victoria (mentee) also shared her reaction after listening to recent graduates speak at one of the workshops. She said, “I’m like, hey, they look like me and they succeeded!” Having these examples of success provided both inspiration and energy to persist and continue working through on their own degree completion. Attending the end of the year/graduation ceremony, Victoria (mentee) talked of watching graduating mentees receive their stoles (long sash worn with the graduation gown) and thinking, “If they can do it, I can do it, too!” The recognition of other Latinx students who had persevered and
completed their degrees gave Victoria confidence that she also could obtain her goal of graduating.

The importance of having a role model, one who could offer advice and guidance from a common cultural perspective, became apparent as mentees spoke of their mentors and how they were both supportive and inspirational. Lucia (mentor) shared this about her mentor: “She's a big role model to me. She was able to complete it (college degree) even with setbacks in her college career, then, I can do it as well.” Perceiving her mentor as a role model provided Lucia with a pattern for success and a source of inspiration. She felt confident replicating this model of success due to the relationship with her mentor. Mentees spoke often of the affirmation they received when seeing others, who look and sound like them, succeed.

As mentors modeled ways of being and knowing through decision-making and stress reduction, they became role models to whom mentees brought other concerns. Mentees were confident that mentors would share the insights and information needed to help process and validate the mentees’ experiences, feelings, and decisions.

**Validate experiences, feelings, and decisions.** Mentors used their own personal experiences to provide validation of mentees’ experiences, feelings, and decisions. As mentors shared similar cultural backgrounds as their mentees, they were able to recognize the interconnectedness of mentees and their families and gave examples from their own past experiences as encouragement when mentees felt pulled between home expectations and college demands. Sara (mentor) spoke of the struggles she saw as mentees pulled away from their families due to the engagement in college life:
I get the sense that it's harder for some of our Latinx students to pull away from the family. I know that was something that I struggled with as a young adult, still do, and maybe it's just the way that we're so interconnected with our family members. That's just how we were brought up. I know that's a generalization about Latino culture, but I've gotten a sense of that, kind of detaching from mom a little bit and family and that's okay. I think some of our students have a hard time with that.

As a first-generation Latinx, Sara used her own experiences to make sense of the struggles she saw that her mentees and other Latinx students faced. As mentees hear mentors say, “I went through that same struggle, and this is what I did,” it assures them their situation is not unique, nor impossible to find a solution.

Sonia (mentor) used her own personal experiences to offer solutions to her mentee as she struggled between the need to help with her father’s business conflicting with the need to study and get involved on campus. Sonia explained how her own younger sisters took over some of the tasks that had typically been hers, as the eldest daughter, and suggested that her mentee’s siblings could do the same. Sonia explained:

I was able to use some of my examples of writing all the checks and balancing all the checkbooks, so when I went to college my sisters had to step up and it happened even without me being there. So, sharing that story and letting [mentee] know that they will figure it out, it might take them a little bit longer but they will figure it out.

This concrete example allowed the mentee to see the possibilities of her siblings stepping up and assuming some of her home duties, allowing her the time needed for studying.

Within classrooms, Latinx students may experience challenges due to others’ perceptions of their ethnic identity. Victoria (mentee) told of her experience with a professor who asked her
to voice her opinion because she was Latina. In relating this experience to her mentor,

Victoria discovered her mentor had a very similar experience:

I remember this instance where a professor made me the ambassador of the Latino community by asking, ‘Well, you're a Hispanic, why don't you say?’ [speak for all Hispanics] And I told [Mentor] that and she was like, ‘Yeah, I remember a professor doing something similar with me for the Black community. He made me, all of a sudden, an ambassador for the Black community.’ I [Victoria] was like, ‘Yes! Exactly! Just singling you out as all of a sudden, you’re the spokesperson.’ That was an instance that we both bonded over and we bonded over how uncomfortable it was to be put in that position. So she understood because it [being singling out] had happened to her.

Bonding over cultural experiences was possible due to the shared cultural experiences of Victoria and her mentor at a PWI. Victoria continued by expressing how she felt “really blessed that [mentor] being a person of Color, she got it. She had either gone through something similar or understood the struggle of being a person of color and being at a predominately white institution.” The sharing of experiences surrounding culture also extended into societal perceptions. One mentor, Raquel, recognized that her own experiences influenced the information she gave her mentees. When discussing cultural aspects of college, Raquel stated:

I'm sure my own experience very much colors that [how she advises mentees], there's what we should say and then there's the reality of it. Yes, people are always going to look at you funny and put you in a box if you have an accent. Period.

Mentors’ experiences and realities were often offered as support to the current experiences their mentees faced. Mentees appreciated their mentors understanding and helping them process uncomfortable situations each faced.
Multiple mentees sought out their mentors when faced with a challenging situation. Mentors confirmed that the situation was indeed challenging but emphasized that they themselves had faced similar situations and overcome them. The process validated mentees’ feelings and experiences and also gave them the confidence to keep working until they had accomplished the task. Gabrielle (mentee) stated she often looked to her mentor to “help with this crazy student lifestyle” and urged other mentors to “continue to give advice to your students and care for them and reach out to them” as her mentor did regularly. When mentors verified that student life might be crazy, but it could be navigated through successfully, mentees walked away with hope and renewed resolved to persist. Often, the recognition of conflicting feelings was enough to validate the mentees’ struggles. Sara (mentor) spent time with her mentee:

… talking through some ways of getting through those struggles. Just kind of reassuring [mentee] that sometimes those feelings you are having are okay. That it's okay to be really frustrated with school, or, it's okay to not like your major and question, ‘Is that really what I want to do in life’? Mentors’ validation of these feelings lessened some of the anxiety and opened the path to productive thought processing. As mentees processed their thoughts, they often felt pulled in two different directions, such as the need for independence versus the need to remain living at home for financial reasons. Mentors assisted their mentees in examining options, but also validated the decisions mentees made. Sara (mentor) described the process of working through this tension with her mentee:

[It took] reassuring her that having those kinds of thoughts of pulling away from the family a little bit, that that's just part of growing up and discovering who you are and also that if you decide that staying at home is the best option, then that's okay, too.
The affirmation from Sara allowed her mentee to understand that either decision held merit and there was value in both outcomes. This type of support aided mentees in basing decisions on their personal situations, therefore decreasing the chances of decisions being made based on what mentees think they “ought” to decide. Expectations for mentees came from a multitude of sources including self, family, community, social media, and universities. As these expectations were often conflicting, mentors played a role in helping mentees manage and select which expectations needed action.

Mentors validated the experiences, feelings, and decisions of mentees, which helped build mentees’ confidence. As these mentoring relationships developed over several years, many pairs included each other in events outside of the campus culture. Mentees were invited to mentors’ homes and family celebrations and mentors were included in mentees’ family events, often being referred to as part of the family. The expansion of the mentoring relationship to include and influence others concludes the practices that build the mentoring relationship.

**Expand the relationship to include others.** As the mentees and mentors continued to build their mentoring relationship, the relationship continued to expand and include others, often including each side’s families. Lucia, Victoria, Isabella, and Sofia (mentees) spoke of knowing their mentor’s family and introducing their mentor to their own family. From multiple mentors’ perspective, simply meeting families at program events was not enough; mentors also felt compelled to develop a relationship with their mentee’s family. Interactions with a mentee’s family fortified the support, thus building a community that could sustain the mentee in his/her pursuit of the college degree. Antonio (mentor) described
his intentionality of meeting and developing a relationship with Diego’s family to establish trust and show his support for their son’s future plans. Antonio stated:

I don't want them [Diego’s family] to think that I'm here to guide him [Diego] in a direction that they [the family] may not want to be going in, but I am here to help create opportunities for him [Diego] and to fulfill his dream, not only of getting his education but getting a job opportunity either here or there. But I think it's good for a parent to know ‘Okay, I can trust who this person is with them and good things are going to come out of it.’

Antonio’s inclusion of Diego’s family in the mentoring relationship was purposeful and intentionally recognized the importance of family to Diego. By seeking to develop this relationship, Antonio built a wider foundation for on and off-campus support for his mentee. Antonio spoke of several times when Diego discussed school and career options with his family, and they asked, “Have you talked to Antonio? What does he say?” Antonio noted that this type of all-encompassing support is what he likes to offer all of his mentees.

Cristina (mentor) also shared Antonio’s view of including her mentee’s family as a way to fortify the support for her mentee. She first met her mentee’s family at a program-sponsored celebration and recognized the importance of families being involved in the mentoring process. She stated:

I think the celebratory part is key because that's when they [mentees’ families] come to the fall reception, the Familia … I think that's a high moment for some of the families because [they say], ‘Oh, look at all these other kids and look at what they're doing.’ I think when they get to see the [mentoring program] scholars walk across that stage and get their stole, even if they're not there for their kid that year … it gives them a vision of what the program is all about.

Cristina capitalized on the opportunity to get to know her mentee’s family at the celebratory event and built the relationship over the next two years. As mentees learned the skills
necessary to be successful in the academic arena, mentors, who included their families in the mentoring process, also facilitated the learning process for the entire family. This inclusion not only fortified the support for the mentee, but also provided information for younger siblings, cousins, and family friends to use on their own journey into college.

Mentors and mentees spoke of meeting each other’s families, trying new restaurants together, going to movies, concerts, lectures, and sporting events. Benefits of these experiences extended beyond enjoying an experience together. Sonia (mentor) described attending a soccer game with her mentee and interacting with the mentee’s younger siblings and friends. Sonia spoke of the extended advantage of “actually seeing yourself there not only helps the mentees, but also the high school kids seeing the mentors and the mentees being there to support them.” As mentees completed their degrees, the choice to maintain a relationship was easy. Victoria (mentee) shared this about her mentor:

I still continue to have a relationship with her [mentor]. She was at my wedding. She was part of all of that. Because we did stuff together, it made an easy transition. Even when our families met, we did that quite frequently, where my family would come over or our families would go out to eat. Those things make a difference.

Shared experiences, like the ones Victoria and Sonia illustrated here, built strong bonds between mentee and mentor.

All five practices in Theme Two focused on developing the mentoring relationship. Mentors and mentees first learned about their own respective responsibilities in the mentoring relationship, and then learned how to build the relationship. Then the emphasis shifted to how the mentor could model ways of being and knowing, often teaching new skills along the way. The mentors validated the experiences, feelings, and decisions of the
mentees, and both mentor and mentee expanded the mentoring beyond the mentee/mentor pair. The third theme of practices focused on mentors’ sharing their knowledge and experiences with mentees, in both the academic and professional areas.

Theme Three: Practices that Offer Academic Knowledge and Professional Connections

As the mentoring relationship developed, mentees sought the advice of their mentors in multiple areas. Mentees perceived their mentors as rich sources of information and experiences in two areas, academic and professional. Two types of practices that offered mentees access to mentors’ knowledge of academia and their professional connections were: (1) share knowledge of academic culture, and (2) share professional knowledge and networks. Mentors and mentees perceived both practices as important to the successful completion of a degree and entrance into either graduate school or the professional work environment.

Share knowledge of academic culture. Mentees valued the times when they could access their mentor’s knowledge of academic culture (e.g., where to go for tutoring, when to talk with professors, how to write for academia, etc.). Mentors often provided mentees with needed insights of academic culture, thus giving mentees ‘insiders’ knowledge.’ Mentors also offered guidance for activities outside of the classroom, such as conferences and volunteer opportunities, which would enhance the mentees’ education experiences. As mentees progressed closer to graduation, mentors shared their knowledge on preparing for and excelling in graduate school.

Finding resources to support academic success was an area where mentors’ knowledge of the academic world benefitted their mentees. When faced with her first
research project, Victoria (mentee) felt overwhelmed and hesitated to go to her instructor for help. Instead, Victoria went directly to her mentor and asked for help:

I remember coming to her [my mentor] and saying, ‘Hey, I have this research project and I need help figuring out scholarly and peer review stuff and I don't even know where to start.’ So her helping me figure out how to navigate the library databases and understanding what the library resources were, I mean that, that right there? [That] made a huge difference.

Victoria’s mentor shared her knowledge of the library databases and modeled the navigation needed to obtain scholarly articles to support Victoria and equip her with the needed skills to successfully interact in the academic research culture.

Another area where a mentor’s academic knowledge directly aided in mentees’ academic success was modeled by Jorge (mentor). Jorge arranged study sessions for his mentees. Jorge stated that the study sessions seemed “to give them confidence; it's two students who come to the study session and they're both Latinos. I just sit and answer any questions they may have about the subject.” Jorge also shared his experiences as a Latino educator during those study sessions to provide insights for his mentees. He stated:

I give them [mentees] what I’ve learned as a faculty member and how it [becoming a faculty member] can be done. I give what I know as a faculty member and [how] I could have been trained better, so there’s a lot of experiences that I believe I can pass on to them that weren't necessarily passed on to me.

Offering insights on how to study and answering questions about content material were both important goals of the study sessions, however, equally as important was the insight into being a successful Latino faculty member.

It was important to mentees that they trusted their mentors’ knowledge and leadership would lead in a positive direction for their valued goals. One practice that
contributed to building trust occurred when mentors shared personal experiences from their own lives within an academic culture. Victoria (mentee) found it beneficial to talk through her academic writing struggles with her mentor:

> When I talked about how difficult it was for me to write papers at the time and how difficult it was for me to keep up with my classmates which was, way more stuff, that they use these big words, these words that I never heard of. And she [my mentor] remembered how that was for her, trying to seek the way that met the mark. So she just related to me because she had gone through something similar.

As Victoria’s mentor related her own experiences of struggling with academic writing, she validated Victoria’s experience and provided comradery in the struggle. While relating to a particular struggle can provide comfort, most mentors extended their support to provide both hope and concrete suggestions on how to navigate the academic scene. Sonia (mentor) often shared her own strategies as examples for her mentees:

> I've been able to say, well when I was at this point, this is what I had to think about, even just recognizing that you can go talk to an advisor about a class and figure out if you need to withdraw or continue with it, and how does that affect your ability to graduate on time or not. It's just those similar experiences and letting them know that they're not the only ones that have gone through that.

Sonia’s use of her own past experiences offered guidance and comfort to her mentees as they traversed the academic experience. By offering validation of mentees’ experiences, suggesting actions that may be taken, and providing information that was not known, mentors contributed to their mentees’ abilities to reach goals, complete classes, and stay the course to graduation.

Mentors also looked for external learning experiences their mentees would be interested in and reminded mentees of the value of learning outside of the classrooms. Sofia
(mentee) spoke of the pursuit of this type of knowledge, which occurred during a typical mentoring meeting:

We [my mentor and I] would talk about different opportunities and different conferences I should probably attend to follow the research, the global international nonprofit or nonprofit organizations, and [my mentor] would lead me in the right direction. I'm asking [my mentor] because she is a credible source and [I] know that I can indeed do whatever she is saying to do and [I] trust her throughout the process.

Trusting that her mentor knew the process allowed Sofia the confidence to engage in learning beyond the classroom walls. This level of trust, relying on the knowledge of the mentors, was apparent in multiple mentees’ interviews. Victoria (mentee) shared this about her perceptions of the payoff to trusting her mentor’s guidance: “I would say she greatly contributed to my success at college. I mean, I don't think I would have succeeded, have gone off to more of the different steps of my career without her mentorship.” Victoria appreciated her mentor’s academic cultural knowledge and credited it as a great contribution to her own success. Beyond the academic knowledge that mentees perceived as supportive, mentors used their knowledge of graduate school to assist mentees in navigating through the application and acceptance process.

As mentees completed their Bachelor’s degree while participating in the mentoring program, they recognized the importance of the continued programmatic support as they transitioned into graduate school. Two mentees spoke of the importance of having someone with insider knowledge to smooth the way for successful acceptance into their graduate program of choice. Victoria (mentee) described multiple conversations with her mentor surrounding the application process for graduate school. She relied on her mentor to answer questions such as: ‘What does the graduate school application procedure look like?’ and
‘What were my options for scholarships for graduate school?’ Victoria’s mentor was again a valuable source of information that allowed Victoria access to new knowledge she needed to continue her education.

Sofia (mentee) turned to Celeste for this new knowledge and found assistance with both scholarship information and preparation material. She noted that the program director “just made it happen, she ended up giving me a GRE prep book, something that at the time I couldn't afford.” This access to preparation material allowed Sofia to successfully navigate through the process of preparation, testing, and acceptance into a graduate program. If mentees were not focusing on entering graduate school, many were gathering information to enter the profession of their choice. Mentors, along with the mentoring program’s director, were often the source of mentees’ new professional knowledge.

**Share professional knowledge and connections.** As mentees approached graduation, mentors working in their future professions were rich sources of information to gather insights and new knowledge. Isabella, Sofia, Lucia, and Diego (mentees) each spoke of time spent with their mentors learning how to traverse the interview process. Antonio (mentor) reviewed his mentee’s resume and facilitated a mock interview. Sonia (mentor) made sure to supply her mentee with books on leadership and other areas of professional development. Sonia also reviewed her mentee’s resume and highlighted areas of leadership and marketable skills that the mentee had overlooked. Sonia described this process as:

> Helping him [my mentee] identify some of those strengths that he developed throughout life. And being okay with identifying those strengths and being able to market yourself when you're looking for a job, because he didn't see what he had done as leadership or like, being bilingual as a skill, something that can help you.
Sonia’s professional knowledge enabled her to focus on the details that made her mentee professionally competitive, but he had failed to recognize. Helping identify experiences as leadership skills and highlighting strengths, such as being bilingual, enriched the mentee’s resume and created a better reflection of his preparation for entering the professional world. Being both the source of new knowledge for mentees and supporting them through new experiences, such as job interviews, proved to be helpful from the mentees’ perspective.

Lucia (mentee) stated:

She [my mentor] would give me hints of what to expect … how to go about the interview. I did call her a few times … just to clarify a few things, but I always knew she was always there for me to call if I ever needed anything.

The hints, or professional knowledge, that Lucia appreciated helped support her professional growth, but the knowledge that she could access support at any time, simply by calling her mentor, provided a sense of security; Lucia placed a high value on this type of access and support.

As mentees secured employment during the school year, accessing their mentor’s professional knowledge continued to be important as mentees learned to interact with other professionals. Sofia (mentee) contacted her mentor and explained that her supervisor at her work was making remarks based on stereotypes. Sofia stated, “It was really, really hard to be a passionate young professional and then you bump into people that only know [about Latinas] what they see on TV.” Her question to her mentor was, “How do I deal with a person that has zero clue of how to communicate with someone like myself?” Sofia described her conversation with her mentor concerning issues she faced in her work place:
So I would ask her [my mentor], ‘How should I bring up my concerns with my supervisor? Should it be one-on-one, should I email it? Should I go above and beyond the chain of command, basically? How can I come into work with that negative attitude that I know I may not have the best supervisor and I know that I'm dealing with x, y, and z? … She [my mentor] was great at just guiding me through it. She just told me [that] I have to be patient and also just stand up for myself. So that's exactly what I tried to do at the beginning … She [My mentor] also clarified, ‘It's okay to be me. It's okay to take time to just stand up for what I believe in and know that there is a right time, a right place, and a right way to communicate that in the workplace.’

Sofia’s mentor was able to guide her through multiple strategies that helped her respond to her supervisor in a professional way. Guiding her through this situation required both professional awareness and experiences with working through complex office issues. Sophia’s mentor provided the professional knowledge needed to determine which communication method was most effective, while also building Sofia’s confidence in standing up for what she believed in. Learning from the mentors’ professional knowledge also became important as mentees began to graduate and seek professional employment. Both mentees and mentors spoke about the importance of connecting with professionals, outside of the university, but inside the mentees’ desired career. Mentees valued opportunities in which mentors introduced them to professional colleagues and provided learning opportunities within their chosen professions. Diego (mentee) asked his mentor, Antonio, about internships in his field of real estate development. When Antonio asked what he needed for internships, Diego replied he didn’t know. The following is Antonio’s recounting of the process and end results of the connections he made for Diego:

I have a lot of friends who are developers … so I took him to two of my friends that are developers here, they sat and talked. I called my brother on the phone in LA and we talked with him. So, he got an idea of: ‘This is what I need, they tell you this is what you need to do.’ So, he started doing
internships at these companies and by the time he graduated, he had three job offers and he was picking his job offers on the ones that were best able to give him freedom to act with regards to a design project, a building project, and a cost analysis of the project. Antonio’s willingness to tap into his professional network and make introductions allowed Diego to gather the information needed to strategically plan internships. These internships offered an opportunity to gain professional knowledge that situated him in a prime position at graduation to be able to choose from a multitude of job offers.

Making connections for mentees was also important to Javier (mentor). He explained how he supported two mentees who were aspiring to work in health care. As Javier was employed at a large local hospital, he suggested the mentees “call the hospital where I work and ask if there are any opportunities for some kind of experience there.” One of his mentees chose a “voluntary program where he goes to the E.R. and gets to interact with the families; not working, but at least getting the opportunity to work there and see how other people work.” His other mentee secured a position working in the pharmacy of this same hospital. Both mentees were able to gain valuable professional experiences due to the connections made for them by their mentor.

The range of practices from recruitment to making professional connections offered an important piece that added overall support as mentees worked their way from enrolling in classes to graduation and entering the workforce. Ten practices were identified from the mentors/mentees’ perceptions of what supported Latinx students through their educational journey to successfully complete their degrees. In the next section, I will examine how these 10 practices align with the five tenets of culturally sustaining pedagogies.
Alignment between Themes of Practices and the Five Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies (CSP) Tenets

This section answers the second research question for this study: To what extent do identified mentoring practices align with the framework of culturally sustaining pedagogies (CSP)? First, an overall snapshot of the alignment is presented in Table 2. This shows the three overarching themes of practice and how each of the individual practices aligned with the CSP tenets. Next, I describe the method used to determine if the themes of practices aligned with the CSP tenets, followed by each theme of practice examined separately.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme of mentoring practice</th>
<th>Mentoring practice</th>
<th>SCAI</th>
<th>CC</th>
<th>CCIO</th>
<th>HC</th>
<th>CL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Build Intentional Structure</td>
<td>Recruit a defined group</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Devote resources for programmatic needs</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Create membership of an identifiable group</td>
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<td>For example, create a mentoring group of students with</td>
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<td>similar experiences</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Model ways of being and thinking</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Validate experience, feelings, decisions</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Expand the relationship</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop relationship</td>
<td>Establish partnership</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Build the relationship</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Model ways of being and thinking</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expand the relationship</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Offer academic knowledge and prof connections</td>
<td>Share academic knowledge</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

96
Table 2

Alignment of identified mentoring practices with Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies (CSP)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme of mentoring practice</th>
<th>Mentoring practice</th>
<th>SCAI¹</th>
<th>CC²</th>
<th>CCIO³</th>
<th>HC⁴</th>
<th>CL⁵</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Share professional knowledge and connections</td>
<td>X X</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

¹SCAI Student and community agency and input, ²CC Critical Centering, ³CCIO Capacity to contend with internal oppression, ⁴HC Historicized content, ⁵CL Curricularize for learning

To determine how the identified mentoring practices aligned with the five tenets of CSP, I first had to set criteria for each of the five tenets. Using Paris and Alim’s (2017) work in pedagogical practices as a base, I created the following chart (Table 3) to serve as a guide to determine if alignment was present. Each tenet had two questions, and if evidence was present in the data to answer the two questions in keeping with the purpose of CSP, I noted the practice as in alignment with the CSP tenet. For example: The practice of devoting resources to the mentoring program shows evidence of student and community agency and input (SCAI) by providing answers to the two questions: (1) To who/what is the practice accountable? and (2) Is more than one person responsible for the practice? Data documented that physical space for the director’s office and program event spaces, plus financial resources, were provided by the university. Also, there was a community organization that served on an advisory board that met quarterly with university personnel. This evidence demonstrated alignment with the principle of SCAI, as more than one person was accountable and collaboration was present for the practice of devoting resources. However, when I looked at the Critical Centering (CC) tenet and asked the question of whose voices are represented and how were their knowledge and ways of being represented, no evidence
was present to support an alignment with CSP. The main voice in the devoting resources remained in the university’s domain. No evidence was present that demonstrated Latinx students were involved in any of the decisions about how space and resources were distributed. While the advisory board was involved in planning and had influence, it was limited, as the ultimate decisions were strictly made by the university. This process was used for all 10 practices and each of the five tenets of CSP.

Table 3  

**CSP alignment chart**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CSP tenet</th>
<th>Questions I asked to determine alignment</th>
<th>Possible examples of answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Student and community agency and input (SCAI) | To whom/what is the practice accountable?  
Is more than one person responsible for the practice? | Parents/families  
Communities  
Institution  
Mentee/mentor |
| Critical centering of dynamic community languages, values, and ways of knowing (CC) | Whose voice(s) is/are centered for this practice?  
How are their knowledge/voice/ways of knowing honored? | Students  
Families  
Communities  
Program Director |
| Capacity to contend with internal oppression (CCIO) | What form does oppression take?  
How do practices equip mentees to disrupt oppression? | Recognize  
Deconstruct  
Cope |
| Historicized content (HC)                     | What factors influence the participants’ decisions?  
How are decisions impacted by historical and current context? | Past factors/influences  
Present factors/influences  
Future factors/influences |
| Curricularization for learning (CL)           | Do mentoring practices have a mechanism for accountability, center the mentee/mentors’ voice(s), build | Evidence of all four tenets: SCAI, CC, CCIO, and HC need |
Table 3

*CSP alignment chart*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CSP tenet</th>
<th>Questions I asked to determine alignment</th>
<th>Possible examples of answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>skills to disrupt oppression, and engage historical knowledge with plans for fluidity of current context?</td>
<td>to be present for alignment of Curricularization of Learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the following three sections, I examine each theme of practice and its alignment with the CSP tenets.

**Theme One: Practices that Build Intentional Structures**

Table 4 provides an overview of how the three mentoring practices of the first theme, Build Intentional Structure, aligned with each of the five CSP tenets.

Table 4.

*Alignment of Theme of One with Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies (CSP)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme of practice</th>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>SCAI¹</th>
<th>CC²</th>
<th>CCIO³</th>
<th>HC⁴</th>
<th>CL⁵</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Build Intentional Structure</td>
<td>Recruit a defined group</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Devote resources for programmatic needs</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Create membership into an identifiable group</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹SCAI Student and community agency and input, ²CC Critical Centering, ³CCIO Capacity to contend with internal oppression, ⁴HC Historicized content, ⁵CL Curricularize for learning

**Recruit a defined group.** In the first practice, recruit a defined group, I saw alignment between the practice and the first tenet of CSP, student and community agency.
and input (SCAI), in the multiple groups involved in the continued recruitment of students. The community organization’s members and university personnel maintained an active partnership documented by the mentoring programs yearly reports and newsletters. In the second tenet, critical centering (CC), I only saw evidence of alignment in one area. The community organization’s members did have input into the recruitment process and therefore critically centered the values of the Latinx communities as they shared the same ethnic/heritage culture with the students, but the students’ input was missing, therefore, the practice did not align with CC. Both capacity to contend with internal oppression (CCIO) and historicized content (HC) showed evidence of alignment. Latinx students were the defined group recruited for scholarships and mentorship for continued assistance in facing the challenges of college, which aligned the practice with CCIO. Within HC, I saw alignment through mentors’ interviews, Celeste’s comments, and program documents. Each told of past and present decisions that created, maintained, and changed the program into its current form. The final CSP tenet, curricularized for learning (CL), required the presence of the first four tenets; therefore, due to the missing CC tenet, an alignment with CL was not possible.

Devote resources for programmatic needs. The second practice, devote resources for programmatic needs, also had evidence of alignment with three CSP tenets. The first tenet, student and community agency and input (SCAI), displayed evidence of alignment through programmatic documents of planning meetings with both the community organization, university personnel, and student input through meetings with Celeste. The second tenet, critical centering (CC), had evidence of critical centering, but the centering
was not on the students’ languages, valued practices, and knowledge. The sole decision-making body was the PWI, without representation from either the Latinx community organization nor members of the mentoring program. The third tenet, capacity to contend with internal oppression (CCIO), was aligned through the narratives of the mentees describing how the workshops and program events helped them overcome challenges they faced. Alignment of CCIO and devoting resources was also supported by mentors’ training documents and feedback, which stated the training provided enabled them to better address the needs of their mentees. In the next tenet, historicized content (HC), I found alignment in program newsletters and planning meeting documents that provided information on the past decisions on devoting resources to the mentoring program. Because this practice did not have evidence of alignment in CC, it also did not have alignment in the last CSP tenet of curricularized for learning (CL).

Create membership into an identifiable group. The third practice, create membership into an identifiable group, did have evidence to support alignment with all five CSP tenets. First, the practice of creating membership began with an original group of individuals, from both the community organization and the university, who researched, designed, and started the mentoring program. Once the program was formed, student input was gathered during workshops and individual meetings with Celeste. Collaboration with the community advisory board also contributed evidence of alignment between the practice of creating membership and the first CSP tenet of student and community agency and input (SCAI).
The second CSP tenet, critical centering (CC), showed alignment with creating membership through the narratives of mentees who spoke of belonging to the program and how it created a ‘space’ for them. Mentees also spoke to the dedication of the program director in listening and being responsive to their needs, (e.g., inviting families to program events, providing literature in both Spanish and English). The final piece of evidence of CC was in the language the director chose when speaking of group members, they were always “scholars,’ which distinguished members of the mentoring program from other students at the university. The director spoke in her interview of being conscious to always represent the scholars’ voices, keeping the critical centering on the Latinx mentees; and in each decision being mindful of how decisions impacted the members of the mentoring program.

In the next tenet, capacity to contend with internal oppression (CCIO), I determined alignment in the mentees’ statements regarding isolation, being the only Latinx in a classroom, and how the mentoring program offered membership that negated that isolation and gave them an affinity space to claim as their own. Another example from the data that illustrated CCIO, was found in Sofia’s (mentee) account of the help her mentor provided in standing up to a supervisor who was made remarks based on stereotypes of Latinas. All mentees in this study spoke to the importance of being around others who shared their ethnicity as a positive impact on their lives. Group membership gave them access to multiple supports (e.g., their mentors, program director, workshops) they perceived as encouraging their degree completion that would not have been readily available outside of the membership of the mentoring program.
The fourth tenet, historicized content (HC), was illustrated through the mentors’ disclosure of developments and changes to the group over consecutive years in the program. Interviews with three mentors, Antonio, Jorge, and Marta, who were part of the development of the program and served as mentors for the six years of the program’s existence, gave a clear picture of how the historical knowledge of the community members influenced the development of the practices that defined membership. Each talked of the attention paid to developing a program that was purposeful and intentional in meeting the needs of Latinx students and creating an identifiable group (mentoring program) that required membership (scholarship recipients). The final CSP tenet, curricularized for learning (CL), required that all four other tenets be present. This practice, create membership into an identifiable group, was the only practice that displayed all four tenets and therefore aligned completely with each tenet of CSP.

Within the first theme of practices, two findings are noteworthy. First, creating membership is the only mentoring practice that showed evidence of all five CSP tenets. Second, the critical centering (CC) for devoting resources remained outside of the Latinx dynamic community language, valued practices, and knowledge. The absence of one or more tenets, such as CC, does not mean that the tenet does not exist, only that alignment was not evidenced in this study. The next theme of practices, develop the mentoring relationship, kept the critical centering on Latinx mentees, but also illustrated an area lacking alignment with CSP tenets.
Theme Two: Practices that Develop the Mentoring Relationship

As mentees entered the program, introductions to mentors became the first step into building a mentoring relationship. Multiple activities and experiences were involved in this next theme of practices that illustrated the establishment of a partnership through to the inclusion of others into the partnership.

Table 5.
Alignment of Themes of Practice Two with Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies (CSP)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme of practice</th>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>SCAI</th>
<th>CC</th>
<th>CCIO</th>
<th>HC</th>
<th>CL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop relationship</td>
<td>Establish partnership</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Building the relationship</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model ways of being and thinking</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Validate experience, feelings, decisions</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expand the relationship</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Establish partnership. The first practice in theme two, establish partnership, lacked evidence to support alignment with student and community agency and input (SCAI). Celeste established the mentee/mentor partnerships, and while she gathered information from mentees and mentors, the actual pairing of the partnerships was her sole responsibility. The lack of student or community input on a consistent basis kept the first practice from aligning with SCAI. Evidence was present for the alignment of critical centering (CC) in establishing the partnership. In interviews with the program director, I saw consistent evidence of conscious attention paid to the valued practices of the Latinx mentees. In Diego’s (mentee) interview, he talked directly to this subject and described the process of
asking Celeste for specific characteristic in a mentor. For the next CSP tenet, capacity to contend with internal oppression (CCIO), the process of establishing the relationships, as outlined in Celeste’s interviews, created the foundation for mentees and mentors to build future practices that would assist the mentees’ capacity to contend with internal oppressions. For the next tenet, historicized content (HC), I found support for alignment within the program director and mentors’ interviews. Each provided insight into the continued development of a process to establish the partnerships. Early in the program, mentors and mentee would meet in Celeste’s office. As the program grew, the practice has evolved to include a type of meet-and-greet session early in the year for mentees and mentors to network prior to establishing a partnership. This change enabled the director to receive more feedback from students before connecting the mentee/mentor pairs.

The second practice, building the relationship, held similar alignments as the first practice, establishing the relationship. I determined a lack of alignment between building the relationship and the first CSP tenet, student and community agency and input (SCAI), due to the involvement of only the mentee and mentor. This practice did have student input (mentees) but lacked any community agency; the program director could be considered involved in building the relationship due to personal interactions and workshops, but the evidence posed an overview, not a community-based input, for this practice. I did find evidence of alignment between Build the Relationship and the next three tenets of CSP, critical centering (CC), capacity to contend with internal oppression (CCIO), and historicized content (HC). For alignment with CC, the mentors and mentees were the focus for building the relationship, thus their community languages, valued practices, and
knowledge were indeed at the center of building their relationship. Within CCIO, mentees spoke consistently of the value of building the relationship. Multiple times mentees and mentors documented the value of devoting time to developing the relationship and how that relationship helped them overcome obstacles both within the academic environment and personal challenges. For HC, mentors spoke of experiences with multiple mentees, and relationships lasting three to six years. As mentors recounted the changes they made due to experiences with different mentees, or as the needs of their current mentees developed over time, the use of that historical knowledge to modify or change how the relationship was built, substantiates alignment between the practice and HC. The final CSP tenet, curricularized for learning (CL) did not fully aligned with this practice, due to the missing alignment with SCAI.

**Model ways of being and thinking.** The third practice in this theme, model ways of being and thinking, did not align with the first CSP tenet, student and community agency and input (SCAI). Again, the input was from the mentee and mentor, with little evidence of community input. The next two CSP tenets, critical centering (CC) and capacity to contend with internal oppression (CCIO), aligned this practice through the following evidence. For CC, each mentor identified as Latinx, with variations on personal preference of terms (Hispanic, Colombian, etc.) but spoke of heritage pride and their cultural understandings as part of their mentoring practices. I found multiple examples of mentors modeling decision-making (i.e., Sara modeled how to keep decisions from being a matter of life or death, and Lucia taking inspiration from her mentor’s success) and counted these examples as support for the alignment with CCIO. I did not find evidence in the data to align this practice with
historicized content (HC). One mentor, Monica, did speak about modeling her mentoring practices on previous mentoring she received as an undergraduate, but other mentors did not reflect nor speak to historical influences. This may indicate an area to ask more direct questions in future research. Due to the lack of alignment to the tenets SCAI and HC, this practice did not align with curricularized for learning (CL).

**Validate experiences, feelings, and decisions.** Alignment was not evident for student and community agency and input (SCAI) and the fourth practice, validate experiences, feelings, and decision. From the data collected, I found the validation came from the mentors at their individual level of engagement. The topic of validating mentees experiences, feelings, and decisions did not appear in any training documents or the interviews with Celeste. When mentors spoke of this practice, it appeared as part of their naturally occurring conversations with mentees, not as a process aided by input from others. I did see evidence in the data for alignment of this practice with critical centering (CC) and capacity to contend with internal oppression (CCIO). Mentors, (i.e., Monica) used their personal experiences to validate their mentees’ but consciously kept the focus on the mentee (Monica stated, “It isn’t about me, but I shared my experiences to help her.”). The collective attention the mentors gave to mentees showed alignment with the CSP tenet of CC. For CCIO, I saw alignment in the mentees interviews. Mentees, (i.e., Victoria and Gabrielle) spoke of feeling relieved as they learned of a shared experience with their mentor. The insights that the mentors could share, based on their previous experiences, assisted the mentees to contend with the issue they currently faced. This supported the alignment between the practice to validate experiences, feelings, and decisions with the CSP tenet of
CCIO. I did not find evidence for alignment with historicized content (HC). If mentors considered historicized content in the area of validating their mentees experiences or feelings, it did not appear in the interviews. Again, this is not to say it does not exist; only that it did not appear in data collected. With the missing alignment of SCAI and HC, the final tenet of curricularized for learning (CL) remained void of alignment for this fourth practice. The final practice in this theme is explored next.

**Expand the relationship.** The last practice in theme two, expand the relationship, was also missing alignment with the student and community agency and input (SCAI) tenet of CSP. The nature of all five practices in this theme focused on the mentee and mentor pair, while workshops and trainings supported both mentees and mentors, I saw little evidence of community input from the data collected. Sara and Monica (mentors) both expressed concern about the heavy reliance on Celeste for all accountability pieces in the program and expressed concern that all the pieces of the program were too much for one person to sustain. The absence of SCAI in theme two was a representation of Sara and Monica’s concern and an opportunity to explore options that would increase or create some form of student and community agency and input within those practices that currently resides on the shoulders of just one person (director or mentor). Engaging in member checking with the Celeste, she was intrigued by this finding. Her response after seeing Table 5 was “Interesting, I am going to have to think about that!” She disclosed plans for creating a small advisory board, to include students, which could provide an opportunity to add the SCAI piece in this theme of practice.
As mentors spoke about including families and others in the mentoring relationship, I saw evidence of critical centering (CC). Mentees (i.e., Lucia, Isabella, and Sofia) spoke of inviting their mentors to family events. Victoria’s mentor was part of her wedding. The inclusion of mentors into family events, and mentees into mentors’ family events, presented evidence that centered on the Latinx community languages and valued practices (i.e. weddings). Within these events, I also saw alignment with the next CSP tenet, capacity to contend with internal oppression (CCIO). As mentees and mentors included each other’s families in the mentoring relationship, the foundation of support widened. Support for both the mentee, (i.e., Diego’s mentor meeting his family to build trust in his advice) and for the families (i.e., celebrations show others graduation is possible). I did not find this practice in alignment with historicized content (HC) as the data did not include reflections on past experiences by any of the mentees or mentors to indicate influence on current decisions. There did appear to be an assumption that including families was ‘just the thing to do,’ which, I would say demonstrated the tenet of CC, as mentees and mentors shared that critical centering on families as a valued practice. As this last practice did not include all four CSP tenet, there is not an alignment for the final tenet, curricularized for learning (CL).

Finally, the absence of alignment of all five practices in this theme does not indicate that student and community input does not exist. Within data analysis, I defined student and community agency and input as extending past the mentor and mentee pair; therefore, within this interpretation there was not enough evidence to demonstrate alignment with SCAI. If mentors and mentees were to be viewed as a community, with workshops and events as collaborative times, the alignment results may show a different conclusion. In future
research, the question of how to define community will need to be explored in greater detail. The final theme of practices focused on mentors sharing their academic and professional knowledge.

**Theme Three: Practices that Offer Academic Knowledge and Professional Connections**

In the last theme, practices that offer academic knowledge and professional connections (Table 6.), two practices focused on mentors sharing their academic and professional knowledge, plus their professional connections. In this theme, I found a continuation of alignment with capacity to contend with internal oppression (CCIO), but also found a shift away from the critical centering (CC) tenet that was prevalent in theme two.

Table 6.

*Alignment of Themes of Practice Two with Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies (CSP)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme of practice</th>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>SCAI</th>
<th>CC</th>
<th>CCIO</th>
<th>HC</th>
<th>CL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Offer acad.</td>
<td>Share academic knowledge</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge and prof.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>connections</td>
<td>Share professional knowledge and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>connections</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Share academic knowledge.** In theme three, the tenet student and community agency and input (SCAI) reappeared and aligned with the first practice, sharing academic knowledge. The responsibility of sharing academic knowledge was redistributed within the academic community and included more community input. Mentors received training from the program director to clarify resources and services the university offered to all students.
Campus resource lists were shared at mentors’ professional development and with mentees at various program events throughout the year. Mentees received referrals to campus resources (e.g., tutoring or writing labs) from mentors, fellow mentees, and/or the program director. While the director and individual mentors remained first points of contacts for many mentees, I saw the accountability for sharing academic knowledge involve more than one person and evidence of collaboration was in the data, thus aligning the first practice with the first tenet, SCAI.

Data showed evidence of critical centering (CC) in theme three, but the evidence did not support alignment with CSP principles. The critical piece of CC was to determine whose values and practices were centered and how their values and ways of knowing honored. When looking at data for mentees’ valued practices and ways of knowing to be centered in the application for graduate school, evidence was absent. While mentors prepared mentees by explaining the process, helped with applications, and answered questions, no evidence verified that preparation for a graduate program was based on the Latinx languages, valued practices, and knowledge. What was evident was the preparation to continue graduate school remained with the same PWI values and ways of knowing.

The third CSP tenet, capacity to contend with internal oppression (CCIO), was evidenced through the mentees’ interviews. Victoria (mentee) credited her mentor with both her academic success and her acceptance into graduate school. Comments such as, “she greatly contributed to my success” (Victoria, mentee) and “she just made it happen” (Sofia, mentee) indicated mentees’ received the support needed to overcome academic hurdles they viewed as obstacles. For the next CSP tenet, historicized content (HC), mentors provided
evidence of alignment for this practice. Jorge (mentor) spoke of passing on to his mentees the information that had not been passed on to him. Jorge’s recognition of experiences influenced his choices with his current mentees. Celeste provided more evidence of alignment when she spoke to mentees in the summer bridge sessions telling of the historically low numbers of Latinx students who complete their degrees and/or complete a graduate degree. Gabrielle (mentee) referenced those statistics in her interview as motivation to make sure she completed her degree. This first practice in theme three did not have alignment with the final CSP tenet due to the missing alignment of critical centering (CC).

The final practice in the study is examined next.

**Share professional knowledge and connections.** The practice of sharing professional knowledge and connections did not align with the first two tenets of CSP, student and community agency and input (SCAI) and critical centering (CC). The decision of how much and what to share was solely the individual mentors. While training provided guidelines, collaborative discussions and accountability of mentors sharing their knowledge and connections was not evident in the data. Diego (mentee) discussed his decision to ask Celeste for a different mentor to provide him with better business connections in his field. The individualization of this practice was the basis for non-alignment with SCAI. For CC, mentors prepared mentees for entrance into the professional workplace, and shared their professional networks, but few had conversations about maintaining or sustaining their home cultures. One exception was Antonio and Diego. Antonio (mentor) shared his knowledge and professional connections with Diego, but also encouraged him to become involved in a professional organization for Latinx. This was the only evidence of mentors
keeping the critical centering on the Latinx languages, valued practices, and knowledge within this practice.

The next tenet, capacity to contend with internal oppression (CCIO), did have support for alignment within this practice. Multiple mentees (Isabella, Sofia, Lucia, and Diego) spoke of the support their mentees provided in understanding the interview process and how to successful apply for professional employment. Antonio and Sonia (mentors) both spoke of using their own professional knowledge to help their mentees overcome professional challenges. Mentors also provided evidence of alignment with the fourth tenet of CSP, historicized content (HC), through mentor training documents. One session focused on how to connect mentees to resources, the university’s career center being one such resource, and discussion followed the presentation on what practices had worked in the past, and how mentors could support mentees as they entered the professional world. Antonia, who has been with the program since it started, provided examples of various mentees and how he provided them with access to his professional network. These examples showed how past influences and decisions (through Antonio’s personal stories) can influence present decisions (new mentors followed Antonio’s examples with their mentees), therefore aligning the last practice with the CSP tenet of HC. Due to the lack of alignment with the SCAI and critical centering (CC) tenets, this final practice did not align with curricularized for learning (CL).

Overview of all Practices

When examining the alignment of all 10 practices, only one tenet of CSP appeared in every mentoring practice—the capacity to contend with internal oppression. This program
was designed to support Latinx students, therefore it was not surprising to find that practices identified as supportive were also ones that built mentees’ capacity to contend with internalized oppression. Evidence within the first theme included the recruitment of Latinx students paired with a scholarship to ease the financial burden that may prevent students from continuing their education. Having resources dedicated to their success symbolized that the PWI valued the Latinx students and was investing in their success. Membership offered Latinx mentees a sense of belonging that decreased isolation and provided access to multiple services designed to support their academic progress. In theme two, the capacity to contend continued as mentee/mentor pairs developed mentoring relationships that supported the mentees’ success in many ways. Mentors attended professional development sessions directly related to systems of oppression (e.g., DACA and mixed family status) and validated mentees’ experiences through sharing experiences of their own (e.g., being called on to represent the Latinx community). In the final theme, mentors shared their knowledge and connections to build mentees’ capacities to survive in both the academic and professional worlds. Mentors shared tips on academic writing, interview protocols, what to say to a supervisor who is making judgements based on stereotypes, and encouraged new graduates to join professional organizations specifically for Latinx. Each of these practices built skills mentees could use to counter or disrupt the various forms of oppression they faced. While the consistency of this CSP tenet clearly emerged in aligning practices, one practice revealed an unexpected result, described next.

Examining the practice of recruiting a defined group highlights a practice that both supports and oppresses Latinx students. A portion of Latinx students, those who receive the
community organization scholarship, are invited into the mentoring program. These students already display some competencies in the academic world as reflected in their meeting the requirements to be selected as a scholarship recipient. What is not represented is the number of Latinx students who, by the very design of the recruitment, are excluded from the mentoring program. These students could potentially benefit from the same practices but are denied access by the same structures put in place to support the scholarship recipients. Jorge and Marta (mentors) both spoke of referring Latinx students to the mentoring program, even though they were not scholarship recipients. Both mentors had discussed this need, mentoring for non-scholarship recipients, with Celeste. Recognizing that the program was missing some students who could benefit the most prompted discussions of expanding the program.

Conclusion

This study identified 10 mentoring practices that mentees and mentors perceived as supporting the persistence of Latinx students towards degree completion. I examined these practices using the Culturally Sustaining Pedagogical framework (Paris 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017) to explore the alignment of the CSP tenets with each identified mentoring practice. All 10 mentoring practices aligned with CSP’s tenet, capacity to contend with internal oppression (CCIO). One practice, recruit a defined group, also highlighted the exclusion of other Latinx students (non-scholarship recipients) which perpetuated the very oppression the program was designed to confront and disrupt. The implications of these findings and indications for future studies will be explored further in Chapter V.
CHAPTER V: SUMMARY, INTERPRETATIONS, IMPLICATIONS
AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides an overview and interpretation of study findings, implications for
practice, and recommendations for future research. It is divided into four sections and begins
with a brief summary and interpretation of the key findings. The second section outlines a set
of recommendations for further incorporating CSP principals into the current Latinx mentoring
program and recommendations for other programs wanting to implement a culturally
sustaining approach to mentoring. Third, a brief overview of the limitations of this study is
followed by the implication of study findings for practice, which includes a conceptualization
of a culturally sustaining mentoring program based on the principles of CSP with potential to
develop a framework for Culturally Sustaining Mentorship. The fourth and final section
includes recommendations for future research followed by the final conclusions.

Summary and Interpretations of Key Study Findings

The goal of this qualitative case study was threefold: (1) identify mentoring practices
that mentees and mentors perceived as being supportive in the persistence of degree
completion, (2) examine how those practices align with the framework of CSP (Paris, 2012),
and (3) provide current data for the director to use for programmatic purposes. A summary
of the two research questions and key study findings are presented first, followed by a brief
summary of the use of data by the program director.

Question One: What mentoring practices do mentors and mentees perceive as
supporting Latinx student persistence toward degree completion at a PWI? Previous
literature states that mentoring provides positive support for Latinx students (Cerezo &
McWhirter, 2012; Gershenfeld, 2014). However, the specific mentoring practices that can act in concert to undergird a Latinx-dedicated mentoring program had not been identified. In response, this study identified and delineated 10 key practices that mentees and mentors perceived as supporting Latinx student persistence to degree completion. Identification and delineation of these 10 practices fills a void in the literature that called for more research on Latinx mentoring programs (DeAngelo et al., 2016; Miller et al., 2013; Rhodes, 2008). These practices may serve as a foundation in creating mentoring programs at PWIs for Latinx students as they provide direction about where and how to target program-dedicated resources to meet the unique needs of Latinx students (Holloway-Friesen, 2016; Saladino & Martinex, 2015).

Question Two: To what extent did identified mentoring practices align with the framework of culturally sustaining pedagogies (CSP)? The practices identified by mentees and mentors as supporting Latinx students hold potential to be aligned into a foundation to develop culturally sustaining mentoring programs. In general, all 10 key practices showed evidence of alignment with two or more tenets of CSP. Five practices aligned with the first tenet of CSP: student and community agency and input (SCAI). Six practices aligned with the second tenet: critical centering of dynamic community languages, valued practices and knowledge (CC). Seven practices aligned with the fourth tenet, historicized content and instruction (HC), and all 10 practices aligned with the tenet capacity to contend with internal oppression (CCIO). The final tenet of CSP was the curricularization for learning (CL) and was only considered in alignment if all four other CSP tenets were in...
evidence, therefore, only one practice, create membership of an identifiable group, fulfilled this requirement and was noted as being aligned with CL.

Against the backdrop of the general extent of alignment described above, three noteworthy alignments emerged.

First, all 10 key practices aligned with capacity to contend with internal oppression (CCIO). As these 10 practices were identified by the mentees and mentors, and all had evidence of alignment with CCIO tenet, it indicates the importance of targeted practices that build mentees’ skills in disrupting injustice. The need for mentees, in both the academic and professional settings, to have a strong capacity to work through challenges, find solutions, advocate for themselves, and understand a diverse range of cultures, is highlighted by the staunch alignment of building capacity to contend with internal oppression in all identified practices.

Second, one practice, create membership of an identifiable group, demonstrated evidence of alignment with all five CSP tenets. Evidence of alignment with the first CSP tenet, student and community agency and input (SCAI), was found when students, community members, and university personnel created the membership through interactions, such as attending workshops, trainings, and celebrations with the identifiable group (mentoring program). Within the tenet of critical centering (CC), the mentees’ voices, valued practices, and ways of knowing were richly represented by comments from mentees identifying themselves as belonging to the ‘group’ (mentoring program). Also supporting alignment with CC were practices, such as inviting families to the Summer Bridge program
and events, which came directly from Celeste’s choices to honor mentees’ and their families’ valued practices.

Within capacity to contend with internal oppression (CCIO), membership was recognized by mentees as decreasing their isolation and increasing their sense of belonging. Mentors provided the evidence of historicized content (HC) through their narratives of how the program developed new events (e.g. La Familia event) based on the fluidity of the current students’ needs and preferences. With evidence of all four tenets, the fifth tenet, curricularized for learning, is aligned. Recognizing the intertwining of all four tenets to create the fifth key component of CSP (Paris & Alim, 2017) is important for programs striving to create culturally sustaining mentoring practices. Practices, such as this one, create membership, which show alignment with all five CSP tenets, are significant because they model how mentoring practices can align with the framework of CSP. As a collection of such practices become programs, Latinx students will have programs specifically designed not to assimilate them, but to sustain them.

Third, all 10 practices had evidence of aligning with two or more CSP tenets. Each practices’ alignment included the capacity to contend with internal oppression (CCIO) plus at least one other CSP tenet. This indicates a potential for each practice to be thoughtfully evaluated to see if further alignment with the other CSP tenets might be achieved through modifications within the practice. If it is appropriate, modifications to the practice could be made to bring the practice into alignment with all five CSP tenets and further research conducted, to see if the application of the other CSP tenets improved the practice. With thoughtful application of CSP tenets and further research, other practices could be examined
through the lens of CSP to create a breadth of culturally sustaining mentoring practices, backed by research to fill the gap in the research that called for theoretical based practices (Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Miller et al., 2013). Further, these alignments suggest that the CSP framework can be useful for mentorship for Latinx students at other PWIs.

At the request of Celeste Burk, I created a short two-page summary of the 10 practices that mentees and mentors identified as vital to degree completion (see Appendix F). On behalf of the mentoring program, Celeste must present justification for its budget to both university administration and the community organization’s Board of Directors. She believed the data from this study would provide the empirical evidence needed to contextualized portrait of the events impact on Latinx students’ persistence. The director and I also discussed the further alignment of the practices within the current program with CSP principles and how it might benefit the current program. These recommendations are listed below.

**Recommendations for Further Alignment with CSP Principles**

Examination of the practices identified by Latinx mentees and mentors in this study revealed four areas in which further alignment with CSP principles might offer additional benefits to the mentorship. These four areas are: (1) increased student and community agency and input, (2) expansion of inclusion to all Latinx students, (3) assessment of critical centering of dynamic community languages, valued practices, and knowledge, and (4) challenging white supremacist structures. Recommendations within each of these four areas are presented here.
**Increased student and community agency and input.** Within this study, the CSP tenet of student and community agency and input (SCAI) was evident in the first theme of practices, recruit a defined group. As mentees moved from their first year in the program through to degree completion, SCAI became less evident, and became dependent on either the program director or individual mentors, rather than demonstrating student and community agency and input. This left a tremendous responsibility on one person’s shoulders (typically Celeste’s). The second theme of practices, developing the mentoring relationship, could be improved with more collaborative efforts, (e.g. SCAI), such as an advisory board of students, faculty, and community members. Increasing the amount of student and community input would open opportunities for others to share some of the responsibilities shouldered currently by only the program director. Marta (mentor) spoke at length in her interview about the need for mentors to support the director, but not knowing the best way to do so. Using the SCAI tenet to highlight opportunities for further involving students and community members might reveal opportunities to address Marta’s concerns.

**Expansion of inclusion to all Latinx students.** The practice of recruiting a specific group, in this case, Latinx scholarship recipients, had an unexpected result. The recruitment plan, by its very design, created exclusion of other Latinx students who may have reaped greater benefits from mentoring experiences than the scholarship recipients for which the program was designed. In looking at mentoring for Latinx students through the Critical Centering (CC) lens of CSP, I posit mentoring needs to be offered within a structured program, similar to this one, to all Latinx students at the PWI. While the current program director accepts non-scholarship recipients through an informal referral process, an official
A program offering mentoring to all Latinx students would improve the extension of membership and not perpetuate the exclusion and isolation of the very group this program was designed to support.

Assessment of critical centering. Assessing the critical centering (CC) throughout the program will clarify where mentoring practices drifted away from the critical centering of the Latinx dynamic community languages, valued practices, and knowledge. Mentoring practices had clear evidence of critical centering (CC) in six of the 10 identified practices. As mentors began to offer professional knowledge and connections, the centering shifted off the languages and valued practices of Latinx and became focused on assimilation-type practices, centering on the dominant culture. These assimilation-type practices were used in preparing mentees for graduate school and professional work environments. Examining how critical centering (CC) is maintained throughout the mentoring program would provide insights into areas that may require additional training for all persons involved to ensure the centering stays on the Latinx valued practices and knowledge. Informing mentors of the possibility of this shift in their own mentoring, whether consciously or unconsciously, and providing them with useful tools to correct the trajectory of CC may be the first step to re-center the mentoring. Training in recognition of assimilation practices and how to constructively challenge the status quo, or dominant culture, must include both mentees and mentors.

Challenging white supremacist structures. The indication that critical centering shifted to the dominant culture presented an opportunity to challenge the status quo. White supremacy is a social construct (Leonardo, 2007; Osei-Kofi, 2012) prominent within many
PWIs (Baker, 2013; Ballinas, 2017; Murillo & Smith, 2011; Scott & Venegas, 2017; Von Robertson et al., 2014). I contend that if mentors or mentees recognize assimilation as the only means of gaining access to graduate school or professional employment, they will add to the historical strength of white supremacy structures. Mentors and mentees must both be prepared to analyze and challenge the dominant culture and its practices. Mentors and the program directors are essential in preparing mentees for entry into postgraduate and/or professional work after completing the undergraduate degree, but I contend that they need to be mindful of assimilation practices and instead encourage cultural competency. Directors and mentors must also be aware and guard against retaliation, often in the form of denial of access, and be conscious of supporting/protecting mentees while working on institutional change. While changes in institutional culture are slow, utilizing the CSP principals may provide guidance to support needed reforms.

**Limitations and Implications for Practice**

**Limitations.** The focus of this study was to identify practices mentees and mentors perceived as supportive of Latinx students and contributing to increased graduation rates for this specific population of students. The research site was one urban-serving PWI, located in the Midwest, with a mission and vision focused on the local community’s needs and the urban issues surrounding its city and region. The Latinx mentoring program in this study was created as one initiative to support the university’s commitment to social justice and urban issues. The local urban center also has a rich history of Latinx culture with many families remaining in the same neighborhoods for multiple generations. Other programs with different geographic, historical heritage histories, and/or institutional missions may find
those contextual factors affect different alignments with the CSP framework. This limitation is further incentive for more research to be done in diverse PWIs.

**Implications for Practice.** As PWIs are searching for approaches or programs aimed at increasing the retention and graduation rates of Latinx students, mentoring programs are being developed void of theoretical based information (Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Miller et al., 2013). Considering the framework of CSP as a continuous, intertwining threading of experiences and practices, a vision of what Culturally Sustaining Mentorship could be, begins to emerge. Each principle of CSP has the potential to be embedded in practices that Latinx mentees and mentors perceive to support—and sustain—students through academic rigor and to the completion of their degrees. Each CSP principle is independent yet supports and is interrelated with the other principles. Building a culturally sustaining mentoring program results in a unique picture from each unique community that chooses what to sustain according to what is important in their own histories, and the languages, valued practices, and knowledge they choose to center, and sustain, through their own agency.

For institutions seeking to offer culturally sustaining mentoring practices, this study may offer beginning guidance for laying a foundation for culturally sustaining mentoring, or CSM. Using the framework of CSP provides five tenants by which structure foundational practices can be established. Each of the five CSP tenets are described below as they could be applied in the concept of CSM. Results of this study indicate that critical centering of dynamic community languages, valued practices, and knowledge is a starting point that is important to keep as the focus when developing programmatic structures.
Critical centering of dynamic community languages, valued practices, and knowledge. I contend that mentoring programs centered on the languages, practices, and knowledge of the local Latinx community require deep connections with the local community and an established trust to lay foundations that will define policies and procedures. Higher education institutions need to evaluate their mission and vision to ensure openness to the community. For true critical centering, I challenge universities to shift the traditional strongholds of decision-making and open the door to community members as stakeholders with decision-making power. Shared governance of power is vital to prevent the exclusion of either partner and to create accountability to both partners in all decisions. Upon identification of a ‘defined group’ for mentoring, the languages, practices, and knowledge must also be defined to ensure all decisions made in developing the program will be centered on the identified dynamic community languages, valued practices, and knowledge.

Student and community agency and input. Once the defined group is established, the recruitment of the community who will support them must also be cultivated. I maintain that student and community agency and input must be comprised of stakeholders who share the critical centering of dynamic community languages, valued practices and knowledge, and also share a deep commitment to the critical centering of these languages, practices, and knowledge. If two or more groups have accountability, as in this study both the university and a community organization, it is essential for the accountability to be balanced, ownership with both, not to the exclusion of either. While this charge is unconventional, and may be difficult to enact, I remain firm in the need for this equality of accountability. This
intertwining of what are traditionally two very separate decision-making powers may present challenges, but keeping the critical centering will help to decrease internal power struggles between the groups. The communities (i.e., both community members and university personnel) must work intently to keep the critical centering of languages, practices, and knowledge as ever evolving and fluid, and to take into consideration all perspectives. As student and community agency and accountability holds the program to critical centering, the historicized content and instruction should saturate the formation of practices, procedures, and policies.

**Historicized content and instruction.** The understanding of historicized content and how it influences current needs of today’s students is vital in developing culturally sustaining mentoring practices. I urge all those involved in mentoring to discern how heritage culture and current culture intertwine and create the capacity to both respect and cultivate cultural pride. Understanding how mentees’ cultural pride is represented inside and outside of the heritage community supports the building of cultural competencies in both places. If we, as mentors, do not challenge assimilation as the only way to achieve cultural competency, our mentees will lack needed skills to disrupt the systemic oppression structures and practices present in our education and professional environments today. I offer that it is essential for the critical centering of Latinx students, supported by mentors, to reject systemic racism, confront prejudice practices, and call out policies in need of reform. Recognizing past influences, their intersectionality with current events, and deciding what is essential to sustain, all interweaves with critical centering and student and community
agency and input to create a system that builds mentees’ capacity to contend with historicized internalized oppressions.

**Capacity to contend with internal oppression.** The oppression Latinx mentees face is real, told in experiences shared with their mentors, in low graduation rates, and in the lack of representation within higher education faculty and administrators. Language can be used to add value, such as addressing the mentees as scholars instead of students, or it can reflect deficient thinking, such as the terms “dominant culture” and “PWIs” that imply Latinx mentees are “less than” and not members of the “dominate” group. Terms such as illegal immigrants, foreign born, and even DACA, all identify students as separate from the “norm.” I urge programs to enact practices that provide Latinx mentees safe spaces where they are free to ask questions they feel they cannot ask other places. I challenge these same programs to teach skills to confront dehumanizing language and discredit stereotypes, as ways to help mentees build their capacity to contend with internal oppression.

Building the capacity to contend with oppression cannot rest solely on the shoulders of the mentees; the community (e.g., mentors, program personnel) must be involved in systemic change to decrease the incidents of oppression. It is vital to have student and community agency and input, as the different groups that make up the community must also exercise influence within the university or other entities where the mentoring program is situated. Student and community agency and input requires all stakeholders to be advocates and allies both for and with the defined population of mentees. As all four principles intertwine together, the fifth tenet, curricularized for learning, becomes the thread that brings it all together.
Curricularize for learning. Each of the four principles described above must be purposeful, planned, and implemented in order to construct a culturally sustaining mentoring (CSM) program. Decision-making must center the interest of the defined group and be accountable to their input. As the critical centering is happening, the historicized content gives context to both past and current influences and must be recognized as fluid and even changing. Using all five tenets of CSP as the foundation for CSM may provide mentoring programs based on a theoretical framework that existing literature (Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Miller et al., 2013) has called for, but further research will be necessary.

Recommendations for Future Research

The examination of the alignment of CSP with the practices identified in this study was a first step in conceptualizing culturally sustaining mentorship (CSM). Additional research will be necessary to extend and develop the ideas presented here. I have four recommendations for furthering the concept of CSM: (1) further study at both PWIs and HSIs on applicability of CSP to mentoring, (2) longitudinal studies to assess changes in mentoring, (3) comparative case study of Latinx students in/out of mentoring program, and (4) participant action research to move theory into practice.

Further study at both PWIs and HSIs. I contend more research is needed to develop a rich literature base on culturally sustaining mentoring (CSM). Both theoretical and practice based research is needed to focus on the alignment of practices with CSP, and how current practices could be realigned based on the CSP framework. Gershenfeld (2014) denotes the lack of research on mentoring practices specifically designed to support Latinx students in PWIs and multiple studies cite the lack of theoretical foundations (e.g. Crisp &
Cruz, 2009; Miller et al., 2013) as a deficit in mentoring literature. I present this study, using CSP as a theoretical framework, to develop CSM for Latinx students. I urge more exploration of mentoring practices through the lens of CSP to help fill both gaps in the literature. I pose more research, conducted in diverse PWIs would also enrich the literature as multiple geographic settings may present contrasting data.

Programs at Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) provide another avenue of research that may provide insights on how CSP might be applied in mentoring for Latinx students. I caution that HSIs may still be based on PWI values, as most started as PWIs and made the transition to HIS, as opposed to being created as a HSI. But, I argue that institutions with a full campus mission of serving Latinx students might provide new insights into the structure of mentoring programs through the CSP lens.

**Longitudinal Studies.** Longitudinal studies are needed that trace mentees’ experiences throughout the life of a mentoring program to determine how the tenets of CSP shift or are contextualized across the program. I maintain that practices situated early in the mentees’ academic career held critical centering on Latinx languages, practices, and knowledge. As graduation grew closer, I noted assimilation-type practices emerge and the critical centering began to drift into the dominant culture of the institution or professional environments, crowding out the original critical centering. While it was not clear in this study if this shift was unconscious on the part of mentors, or conscious bias based on their own historical experiences with assimilation, this area requires further exploration.

**Comparative case study of Latinx students in/out of mentoring program.** This study is limited to Latinx students who applied for and received a scholarship, which
included an invitation to the mentoring program. Concerns for other, non-scholarship Latinx students were raised several times in various interviews. Both the program director and multiple mentors talked about an unofficial process of accepting students into the program who were not part of the scholarship program. Concerns about non-scholarship students led to the acceptance of Latinx students into the mentoring program through either a mentor referring them to Celeste or a fellow mentee bringing them into her office. This indicated a need for students, unidentified through established recruitment and yet in need of additional supports, to have an opportunity to become involved in the mentoring program. A void exists in knowing where non-mentored Latinx students get information, academic and social support, and how they persist to graduation. I call for research that focuses on those questions to further inform how Latinx students succeed at a PWI. Including other Latinx, non-scholarship recipients is also necessary, as I recognize this study is a limited look at practices valued by students who already display cultural competencies in education by the very nature of their abilities to apply for and receive a scholarship.

**Participant action research to move theory into practice.** Research into the mentoring relationship, and, specifically, what is said between mentees and mentors, would fortify which practices are strengths, to be replicated, or where there is room to expand and support using the CSP framework. Involving pairs of mentors in ethnography and/or autoethnography would give researchers access to the ‘insiders’ process of building relationships and how dynamic community languages, valued practices and knowledge are used throughout the mentorship. It would also give insight to how mentors support mentees as they critique and challenge the dominant culture. I assert that a much deeper
understanding of the mentoring relationship is needed in order to structure practices and policies that support and nurture culturally sustaining mentorship (CSM).

**Conclusion**

This study asked Latinx mentees and mentors what practices they perceived as supporting persistence to degree completion. Ten mentoring practices were identified and organized into three themes of practice. These themes represented practices that built structure for the program, developed relationships, and offered academic knowledge and professional connections. Identifying these themes of practice provided an overview of mentoring which was then used to explore the concept of cultural sustaining mentoring. Using the 10 identified practices to explore alignment with the five tenets of CSP revealed much potential for creating culturally sustaining mentorship for Latinx students at PWIs. When mentoring programs are designed to address the needs of Latinx students, similar to the program in this study, CSP can provide a framework to structure practices, policies, and procedures that are threaded and intertwined in principals designed to support the success of Latinx students. As more research is done on the application of CSP in mentoring programs, Latinx students will reap the benefits of programs steeped in the critical centering of dynamic community languages, valued practices, and knowledge, rich with student and community agency and input, fortified by historicized content and instruction, and builds students’ capacity to contend with internal oppressions by curricularizing it all for learning. In other words, Latinx students will have culturally sustaining mentoring to support them through to degree completion at PWIs.
APPENDIX A: MENTEE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Thank you for meeting with me today, I appreciate you taking the time to share your thoughts and experiences as a mentee in the [name of program]. This interview will focus on mentoring practices and what you perceive as helpful to you in the mentoring process. I will start with some general questions about your experiences in the program, then more specific mentoring practices, then we will chat about the barriers to degree completion, and then I would like to gather your thoughts on the big picture of mentoring programs as a whole. At the end, I will ask you to share anything you think is important that I may not have thought to ask about.

Will you tell me about your experience in [name of program]?
(To include: How long have you been involved in [name of program], and how many mentors have you had thus far?)
How and why did you decide to become involved in this program?
In what programmatic offerings have you participated?
How have those programmatic offerings helped you?
Now I want to ask you some specific questions about your mentor with whom you are currently working.
How long have you worked with your current mentor, [during interview, will insert name of mentor]?
Describe the mentoring relationship you have with [name of mentor].
Describe some examples of mentoring practices or strategies that have been helpful or useful to you in continuing to pursue your degree.
Why and how do you find these mentoring practices or strategies to be useful?
Describe the activities that you and your mentor do together. Why are these activities important to your mentoring relationship?
The next several questions will focus on the barriers or challenges that you may face as you pursue your degree here at [name of university].
In your opinion, what are the biggest challenges that most Latinx students encounter on this campus?
How might this program help Latinx students overcome those challenges?
What, if any, challenges might Latinx students encounter on this campus that this program cannot or does not help them address?
What, if any, experiences have you shared with your mentor about barriers or challenges at college thus far? (Such as discrimination or microaggressions, language discrimination, lack of role models, or cultural dissonance)
Was your mentor able to help you overcome/resolve those barriers or challenges?
Would you explain why the help your mentor offered was useful in overcoming barriers or challenges?
Have you and your mentor discussed any conflicts that might be related to cultural concerns, such as college culture, family culture, ethnic culture, etc.
Have you ever shared with your mentor that you were considering leaving college? If so, what reasons did you give for thinking about leaving college?
If you did share that you were considering leaving college, what did your mentor say and do in response?
How was his/her/their advice helpful and why?
Now I have a few general questions to end our interview.
In your opinion, how effective are the programmatic offerings of this mentoring program as a support for Latinx students’ degree completion?
Again, in your opinion, how effective is the concept of pairing individuals (mentee and mentor) as a support for students’ degree completion?
What else (besides this program) could be offered on this campus to help Latinx students complete their degrees?
If you were the director of this program, what is one change that you would make to make mentoring more effective, and why?
What advice do you have to offer other Latinx students who are working to earn their degrees?
Now, the final question:
Is there anything you feel would be useful for me to know that I have not asked?
Thank you so much for your time and sharing your thoughts and experiences!
APPENDIX B: MENTOR INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Thank you for meeting with me today, I appreciate you taking the time to share your thoughts and experiences as a mentor for a Latinx student. This interview will focus on mentoring practices and what you perceive as helpful to your mentee in supporting her/his/their persistence towards degree completion. I will start with some general questions about your service as a mentor, then more specific mentoring practices, then we will chat about the barriers to degree completion, and then I would like to gather your thoughts on the big picture of mentoring programs as a whole. At the end, I will ask you to share anything you think is important that I may not have thought to ask about.

Will you tell me about your experience in [name of program]? (To include: How long have you served as a mentor in this program, and how many students have you mentored thus far?)
How and why did you decide to become a mentor in this program?
In what programmatic offerings or trainings have you participated as a mentor?
How have those programmatic offerings helped you to mentor your student(s)?
Now I want to ask you some specific questions about how you mentor the student(s) with whom you are currently working.
How long have you served as a mentor to [during interview, will insert name of current student(s)]?
Describe the mentoring relationship you have with this/these student mentee(s).
Describe some examples of mentoring practices or strategies that you have used with this student mentee that he or she found useful.
Why and how did this student mentee find these mentoring practices or strategies to be useful?
Describe the activities that you and your student mentee do together. Why are these activities important to your mentoring relationship with this student?
The next several questions will focus on the barriers or challenges that your mentee may be facing as they pursue their degree here at [name of university].
In your opinion, what are the biggest challenges that most Latinx students encounter on this campus?
How might this program help Latinx students overcome those challenges?
What, if any, challenges might Latinx students encounter on this campus that this program cannot or does not help them address?
What, if any, barriers or challenges has your student mentee shared with you that he or she has experienced at college thus far? (Such as discrimination or microaggressions, language discrimination, lack of role models, or cultural dissonance)
How have you been able to help him/her/them overcome those barriers or challenges?
Would you explain why the help you offered was useful in overcoming barriers or challenges?
Have you and your student mentee discussed any conflicts that might be related to cultural issues, such as college culture, family culture, ethnic culture, etc.
Has your student mentee ever shared with you that he/she/they are considering leaving college? If so, what reasons did he/she/they give for thinking about leaving college? If your student mentee was considering leaving college, what did you say and do as a mentor in response?

Have you ever had a student mentee leave college? If so, why? What was that experience like for you as a mentor?

Now I have a few general questions to end our interview.

In your opinion, how effective are the programmatic offerings of this mentoring program as a support for students’ degree completion?

Again, in your opinion, how effective is the concept of pairing individuals (mentee and mentor) as a support for students’ degree completion?

What else (besides this program) could be offered on this campus to help Latinx students complete their degrees?

If you were the director of this program, what is one change that you would make to make mentoring more effective, and why?

What advice do you have for other mentors of Latinx students to support them in earning their degrees?

Now, the final question:

Is there anything you feel would be useful for me to know that I have not asked?

Thank you so much for your time and sharing your thoughts and experiences!
APPENDIX C: FOCUS GROUP FOR MENTEES PROTOCOL

Thank you for meeting with me today, I appreciate you taking the time to share your thoughts and experiences as a Latinx students. This focus group will explore mentoring practices and what you perceive as helpful persistence towards degree completion. I will start with some general questions, then more specific questions about different competency areas, and then I would like to gather your thoughts on what practices will get your through to graduation. At the end, I will ask you to share anything you think is important that I may not have thought to ask about.

In looking at the big picture of mentoring for you, as Latinx students, what positive benefits have you experienced that you would not have had the opportunity to if not for [name of program]?
Do you see your college experience as being different from other Latinx students who are not part of the [name of program]? Explain any perceived differences, please. What do you contribute the differences to?
Does effective mentoring look different for you, as Latinx students, then it would for other ethnic groups?
Does it need to be different? Why or why not?
How do mentors show support for your ethnic heritage and values?
Is that important? Why or why not?
In what ways, if any, did your mentor offer support in linguistic competency?
How or why was that helpful?
In what ways, if any, did your mentor offer support in literacy competency?
How or why was that helpful?
Will you identify mentoring practices that you see as the most influential in supporting you to degree completion?
Walking away from [university] with degree in hand, what will you reflect back on and identify as the one thing that helped you persist and earn your degree?
What else would you like to share as a Latinx mentee of the [program name]?
APPENDIX D: FOCUS GROUP FOR MENTORS PROTOCOL

Thank you for meeting with me today, I appreciate you taking the time to share your thoughts and experiences as mentors for Latinx students. This focus group will explore mentoring practices as they pertain specifically to Latinx students. I will start with some general questions about what makes college different for our Latinx students, then more specific questions about different competency areas, and then I would like to gather your thoughts on the challenges of being a mentor. At the end, I will ask you to share anything you think is important that I may not have thought to ask about.

Do you see college experiences as being different for Latinx students? Explain any perceived differences, please. What do you contribute the differences to? Does effective mentoring look different for Latinx students, then it would for other ethnic groups? Does it need to be different? Why or why not? How do you, as mentors, show support for your mentees’ ethnic heritage and values? Is this important? Why or why not? How do you, as a mentor, support your mentee in learning the collegiate culture of this PWI, and yet retain their own family values/beliefs/culture? In what ways, if any, did you offer support to your mentee for linguistic competency? How or why was that helpful? In what ways, if any, did you offer support in literacy competency? How or why was that helpful? Will you identify mentoring practices that you see as the most influential in supporting your mentee to degree completion? What is the most challenging aspect, as a mentor, of supporting a Latinx student at a PWI?
APPENDIX E: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Informational Script for Participation in a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study to explore the challenges of college and the impact of mentors for Latinx students working towards successful degree completion. The principal investigators for this project include Dea Marx and Dr. Michelle Maher of the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

Participation in this study is voluntary at all times. You may choose not to participate or to withdraw your participation at any time without any penalty.

Purpose of Study
The purpose of this study is to explore mentorship as a potential means to support Latinx students in their pursuit of degree completion.

The results of this study will provide information to educators and policy makers at the university level. This information will provide an understanding of mentoring practices and the implications of how mentoring can influence college persistence.

The risks of participating in this study are minimal, no greater than those encountered in daily life. There will be no identifying information associated with your interview results. Data from this study will be destroyed within five to seven years of this study. The principal investigators will seek publication for the written research findings in peer-reviewed research journals.

Although it is not the University’s policy to compensate or provide medical treatment for persons who participate in studies, if you think you have been harmed as a result of participating in this study, please call the IRB Administrator of UMKC’s Social Sciences Institutional Review Board at 816-235-5927. While every effort will be made to keep confidential all of the information you complete and share, it cannot be absolutely guaranteed. Individuals from the University of Missouri-Kansas City Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves research studies), Research Protections Program, and Federal regulatory agencies may look at records related to this study for quality improvement and regulatory functions.

For questions regarding this study, please contact the principal investigator via phone or email.

Dea Marx, Doctoral Candidate/Coordinator of Field Experience.
129B School of Education / 5100 Rockhill Rd. / Kansas City, MO 64110
ph: (816)235-2463/ marxd@umkc.edu

By agreeing to continue with the interview, you are agreeing to participate in this research study.
APPENDIX F: MEMO FOR PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Latinx students comprise the fastest growing ethnic population in education in the United States (Holloway-Friesen, 2016; Rodriguez & Oseguera, 2015). Despite their increasing numbers, however, Latinx students, defined as, “a people [or students] who identify as of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race” (Delgado-Romero, Manlove, Manlove, & Hernandez, 2007, p. 36) remain alarmingly underrepresented in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) (Chapa & De La Rosa, 2006; Freeman & Martinez, 2015). Most Latinx students who pursue a four-year college degree enroll in Predominately White Institutions (PWIs) (Von Robertson, Bravo, & Chaney, 2014). Overall, degree completion rates for all colleges and universities indicate Latinx students trail behind other ethnicities, with 59% of Asians and 37% of Whites attaining a bachelor’s degree or higher, while only 18% of Latinx students reach that same accomplishment (U.S. BLS, 2013).

The purpose of this study was to identify mentoring practices perceived as supportive by mentees and mentors for degree completion. I used a case study research method to collect data and structure the analysis (Yin, 2013). Once I had collected and analyzed all data, I organized the 10 identified practices into three overarching themes. These three overarching themes represented mentoring practices that: (1) build intentional structures, (2) develop the mentoring relationship, and (3) offer academic knowledge and professional connections. Each theme contains individual practices that I identified, based on the mentees’ and mentors’ perceptions, to be supportive of degree completion (see Table 1). The practices in the first theme, build intentional structures, are essential and serve as the foundation for all subsequent practices. These practices are anchored in the actual program and program development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practices</th>
<th>Supportive of Mentee Degree Completion</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overarching Themes</strong></td>
<td><strong>Practices</strong></td>
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<td>Practices that build intentional structures</td>
<td>Recruit a defined group</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Devote resources for programmatic needs</td>
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<td>Create membership into an identifiable group</td>
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<td>Practices that develop the mentoring relationship</td>
<td>Establish roles and responsibilities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Model ways of being and knowing</td>
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<td>Validate experiences, feelings, and decisions</td>
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<td>Expand the relationship to include others</td>
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<tr>
<td>Practices that offer academic knowledge and professional connections</td>
<td>Share academic knowledge</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Share professional knowledge and connections</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Within the first theme, practices that build intentional structures, mentees and mentors spoke to the importance of having a defined group, (Latinx students) and then the importance of the resources and membership devoted to this group. A quick look at the data in these areas is listed below.

Devote resources for programmatic needs:
- Space designated for Latinx students within the Multicultural center
- Access to the program director
- Workshops focused on mentees’ needs throughout the year
- Events dedicated to the recognition of the values and culture of the mentees (i.e., Summer Bridge program, Welcome Back event, End-of-year Celebrations). These programs are vital.

Create membership into an identifiable group:
- Events that gave opportunity to engage with other Latinx (i.e., networking evenings)
- Banners, flyers, etc., that identified the Avanzando membership
- Sense of belongingness created by mentors and program director
- Affinity spaces decreased the sense of isolation
- Workshops focused on cultural pride, academic success, and reduction of stress

Two main findings after the identification of practices:
1) The mentoring practices are highly effective in building capacity to contend with internal oppression, directly linked to Latinx students’ perseverance and degree completion.
2) Expansion of similar practices would increase the degree completion of other enrolled Latinx students who are currently not included in the mentoring program.
REFERENCES


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VITA

Deanna Marx grew up in a rural community outside of Kansas City, Missouri where she attended public schools from Kindergarten through high school graduation. Dea attended the University of Missouri-Columbia and graduated in 1986 with her first Bachelor’s degree in fashion design. After graduation, she moved to Arizona where she returned to college and completed her elementary teaching certification. Dea taught in the public school system for 11 years, during which her interest in working with Latinx students became a passion. Returning to college, she attended Northern Arizona University and graduated with a Master’s degree in Bilingual and Multicultural education in 1996.

In 2001, Dea moved into an administrative role as principal of a charter school that engaged Latinx students in innovative educational practices in Yuma, Arizona. After serving in this role for six years and receiving her administrative certification, Dea returned to Missouri and served as a principal in an urban elementary school. In 2010, Dea accepted the position as coordinator of field experiences in the School of Education at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. She worked directly with student teachers, preparing them to recognize and advocate for students from underserved populations.

In 2014, Dea returned to the classroom as a doctoral student pursuing an Ed.D. in Higher Education Administration. Her research focus intertwines leadership, mentoring, and Latinx college student success. She plans to continue her career in higher education with a focus on advocating equity and access for underserved student groups.