

PLATICANDO CON NUESTRAS HERMANAS (TALKING WITH OUR SISTERS): A CASE
STUDY OF LATINA STUDENT AFFAIRS ADMINISTRATORS' MENTORING
EXPERIENCES

A Dissertation

by

LISA OCAÑAS PEREZ

BS, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, 1994
MEd, Southwest Texas State University, 1996

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This dissertation meets the standards for scope and quality of
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi and is hereby approved.

Lynn Hemmer, PhD
Chair

Randal Bowden, PhD
Committee Member

Laura Muñoz, PhD
Committee Member

Monica Hernandez, PhD
Graduate Faculty Representative

December 2016

ABSTRACT

Hispanics and women represent the fastest growing demographic shift in post-secondary enrollment, yet few Latinas have reached advanced positions within Student Affairs divisions in higher education (Yakaboski & Donahoo, 2011). The nexus of the dramatic student demographic change and the social structure of who is represented in these senior-level positions raise questions about patterns that may signal current discriminatory practices or emerging opportunities surrounding institutional mentoring practices.

The purpose of this study was to describe and understand the mentoring experiences of five senior-level Latina Student Affairs administrators in Texas. Using ethnographic collective case study methods, this qualitative study employed feminism and LatCrit as its theoretical framework. The primary sources of data included pláticas [tr: talks], artifacts, and reflections. Arts-based techniques were used to analyze and represent the data.

Findings are presented as co-constructed narratives of the participants' mentoring experiences and described as: informal mentoring; sharing meaningful connections; serving as advisors, coaches, or teachers; natural and organic; strong bonds; mentoring through technology and groups; familia y construcción comunitaria [tr: family and community building]; tienen las ganas y coraje [tr: having the desire and courage]; haciendo la diferencia [tr: making a difference]; un círculo de empoderamiento [tr: circle of empowerment], and nuestras raíces [tr: our roots].

This study informs administrators to encourage and enable Latinas to pursue senior-level administrative positions. Two implications for practice were suggested: mentoring to empower and coming together. Advocating and nurturing informal mentoring models, which include a

more collective approach in bringing people of similar cultures and values together to develop/strengthen connections with one another is needed. One implication for methodology was recommended: growing through sharing. It is important to recognize that providing a space for pláticas to occur transcends place and time, especially with the use of technology. Pláticas as a methodological approach provides a considerable range of interaction and exchange of ideas, beliefs and values in a fluid, natural structure, which may result, in co-produced narratives about mentoring. Lastly, two implications for scholarship were proposed: being seen and heard, and being a madrina [tr: sponsor]. Advocating for and appointing Latinas to positions of visibility and authority is paramount. Being in these positions provides an opportunity for Latinas to work on implementing change, and present alternative viewpoints to achieve more inclusive environments.

DEDICATION

To my mom, the strongest Latina I know and truly my original mentor, teacher, coach,
and supporter.

To my husband, Charles, whose unconditional love I am most grateful for.

To my children Xavier Amadeo and Amarilisa Mia, you are the reason for my
being and why I continue this journey, all in hopes of making it an easier path for you.

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Since receiving my MEd in 1996, I knew I wanted to continue my educational journey and pursue a doctorate degree. Classmates, administrators, and faculty I had come to know through my graduate program inspired me and deep down inside, I also wanted to be the first in my family to do so. Life at that time had other plans for me and instead of continuing my education I began my career as an educator, got married, and had children. Over the years, I still had a deep urge within me to do so, especially being an employee of the university. From about 2005-2009, I remember attending informational recruiting sessions on the doctoral program provided by the College of Education at least once a year. Each year, I found a way to convince myself that the timing was not right especially because I was trying to balance raising two young children and working full time as an administrator. In the fall semester of 2009, I attended another recruiting session and I recall the late Dr. Sherritt speaking to those of us in attendance and for some reason what she said that day, convinced me to go for it. I finally heard her say it was my time to move forward. Thank you Dr. Sherritt for speaking your words of wisdom and opening my ears to listen to the call. Your message was the extra push that I needed to make it happen.

Throughout this journey, I have been fortunate to have a strong support network. First and foremost, I want to thank God for blessing me with this opportunity. He has been my constant unwavering support through it all. I truly found the strength to continue through this whole process, even when I did not want to, by meditating on the bible verse Philippians 4:13 "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Charles, thank you from the bottom of my heart. I can never repay you for the seven years of sacrifice you have made to help me achieve this milestone; truly this has

been a sign of your unconditional love for me. I appreciate your constant support and being by my side the whole time. Besos mi amor! 143.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Platicando con Nuestras Hermanas (Talking with our Sisters):

A Case Study of Latina Student Affairs Administrators' Mentoring Experiences

I was born a Latina into a single parent household. I am the youngest of five children, having two older sisters and two older brothers. Since there are many years between us in age I have had to find a place of my own; my sisters and brothers were already reaching milestones in their lives such as marriage, graduation from high school and being with their girlfriends. So, for me my Mom, instead of my siblings, was the one I leaned on and from whom I learned to be a strong independent Latina. My Mom divorced during a time (1970s) when it was frowned upon by her family, faith, and culture. She did it because she knew it was the right thing to do for her and her children. While the times were difficult for her to manage she always provided, in more ways than just emotionally and/or financially, as the single parent. She made time to support me during my academic and athletic endeavors and also when I didn't make the best choices; she coached and guided me through my relationships with friends and family, and she gave of herself and sacrificed to help me grow as a person. She was the one who modeled how to be independent and disciplined, how to work through adversity, the importance of working hard, and most importantly how to believe in, and be proud of, whom I am.

While I didn't fully understand it then, I realize now that my Mom and other females in my life were a huge influence on who I have become. I look back and think of the many Sundays we gathered as a family, and the women, *abuela, tías, hermanas, y*

primas (grandmother, aunts, sisters, and cousins), usually were the ones who had a strong presence in the activities of the day, whether it was attending to the food, coordinating activities, or just keeping things in line; this was especially important when gatherings were quite large. It was also during this time when I remember each of the women talking and sharing their life experiences through their stories with those who were around. While at that time I only understood them to be stories, I now know that the women were using this time to share their life knowledge so that the younger ones could absorb it and use it for their benefit. I remember hearing of the hardships they encountered in life as Mexican Americans: not being accepted by others in their community, how my *tías* were not given the same privileges as my *tíos*, and how my mom's classmates, during her 30th high school reunion, still denied mistreating the Mexican American and African American students during the 1950s. These shared experiences allowed all of us to grow in some way, but for me I can remember thinking how I didn't want to experience the inequities my family had endured. I wanted to do something about it by making it easier for those who would follow in my footsteps. I also remember how many of my close family members would honor my Mom and other moms yearly by serenading at their windows with songs like *Las Mañanitas*, and *O Madre Querida*. This annual tradition was a celebration of the important and valued role women held within our family.

There was a presence of strong Latinas all through my family life, yet when I reflect on my world, outside of family, at work and at school, I see few Latinas represented in leadership positions. In college I began working in Student Affairs, first at a community college and then at two universities. Other than my Mom, I have had

professors and supervisors, who have mentored me and who have been influential in my development, but they were not like me culturally. They weren't Latina, they didn't share the same culture that I did, and hadn't experienced what I had through my personal and academic journey. Throughout college and within my professional career, the mentoring that I received was from people with whom I could not identify, either culturally, or as a woman of Hispanic descent. I thought to myself, where can I find a Latina mentor in the workplace? However, as I looked for Latinas, there were not many to choose from. Of the few around campus, I had learned that they were already *targeted*, meaning that other administrators and sometimes other Latinos had negative perceptions of these women and made comments such as "too much of *La Raza* in her; you shouldn't associate with her," or "she only made it to her position because she is Hispanic." I began to think and question, why are these women being depicted as not being capable or qualified for administrative positions? Why the negative stereotypes? Why are they being perceived as outsiders? These and many other questions emerged and I came to realize that I wanted to do something about it. I wanted to begin to bring about a change within the campus climate by focusing on the positive things Latinas are doing in higher education, in particular within the Student Affairs profession. More specifically, I wanted to bring forward Latina cultural practices in the context of how Latinas have been mentored to achieve professional success and how they also assist others to do the same.

Background and Setting

Higher education, consisting of public and private four-year institutions and two-year community colleges, is a huge enterprise with a constantly changing landscape. Leaders on these campuses deal with many issues and facets of higher education such as the state and federal government, external constituents, students, the professoriate,

administrators, funding, curriculum, and the future of higher education as a whole (Fullan & Scott, 2009). Effectively responding to the complexity of issues faced on campuses and operating the necessary functions of institutions of higher education requires several leaders from across multiple divisions and hierarchical structures (Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006).

One of these divisions is Student Affairs. This division consists of many administrative professionals who are responsible for overseeing various aspects (e.g. housing, student activities, counseling services, recreational sports) related to students' development throughout their college years. In particular, the Student Affairs division seeks to assist students to be responsible citizens, help them to think critically, and prepare them for life opportunities.

In recent years, Student Affairs in institutes of higher education in California, Florida, and Texas, have had to respond to the dramatic changes in student demographics (Swail, 2002). Many colleges and universities now serve a student body that is different from those of years past. The traditional minority groups that were historically underrepresented as students are now seen enrolling in larger numbers (Williams, 2014).

Enrollment: race/ethnicity of student	2005 %	2009 %	2010 %	2011 %	2012 %	2013 %	2014 %
White	68.0	64.5	62.6	61.2	60.3	59.3	58.3
Total, selected races/ethnicities	32.0	35.5	37.4	38.8	39.7	40.7	41.7
Black	13.1	14.7	15.0	15.2	14.9	14.7	14.5
Hispanic	11.1	12.9	13.5	14.3	15.0	15.8	16.5
Asian/Pacific Islander	6.7	6.8	6.3	6.3	6.3	6.4	6.6
American Indian/Alaska Native	1.0	1.0	1.0	.9	.9	.8	.8
Two or more Races	----	----	1.6	2.1	2.5	2.9	3.3

Figure 1. Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity 2005-2014 (NCES, 2015).

In 2005, the percentage of White students enrolled in higher education was 68% as compared to 32% of minority students (see Figure 1). During this time, Black students made up 13.1%, Hispanics 11.1%, Asian/Pacific Islanders 6.7%, and American Indian/Alaska Natives 1%. During the next nine years, a shift was seen in the number of minority students enrolling, closing the gap between White and minority students. Recently, the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES; 2015) reported that 58.7% of the students enrolled were White and 41.7% were minorities. The largest percentage increase, 5.4%, in minority student enrollment was seen with Hispanics.

With the shift of demographics there is now an intercultural community on campus that expects Student Affairs professionals to understand cultural change and respond appropriately to their needs. Interestingly enough, even though Hispanics and women now represent the fastest growing demographic shift in post-secondary enrollment, Yakaboski and Donahoo (2011) noted it has been a struggle for Latinas to reach advanced positions within higher education institutions, in particular within Student Affairs divisions.

Historically, women, especially Latinas, have not been represented at the upper levels of higher education administration at the same rate as White women or men (Ballenger, 2010; NCES, 2012).

Gender and primary function/occupational activity	Total	Hispanic or Latino	White
Total	3,921,675	248,577	2,696,264
Professional staff	2,987,391	146,366	2,102,559
Executive/administrative/managerial	248,941	13,807	193,659
Other professional (support/service)	816,176	49,535	573,719
Men	1,782,291	104,598	1,231,308
Professional staff	1,424,981	64,003	1,006,260
Executive/administrative/managerial	112,896	5,488	90,370
Other professional (support/service)	318,611	17,784	226,061
Women	2,139,384	143,979	1,464,956
Professional staff	1,562,410	82,363	1,096,299
Executive/administrative/managerial	136,045	8,319	103,289
Other professional (support/service)	497,565	31,751	347,658

Figure 2. Representation of men and women in administrative positions by ethnicity (NCES, 2012).

In 2012, the NCES showed that Latinas represented 8,319 out of 136,045 executive/managerial positions accounting for 6.1% of women at that level (see Figure 2). Interestingly enough, while Latinas represent a small overall number in these positions, more Latinas are represented when compared to Latinos (5,488, or 4%). However, the system as a whole remains intact, having failed to keep pace with changing student demographics. While female and minority enrollments have soared, 193,659 of the 248,941 executive/managerial positions remain predominately White, with 103,289 of those being represented by White women. While women in general appear to have made advances in their careers the data indicate Latinas/os continue to experience disadvantages advancing to these positions.

The nexus of these two major trends, the dramatic student demographic change in Higher Education and the prevailing social structure of who is represented, or not, in

senior level administrative positions, particularly in Student Affairs, raises important practical questions for educational leaders surrounding inclusive practices. For instance, to what degree are institutes of higher education including Latinas in senior level administrative positions? As mentioned, there remains a lack of Latinas/os in senior level positions, yet Rendon (2003) found that employing Latinas/os as administrators or faculty in colleges or universities is critical to the retention of Latina/o students. Another practical question is how are institutions helping to support the advancement of Latinas/os? As reported by Catalyst (2003) in *Advancing Latinas in the Workplace: What Managers Need to Know*, it is not enough for an institution to recognize and value the unique experiences of a diverse student population but there also needs to be an inclusive work environment that accepts and affirms differences that may include gendered and cultural values.

While the university may need adaptive organizational structures that can respond to the range of increased diversity in student demographics, Fincher (1991) suggested, that university administrative structures, specifically roles and responsibilities, continue to be organized with hierarchical and bureaucratic characteristics, with limited initiatives to educate, train, and develop their own leaders. One way that institutions have responded to grow leaders is through incorporating a mentoring component. Mentoring can be viewed as a way to share or impart knowledge and as a way to share experience with colleagues to assist in navigating the organizational structure within an institution. However, little is understood about patterns that may signal existing discriminatory practices or emerging opportunities which involve various levels of authority and

coordinated efforts to draw conclusions from existing ventures surrounding institutional mentoring practices within and across diversity.

Despite a call for changes in institutional practices to be more inclusive in leadership training and development, much work still needs to be done, especially to help women advance in their careers. In higher education institutions, 59% of graduates are women and 51% of women are working toward doctoral and professional degrees, yet only 26% of women are represented in presidential positions (Teague, 2016; ACE, n.d.). Research also indicates that while the public reports an 89% comfort level with women as leaders, workplace reality shows that only 18% of women hold top leadership positions (Lapovsky, 2009). This gap suggests women are overlooked within the organization despite their credentials and/or their abilities. This in turn leads to questions focused on how mentoring practices within the organization are structured, valued and supported.

There are many barriers that hinder women from reaching senior level positions. The literature posits that women may choose to turn away rather than pursue such positions or, in many cases, are pushed away from such career path choices (Iverson, 2009; Jackson & O'Callaghan, 2009). For those who chose to remain on this career trajectory, an array of challenges is likely to confront them, such as conflicting demands rising from family, work, and life obligations, adjusting to male dominated organizational structures, and being respected as a person of authority, experiencing inflexible supervisors, and/or having to work within political climates. These represent some of the obstacles they will have to navigate and negotiate. Within this climate and organizational structure there is a need to provide mentoring to assist those who choose this career path

to become successful within their roles, and respected in an environment that has seen little representation from Latinas.

Too often, women do not persist to achieve senior level administrative positions. Nonetheless, there are examples of women who have persevered and attained higher-level administrative positions, but it has not been an easy path. While there is plenty of research (Castellanos & Jones, 2003; Fochtman, 2011; Hernandez, Murakami, & Rodriguez, 2015; Nicholson & Pasque, 2011) on how women in faculty positions have been successful and have also encountered being silenced within their roles, little research has focused primarily on Latinas in non-academic administrative roles in institutions of higher education (Alanis, Cuero, & Rodriguez, 2009).

Given the structural components that may be inherent in the advancement or lack of advancement of women in these positions, several professional organizations are addressing inclusive practices as part of their mission for a social transformation to recruit, retain, and advance women of color for administrative positions in institutes of higher education. Reflective of these efforts, the American Council on Education (ACE) with the help of the Carnegie Corporation, created the Women's Network. The goal of this network is to train and promote women to administrative positions within higher education (Teague, 2016). One of ACE's initiatives, *Moving the Needle Forward*, seeks to reduce the disparity gap of women in leadership roles. Found within their Inclusive Excellence Group, this call to action asks university presidents to help by advancing women to chief executive positions by 2030 and to "create parity in the academy for demographically diverse women holding and aspiring to hold senior decision and policy-leadership positions" (American Council on Education, 2016, para 5).

Helping to set good practices for Student Affairs work, the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), are two leading professional organizations that guide divisional policies and hiring practices to promote diversity and appreciate individual differences. Within the NASPA framework, leadership development and encouragement of Student Affairs professionals to “create and nurture a pipeline of the next generation of underrepresented populations such that Student Affairs leadership reflects [that of the] the students and community" (n.d. para 16), is of extreme importance.

Based on the principles of the Student Affairs profession there is an ethical component to lead and create an inclusive culture and environment especially for students and the campus community. Essential to advancing the institutional mission and goals, it is important to explore and examine the degree to which an inclusive culture is being cultivated through mentoring. It may be that through mentoring, a social transformation can be set in motion to change the organizational structure so that it may eventually be more reflective of changing student demographics. Given the intersection between professional guiding principles and institutional practices, this study seeks to understand the career paths of Latinas in higher education administrative roles in order to provide another perspective in which to understand what mentoring experiences in career advancement looks like for Latinas.

Rationale

While Latinas in senior level administrative positions in higher education have increased of late, little is known about their mentoring experiences. Understanding the experiences of Latinas who have been mentored and are currently mentoring aspiring Latina professionals in higher education may inform Student Affairs administrators about

ways to mentor Latina professionals, and how to include them in organizational developmental practices that value diversity. Conducting this study and exploring ways in which the participants have been mentored, and provide mentoring to other aspiring Latina Student Affairs professionals, contributes to the literature in Student Affairs on gender underrepresentation in senior positions, scholarship on race/ethnicity, and mentoring. By studying Latina Student Affairs professionals, specifically those who are in senior administrative positions, a gap that has been left by previous research is being redressed. This study may also help women of color, particularly other Latinas, understand how to successfully meet challenges encountered when navigating organizational structures within higher education, and increase their sense of empowerment as they become increasingly represented in senior level Student Affairs administrative positions.

Research Purpose

The purpose of the study is to describe and understand the experiences of five senior level Latina Student Affairs administrators at institutions of higher education in Texas who have been mentored, and have provided, or are providing, mentoring to Latinas who aspire to professional success in administration as well. The following research questions guided the study.

1. How do the participants describe their experiences as a mentee?
2. How do the participants describe the ways in which they have mentored aspiring Latina professionals?
3. What are the perceptions of the participants regarding the impact their mentoring has had on aspiring Latina professionals as they seek to achieve professional success?

Theoretical Framework

The overarching theoretical frameworks for this study are: (a) Feminism, (b) Critical Race Theory (CRT), and in particular, (c) Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit). Feminist theory centers on the ways women have experienced oppression and exploitation (Nicholson & Pasque, 2011) and understanding that they may also have varying experiences based on the multiple identities they possess. Feminist theory also focuses on issues of justice and power, and tries to unveil the causes of oppression (Glesne, 2011). As noted in the literature, there are few Latinas who achieve senior level positions. Therefore, in using this theoretical framework, an attempt was made to "address the issues of inequality from multiple angles" (Bhattacharya, 2007, p. 11), through the juncture of feminism and critical race theory with issues such as power, justice, privilege, and/or advocacy.

The focus of CRT is on how racism is rooted within American society (Creswell, 2007), with LatCrit examining experiences unique to the Latina/o community (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). Following a LatCrit analysis in this study allows for a more focused examination of the unique forms of oppression Latina/os encounter (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). This is particularly important, given the three main goals within critical race theory:

- (1) to present stories about discrimination from the perspective of people of color;
- (2) to argue for eradication of racial subjugation while recognizing that race is a social construct; and

- (3) to address other areas of differences such as gender, class, and any inequities experienced by individuals. (Creswell, 2007, p. 28)

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) and Delgado and Stefancic, (2001) concurred that race is still an issue in determining inequality in America. To help understand the implications race has in Student Affairs, one only needs to turn to Reason, Walker, and Robinson's (2002) study which revealed that women of color with a master's degree earned less than Caucasian males and females, and men of color in Student Affairs positions. In critical race theory, I used the framework to provide opportunities for the participants to share their experiences of being oppressed and to present how society perceives this as being normal.

Coupling Feminist Theory with CRT/LatCrit theory acknowledges multiple realities and multiples truths realized through each of the participant's unique experiences, as a woman, and as a woman of Latino descent. As a set, these three frameworks combine to display both a sense of individuality and collectivity, of differences and sameness, as they relate to understanding the mentoring experiences of Latina women in higher education administrative positions. Each of the stories revealed through this study provides a voice for the unheard, and perhaps shifts us, as a society, away from customary anchors of personal and group identities relating to Latinas in positions of higher education administration. Reading the stories of Latina Student Affairs administrators as they recounted their mentoring experiences, conveys a sense of what they have experienced and encountered, including both successes and struggles, within their organizational structures.

Methodological Framework

This study is grounded in interpretivism, which espouses that people construct meaning from their lived experiences (Crotty, 2004). Unlike positivism, this framework assumes there are multiple realities and multiple truths, which may be difficult to measure due to the construction of meanings made by a person's understanding of their surroundings (Crotty, 2004; Glesne, 2011). As Glesne (2011) claimed, qualitative researchers "seek to interpret people's constructions of reality and identify uniqueness and patterns in their perspectives and behaviors" (p. 19). The belief of interpretivism is that no one interpretation can be true for everyone (Crotty, 2004). This approach "looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social-life world" (Crotty, 2004, p. 67). In addition, with this study, I used an ethnographic collective case study approach in which *plática* sessions and arts based methods were used to collect and analyze data.

In order to obtain a deep understanding of the participants' experiences, I used *plática* sessions as an interview technique to provide "more complex findings" (Glesne, 2011, p. 48). This type of interview and interaction with participants allowed me to explore the different perspectives that emerged when the participants shared their stories and experiences. These *plática* sessions also opened opportunities for the participants to share artifacts of their mentoring experiences as well as the reflective practice of journal writing. By using *pláticas* as an interview technique, I explored each participant's understanding of how they were mentored through their professional career, their experience as a senior Student Affairs Latina professional, and how these experiences led them to mentor other Latinas. The information provided by the participants was ever evolving, as multiple *pláticas* took place, and questions were further developed as other

answers were provided. It was also my intent to gather other data through artifacts, journal entries, and elicitation. Having each of the participants respond to journal prompts and reflect on their experiences produced data that were useful in the analysis of my findings.

Significance

Understanding the mentoring experiences of senior level Latina Student Affairs administrators may assist other Latinas to navigate a career path that leads to more senior level positions in higher education. Through understanding the participants' experiences, other Latinas may be better informed about how to successfully meet the challenges they may face within higher education organizational structures and learn to make decisions which can positively impact their careers. Additionally, Latinas who aspire to reach advanced positions may be encouraged and empowered knowing that the pathway to success is attainable, having now seen and heard from Latinas who have reached positions of authority.

The study may also inform decisions made about mentoring programs, institutional policies, and/or training development opportunities. The mentoring experiences that are described may provide awareness for non-Latina/o mentors who mentor Latinas and provide for a better understanding of the unique needs of the Latina/o culture. Furthermore, conducting this study will contribute to the research that is lacking on the mentoring experiences of Latinas in Student Affairs.

Operational Definitions

1. Administrators - higher education individuals who lead and manage an organization such as a department or division which specializes in Student

- Affairs, and may oversee residence hall life, student life, and extracurricular activities.
2. Aspiring - the desire to reach a certain position such as director, assistant/associate dean of students, dean of students, assistant/associate vice president, vice president, or president.
 3. Higher Education - a place such as a college or a university where instruction is provided to students.
 4. Latina/o - A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture of origin, regardless of race" (United States Census Bureau, 2013, para 1). For this study, the term Latina/o is used as an inclusive way to identify people within the culture. Mexican American, Chicana/o, Hispanic and Latina are used interchangeably to respect the personal preference of the individual utilizing the terms.
 5. Mentoring - a process in which a person with advanced knowledge and experience provides support and guidance to another person for upward mobility in their career.
 6. Plática - simple conversation used as way to educate and advocate through the use of storytelling. It is how younger generations learn from their elders (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2013).
 7. Professional Success - being employed and happy in attaining higher-level positions such as director, assistant/associate dean of students, dean of students, assistant/associate vice president, vice president or president.

8. Student Affairs - a division within a university which provides activities, programs and services for the purpose of enhancing the college student's experience as part of the co-curricular experience.

Limitations of the Study

All studies fall short of perfection in some respect, therefore, the following are limitations of this study. Latinas are underrepresented in senior Student Affairs positions in Texas. As such, I was limited to the number of potential participants I could recruit from to participate in this study. Although I only had five participants, I did meet with each of the participants three times and collected other sources of data such as journal prompts, artifacts, and documents to help achieve rigor.

The findings of this study are co-constructed understandings created by the participants and myself. I, too, am a Latina Student Affairs professional and because of this, my interpretation of the participants' stories may have hindered or strengthened the findings of the study. The participants shared several personal stories with me during the interviews, and at times, I knew of the people that were included in these stories because of my position. While the participants of the study conducted themselves in a professional manner as they told their stories, a potential risk was created by the fact that I am now also aware of incidents, which were described during our *pláticas*. There is a possibility this could potentially be a political issue for us all in the future. In addition, because of these associations, my interpretation and analysis of findings may have been influenced by my own subjectivities. I made attempts with the participants to share my findings and ensure that I represented their voices accurately.

The participants were all born and raised in Texas. The finite regional location of study participants may also be a limitation. While the findings are limited to their

perspectives, their experiences may nonetheless allow for transferability to the readers of this study. A larger sample size from other states, would have provided richer data and provided a better understanding of the mentoring experiences of senior level Latina Student Affairs administrators.

Chapter Summary

The chapter has provided a brief understanding of the lack of Latinas reaching senior level positions within higher education institutions. In particular, there are few Latinas holding such positions within Student Affairs divisions. Feminist Theory, along with CRT/LatCrit, were used as the framework to gain an understanding of the participants, giving voice to their experiences and showing how their mentoring has impacted other Latinas in achieving professional success. Limitations of the study and the significance of the study were also presented.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a brief historical account of Mexican American women in Texas and a review of women in higher education, followed by the intersection of women of color and Student Affairs, literature on feminism, and synopses of critical race and LatCrit theories. Finally, literature surrounding the power of *pláticas* and mentoring is shared to situate my study of the mentoring experiences of Latinas in the Student Affairs division of higher education.

Mexican American Women in Texas

It is suggested that to better understand contemporary issues encountered by women in leadership positions, research should include an understanding of the historical trends of access and opportunities women leaders of the past experienced (Scheckelhoff, 2007). Barriers that were once considered absolute (e.g. the glass ceiling) may have, in fact, failed to incorporate the complexity and variety of challenges women face on their leadership journeys (Eagly & Carli, 2007). This section of the literature therefore offers a brief historical overview of Mexican American women in Texas as a way to contextualize the opportunities and challenges they experienced and to position them in a way that we may understand their stories as well as our own.

As is typically the case when groups of people or cultures are colonized, Indian women of the Americas (located in what we, today, consider Central America) experienced varying degrees of loss *and* gains of power and economic autonomy, first with the arrival of the Spaniards and then later with the Anglo-Americans. According to Orozco (2016), as Indian women married the crusading Spaniards, they moved further

north into Mexico and present day Texas to develop communities. Initially these women were relegated to the most menial of tasks necessary for a community to sustain, if not prosper, by being expected to prepare meats, launder clothes, and make soap. However, by the early 1800s these women were helping to colonize pueblos in Laredo, San Antonio, Nacogdoches, Goliad, and Victoria. They worked in the community to create schools and churches. In fact, during that time, under Spanish law and before the Texas Revolution (1836), women gained several rights such as owning and selling land. While some obtained positions of power classism remained prevalent, and many women continued to function in subservient roles.

During the time leading up to the Texas Revolution and colonization by Anglo-Americans, it was not uncommon for a Mexican-American woman to marry an Anglo. The Colonization Law of 1823 promised single men an additional one-quarter league of land if they married a *Tejana*, a term used to describe a woman who was a resident of Texas and of Criollo Spanish or Mexican heritage (Ruthe Winegarten Memorial Foundation for Texas Women's History, n.d., para 43). In turn, women who previously held positions of power within the community were then forced to assume more familial duties and responsibilities.

Along with the changes in position and power roles experienced by women of Mexican heritage, these women also encountered discriminatory segregation practices by Anglo-Americans. Mexican American women were limited in educational opportunities and as such were denied upward mobility in *any* [emphasized by researcher] position (DeLeon & Calvert, 2016). Working outside of the home was highly criticized.

It wasn't until the turn of the century with more middle class Mexican women

settling in Texas, that a shift toward more activism for rights of Mexican American women occurred especially as it pertained to equitable and fair working conditions, wages, and representation. Looking back at the mid-century mark, before the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, there were few instances of Mexican American women rising to top positions in industry at either the state or national level. With the advent of the Civil Rights movement though, deeper questions surrounding power and privilege began to emerge. Along with spotlighting racial inequities, the notion of feminist leadership began to take shape and become more widespread in the 1970s. It is important to note that Texas mirrored the culturally gendered climate of other states, especially southern states, at that time. Advocacy groups such as the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), the American G.I. Forum, *La Raza Unida* Party, and the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), developed unique strategies to respond to this cultural and gendered climate that was so predominant in the south. These advocacy groups have much history in Texas. In fact, LULAC (originally called the United Latin American Citizen) was founded in Corpus Christi, Texas in 1929, in response to the rise of the Mexican middle class and resistance to racial discrimination. It is cited as being one of the first national organizations to emphasize the role of women and one in which women of Hispanic descent assumed leadership advocacy roles in Texas and the nation.

According to Acosta (2016) these organizations became influential advocates for Mexican Americans as a whole and helped to advance gender, culture, and racial equality. Feminist and cultural approaches were used by these organizations to disrupt structures that reproduced the prevailing patriarchal models. As evidenced in LULAC's

history, Latinas were instrumental in helping to bring about changes.

In more recent times, Latinas in Texas have assumed leadership roles in state government and in higher education administration. For instance, in the 1970s, Irma Rangel became the first Latina Texas legislator; in the 1980s Judith Zaffirini became the first Latina Texas senator, and in 1986 Juliet Garcia was appointed as the first Latina university/college president in Texas and the United States (Von Drehle, 2009). In 2010, Maria Hernandez Ferrier was inaugurated as the founding president of Texas A&M University, San Antonio. It is now recognized that Latinas in Texas are instrumental in shaping the social and economic landscapes of major urban centers such as Houston or San Antonio. As reported in *LATINA Style*, Latina entrepreneurs, using their bilingual and bicultural skills, along with the art of networking learned from their *madres* (moms), *abuelas* (grandmothers), and *tías* (aunts), are entering into traditionally male-dominated fields.

Although increases in leadership representation appear to be cutting across the political, educational and business arenas, Latinas continue to be underrepresented in all three here in Texas, and in the nation. Of the 181 seats in the Texas Legislature 37 are held by Latinos (which is inclusive of Latinas) representing 20% (National Conference of State Legislators, n.d., para. 1). And, as mentioned previously, only a handful of Latinas serve in senior level leadership roles in higher education. In corporate America, of the 20 women serving as CEOs of Fortune 500 companies in 2013, only four were women of color and none were Latina (Curiel, 2013).

Thinking about how few Latinas are represented in executive or senior level administrative positions in higher education, requires us to recognize how, depending on

cultural context and history, along with existing dominant models, practices, and leadership, prevailing notions of acceptable gendered and cultural roles continue to validate colonializing remnants, deeply embedded within us. An important aspect of this study is framing how Mexican American women in Texas were historically marginalized as a group. This then allows us to move toward the literature focused on women in higher education; exploring how cultural and personal experiences are relative to leadership practice and power (Collins, 1986; Núñez, Murakami, & Gonzalez, 2015).

Women in Higher Education

Literature concerned with women in academia is abundant; literature concerned with women in non-academic roles is scarce (Drum, 1993; Fochtman, 2011; Hamrick, 2003; Hornay, 2002; Iverson, 2009; Patton, 2013; Yakaboski & Donahoo, 2011). The pathway for women in academia, in general, has often been cited as difficult to navigate (Eddy & Ward, 2015), a labyrinth of sorts (Dahlvig & Longman, 2014) and a glass ceiling that remains intact with regard to career advancement, promotion, tenure, and rank (Meyerson & Fletcher, 2000).

Academic

Gender and cultural inequity are still prevalent in the academy. While support for women to advance in the academy has gained traction in recent years, Núñez & Murakami-Ramalho (2012) reported that several obstacles remain for faculty women of color. For instance, Latina faculty members, like other marginalized groups, may: experience both racism and sexism across the academy; feel separated and isolated; be seen as the go-to person to represent a specific culture, race, or gender, as a form of tokenism; and have heightened expectations for service to minority groups on campus

(Núñez & Murakami-Ramalho, 2012; Turner, 2015).

Women faculty earns less than their male counterparts, hold lower level positions compared to men, and are less likely to receive tenure, or earn full professor status (Gee & Norton, 2009). As is reported by Wylie, Jakobsen and Fosado (2007), although women earn 48% of the doctoral degrees in the United States, they still do not keep pace holding positions of rank compared to their male counterparts. More current data reported by the NCES, showed that in 2013, women represented 48.8% of faculty in degree-granting, post-secondary institutions. This percentage has increased since it was first reported in 1987, when females held 33.2% of faculty positions. Even though percentages now present a more equitable representation between males and females, dramatic disparities still exist when it comes to breaking the numbers down by tenure and rank. While gains have been made over the past two decades with more women achieving the academic rank of full professor, huge discrepancies still exist between genders. Women held 10% of the positions in 1981-1982, and in 2005-2006 still only held 25% of the rank. In addition, women's salary ranges were 2-9% lower than men in similar positions or titles, and "full-time women faculty are only half as likely as men to have tenure" (West & Curtis, 2006, p.10) especially in doctoral granting institutions.

Administrative (Non-Academic)

As previously shared, literature focused on women in administrative roles has been scarce. A potential problem with the research is that often times the boundaries between academic and administrative positions become blurred when reporting the number of women in *administrative* positions. When reporting senior administrative positions, in 1997, women held 69,432 of the total 151,363 executive administrative and

managerial positions in higher education, which equates to 45.8% (Twombly & Rosser, 2002). The 2013 Almanac of Higher Education showed that women hold only 22% of the presidential positions in four-year universities, while women hold 40% of the chief academic officer positions, and 43% of all other senior level women hold administrator positions. Those percentages decreased when looking at more elite institutions that were classified as research intensive (Dunn, Gerlach, & Hyle, 2014).

Despite the stability in the numbers of women in these positions over the past twenty years, there is still underrepresentation as a whole, and as such there has been more scholarly attention on the characteristics and experiences of female leaders in higher education. For instance, Dunn, Gerlach, Hyle (2014) employed reflective research to explore leadership experiences of females in higher education leadership positions as a way to understand women's behaviors as academic leaders. Their findings suggested that although women do successfully navigate administrative positions in higher education, it remains a male centric realm that continues to present challenging obstacles for women. They recommended mentoring could help women to achieve balance in this demanding academic structure and achieve equilibrium between the demands of their administrative and personal responsibilities. Helgesen and Johnson (2010), on the other hand, examined organizational health and productivity, specifically related to women in leadership positions. Their findings suggested that there are three important perspectives women bring to leadership: broad scale noticing, day-to-day satisfaction, and a focus on the social fabric of the organization. They also reported that despite having a woman in a leadership position, organizations as a whole are still structured to reward traditionally male skills and points of view.

To further illustrate the scarcity of research in the area of women in higher education administrator roles, prior to Jo's work in 2008, there was little mention in the literature about personnel management with women administrators in higher education (Jo, 2008). Yet, with over 4,700 degree granting postsecondary institutions in the United States (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2016), and over 3.9 million faculty and staff positions (Lederman, 2012), employee issues, such as voluntary employee turnover, are abundant; and, as Jo (2008) reported, conflicts with supervisors, insufficient opportunities for advancement, and incompatible work schedules were the three key reasons women administrators voluntarily leave their job. Most often, the relationships being built between employee and supervisor are of huge value in the retention of employees (West, 2007). If the relationships are not aligned, employees tend to leave their employment. Additionally, if no future opportunities for promotion or consideration for other positions in the organization are present, voluntary turnover is likely. Jo (2008) further asserted that development plans should be created to address the barriers that inhibit women from remaining and advancing in the workplace. It is suggested that consideration be given to the demands women face by having to juggle work and family responsibilities. Attending to these issues, providing the tools and resources to help women administrators balance career and family is key to creating the right organizational culture that may affect their overall level of job satisfaction and ultimately their decision to stay in a position (Jo, 2008).

Other research has helped to frame what we know about women's perceptions about their status in higher education. Astin and Leland's (1991) seminal work *Women of Influence, Women of Vision; A Cross Generational Study of Leaders and Social Change*,

used multiple stories from 77 women scholars, college presidents, and leaders in professional and educational associations to learn about personal histories, peer and work relationships, and professional development of women in leadership roles. From their study, the close relationship between women's leadership and the improvement of women's lives reinforced the idea of "this caring, value-oriented commitment as the centerpiece of leadership" (p. 118), which stood out as an important finding. Further, they found that these women leaders were "predisposed to leadership by their heritage, perhaps, or propelled by their special skills and talents; the women leaders also persuasively demonstrate the critical significance of experiences that allow leadership practice" (p. 55). Through their work, Astin and Leland (1991) then challenged researchers to redefine their notions of what makes a good leader. Arguing that for many women the idea of leadership, whether as leaders or followers, is replaced by the idea of people engaged in collective action.

Kuk and Donovan (2004), replicating Astin and Leland's work, used cross generation conversations as a research method to further explore women's perceptions of status in higher education. Their participants included ten women serving in senior-, mid- and entry-level administrative positions at a public four-year research university. Five themes emerged from their study: (1) perceptions of the current climate for women on the college campus in which women are not readily supported; (2) struggling for balance between personal and work life; (3) difficult career decisions in lieu of the perception that career advancement came at a cost regarding time, energy, and personal sacrifice; (4) mentoring and role models play a significant role in helping women to advance in their career; and (5) informal and formal networks are valuable in allowing space for women

to share vulnerabilities and to help each other through difficult times without compromising their position or status on campus. Kuk and Donovan (2004) concluded that although the climate had improved for women administrators since Astin and Leland's study, there are still many issues that women face. They speak of women being discounted and not being supported in the same way as men.

The Intersection of Student Affairs and Women of Color

While it is known that women do not reach senior level administrative positions in Student Affairs at the same rates as White males (Reason, Walker, & Robinson, 2002), the number of women in these positions such as directors, deans, assistant vice presidents, or vice presidents has seen a slight increase over the last 30 years. In the 1970s, reports indicated that women holding senior Student Affairs administrative positions represented only 7%, increasing to 26% in the 1980s (Rickard, 1985). In the 1990s, data showed women held between 23% (Twale, 1995) and 33% (Drum, 1993) of the senior level positions. During the 2000s, the statistics have increased only slightly, with 36% to 38% of women being represented in senior level positions (Hoffman, 2011).

According to the U.S. Department of Education, NCES 2011 data, of the 248,941 executive, administrative, or managerial position in higher education, 50,436 of them are held by people of color (African American, Hispanic, Asian, American Indian, Native Hawaiian, and individuals who identify as two or more races) translating to 20%; and, 30,174 of these positions are held by women of color, accounting for 12%. When funneling down to specific divisions within higher education, little data exist that illustrate the numbers of people of color, specifically women of color, within each division. What we do know from Turrentine and Conley (2001) is that few people of

color are represented within Student Affairs departments. This is problematic in that the lack of minority staff, such as Latinas in Student Affairs, does not correspond to the increases in enrollment by minority students (Turrentine & Conley, 2001). This problem will escalate as more and more minorities, more specifically Latina/os, come to campus and find few administrators and staff with whom they can identify culturally. This is of particular concern for the Student Affairs departments because Student Affairs staff plays a huge role in providing a positive climate for the campus community (Komives & Woodard, 2003). They play an even larger role in helping to connect and support students. When students of color feel connected, supported, and valued through role models they can identify with culturally, they are more likely to persist. If they are not able to connect, then administrators, and the university as a whole, have not fulfilled their responsibility to meet students' needs, nor contributed to creating an inclusive campus climate where both students and administrators can succeed.

In addition to the underrepresentation of women in higher education, recall that Yakaboski and Donahoo (2011) reported that Latinas struggle to secure senior level positions within Student Affairs. While much has been written on the underrepresentation of women in higher education (Cronin & Roger, 1999; Dominici, Fried, & Zeger, 2009; Dunn, Gerlack, & Hyle, 2014; Hoobler, Lemmon, & Wayne, 2011), most of this research has focused on the types of degrees attained, and problems faced in reaching leadership positions, with little attention to race and ethnicity until lately. In fact, Banning, Ahuna, and Hughes (2000), claimed that racial or ethnic topics were scarce over the early years of the NASPA Journal. Not until the late 1980s and early 1990s was an increase in articles dealing with racial or ethnic issues seen. Concern for

minorities, how to deal with diversity issues on campus, and the need for change within the campus environment were brought forth in the literature at this point. Furthermore, during this period, only one article focused on Latino issues. In a further review of scholarship, it was also noted that women were not represented at the same level as men in upper administrative Student Affairs positions (Turrentine & Conley, 2001).

Blackhurst (2000) asserted women in Student Affairs positions have been studied over the years in a number of areas, such as “equity, salary and promotion, attrition, and barriers to women’s satisfaction and success” (p. 573) and limited research on the effects of mentoring. Blackhurst (2000) found that mentoring women was restricted due to a lack of women being represented in senior level Student Affairs positions. More recently, data from the National Center for Educational Statistics (2012), indicated that Latinas comprised only 6.1% of the 54% of women in the executive or administrative positions. The lack of women in senior positions compounded by the lack of women of color in senior positions creates a vicious cycle. Seen even less within the literature are women of Latina descent who have risen to positions of administrative responsibility in higher education (Alanis, Cuero & Rodriguez, 2009). However, it has been noted that women, in general, whose career path has lead them to positions of authority and power outside of higher education, highlight the importance of mentoring. Mentoring has played a huge role in facilitating the transition to the position, decreasing the length of time required to learn new responsibilities and making the adjustment to the work environment more pleasurable (Chronus, n.d.). There have been recommendations in the past to mentor women of color (Blackhurst, 2000; Twale, 1995). However, the literature review showed

a paucity of research related to mentoring of women of color, Latinas in Student Affairs in particular, during the past several years.

Theoretical Frameworks

Because issues surrounding power, position, and advocacy are inherent issues involved in women securing administrative positions, two substantive theoretical frameworks are presented below: feminism, and LatCrit as an extension of Critical Race Theory. Understanding the complexity of what it means to be a woman rising to an administrative position, and more specifically what it means to be a Latina rising to a position in higher education administration, brings together these frameworks in a way that allows the researcher to explore how mentoring has played a role in their advancement. The literature (Blackhurst, 2000; Brown, 2005; Stanley & Lincoln, 2005) has revealed that mentoring can play a huge role in the success of an individual, especially in relation to career advancement.

Feminism

Throughout history women have had a hard time being considered as equals with respect to their male counterparts. Dating back to the 1700s, philosophers, spoke publicly of women as being less than worthy, they were considered nothing more than an object to be used for sexual purposes, and had no capacity for learning or reasoning (Cengage, 2003). In addition, society also accepted that females should only be educated until the age of eight, then trained after that to tend to the domestic duties of the home (Burke, 2004). This was typical of the time; women were expected to be submissive to men, even if it entailed injustices.

In an attempt to change the perception that society had of women and to discount the negative stereotypes placed upon women, Mary Wollstonecraft, a British feminist who is often cited as the founder of feminism (Burke, 2004), published *A Vindication for the Rights of Women*. Her writings refuted the nonsense that society espoused concerning women and advocated for the equality of women's rights (Donovan, 2000). She was a pioneer before her time and also a rebel, going against and speaking against the image society endorsed for women. Wollstonecraft took a risk, even when society was not ready for it, and reasoned through her publication that women should be treated equally with men, especially in education and civil opportunities (Cengage, 2003). She truly believed and advocated that women were quite capable thinkers seeking wisdom through reasoning. She did not believe women should be superior to men in education, but rather to be equally educated; the very notion that Enlightenment espoused. She truly was extending the thoughts of Enlightenment, reasoning as a way to legitimacy and authority, to women (Burke, 2004). Wollstonecraft tried to create a space for women to be considered equals, yet society denied that space and women continued to remain silent, without power and privilege.

As women in America continued to be marginalized and bequeathed with fewer rights than men, women, like Wollstonecraft, began to take action. In America, feminism emerged, developed, and has been documented by three waves. The first wave occurred during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when abolitionists and women suffragists such as Elizabeth Staton, Matilda Gage, and Susan B. Anthony, took the lead to advocate for the rights of women. The next wave of feminism covered the 1960s through the 1990s. This wave grew out of the anti-war and civil rights movements when

minority groups became more conscious of their rights. It was during this time that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed, a newly formed National Organization for Women started, Title IX (1972) was passed and the Roe v. Wade decision was announced (Nicholson & Pasque, 2011; Thompson, 2002; Langley, 1991). While the first wave drew in White women from the middle class, the second wave saw more women of color:

seeking solidarity and claiming women's struggle is class struggle. Feminists spoke of women as a social class and coined phrases such as 'the personal is political' and 'identity politics' in an effort to demonstrate that race, class and gender oppression are all related. (Rampton, 2008, para. 8).

The term third wave of feminism was first introduced in an essay written by Rachel Walker in 1992 in which she described how the second wave of feminism failed to include the voices of young women, women of color and of non-heterosexual women (Head, n.d.). Others such as Moraga and Anzaldúa (2002) and Sandoval (2000) have also been critical in helping to frame this third wave of feminism through narratives and research collected and shared to emphasize the importance of honoring each other's voices and providing an identity for cultures which traditionally have been marginalized. Third wave of feminism aims to empower women to make changes and to gain equality within their own environments and within their voices.

Feminist theory has three main principles which include: (a) women have something valuable to contribute; (b) women, as an oppressed group, have not been able to reach their potential, receive awards, or gain full participation in society; and (c) feminist research should do more than critique-it should work toward social

transformation (Nicholson & Pasque, 2011). It is through these principles that research (Gill & Jones, 2013; Lopez, 2013; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 2002) has allowed women's voices to be heard, shared, experienced, and used as a vehicle to show that women can and do contribute to society by being high achieving women. Women are reaching higher-level positions such as deans, vice presidents, and presidents within the academy but there is still a long way to go to ensure there is parity with male counterparts. When more women reach positions with decision-making responsibilities, then they can contribute to making a change within the higher education structure to help advance even more women (ACE, n.d.).

Women have used their positions of authority to help others who aspire to do the same, shared their experiences and knowledge on how to balance both work and family life, and provided strategies about how to navigate barriers, which have made it difficult to achieve their success (Fochtman, 2011). Yakaboski and Donahoo (2011) urge continued research that promotes action toward a transformation of policies, procedures, and organizational structures that are usually created from a male perspective. As such, feminist research, similar to critical race theory, provides an opportunity for marginalized groups such as women and people of color, to have a voice and not be silenced (Nicholson & Pasque, 2011; Villalpando, 2004).

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Critical Race Theory (CRT) builds upon two other movements of critical legal studies and feminism, from philosophers and theorists Gramsci and Derrida, and is informed by the works of "Sojourner Truth, Fredrick Douglas, W.E.B. Du Bois, Cesar Chavez, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Black Power and Chicano movements of the

sixties and early seventies" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 2; Harris, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1998). It borrows the idea that not every case has one single outcome from legal studies. Instead, cases can be determined by one side taking into consideration a certain line of argument, or interpreting a fact differently than the opposite side, and critiques how case precedents tend to wear away with time, becoming misinterpreted in lower courts or subject to administrative delays. From the feminist movement, CRT borrows the notion of the relationship between power, social roles, patriarchy, and domination (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Within this study, as Latinas, the participants have had the opportunity to express themselves from a different perspective or lens. They have shared how they balanced, negotiated, and advocated for themselves on their journey to professional success as well as for their aspiring mentees.

As the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s started losing some of its momentum for change, several scholars such as Bell, Delgado and Freeman (as cited in Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) sought to continue pressuring for change by disrupting the accepted norms and addressing more subtle forms of racism within policies and organizational structures. For instance, Delgado and Stefancic (2001) and Ladson-Billings' (1998) work explored policies and funding models within education, which appeared to be race neutral, and were materializing within society.

Similar to the Civil Rights movement, CRT questions inequality and, while it was initially rooted in the legal system, it has spread to other disciplines such as education, political science, ethnic studies, and American studies (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). In education, CRT has been used to understand issues such as school discipline, hierarchy, and controversies within history and curricula looking at how race and power have been

used in these structures, and emphasizing the need to change the inequalities found in these structures, which are an indication of White privilege, for the better to encourage an "activist dimension" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 2) where individuals take action, speak up, and advocate for a just and equitable society. Banks (2013) argued it is critical to hear the different perspective from women of color. Both education and scholarship could greatly benefit from this perspective, and schools need to do more to advocate for women of color to be hired for faculty and administrative positions. In many situations, people of color in administrative and faculty positions are not representative of the students with whom they work. Critical Race Theory has also been a foundation for the formation of LatCrit, which is another theoretical frame that may be used to evaluate the intersection of race, gender, and class, and advocates for equality, especially for Latina/os, and other outsider groups.

Latina/o Critical Theory; An Extension of Critical Race Theory

Latina/o Critical Theory (LatCrit) emerged from CRT, as a theory concerned with transforming the relationship of race, racism, and power. LatCrit Theory manifested during a 1995 meeting where legal scholars were discussing the history, presence, and invisibility of Latinos in the United States (Valdes, 2005). These scholars were dedicated to social justice through legal and policy reform. In legal studies, cases were brought forward where Latino voices were not included, especially in relation to developing law and policy. These legal scholars also took note of the lack of representation within the legal faculty ranks. Further, the 2000 Census predictions for significant growth within the Hispanic population caught their attention. To further the discussion, these scholars committed to maintain the issue of marginalization and invisibility at the top of their

agenda. Subsequently, they have conducted annual at conferences to develop action plans (LatCrit.org, n.d.). This movement has since expanded into other disciplines such as education.

In education, LatCrit is a way to acknowledge that education operates in ways contradictory to its potential to oppress and marginalize, while having the potential to free and empower those who have generally been left out (Delgado & Stefancic, 1997). As an example, the material found in textbooks and curricula, which have traditionally been authored by White males, have, in some cases, omitted people of color because the authors did not want to present unpleasant facts and events in history such as discrimination, bigotry, and oppression (Yosso, Villalpando, Delgado Bernal & Solórzano, 2001). In another example, looking at the mission and vision statements of a university, there may be a sense that the organization does value inclusivity in all aspects of their operation, however inclusive practices may not actually be taking place. Statistics show how people of color and/or Latina/os are not represented at the same rates as Whites in administrative positions within higher education. Among college and university faculty only 4% are Hispanic, and 6% Black, while 75% are White (Myers, 2016); within the ranks of executive, administrative and managerial staff, the numbers indicate a slight increase with 5.5% Hispanic, 9.5% Black, and 77.8% White (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). Latina/os have long been concerned with having representation in education at all levels. Throughout history, women, and Latinas in particular, have not been represented at the upper levels of administration in education. Of approximately 250,000 executive and administrative positions only 3.3% are held by Latinas (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). Showcasing the experiences of

Latinas who have achieved success, may empower others to follow, provide hope to, and legitimize the abilities of Latinas to be seen as equals in the field.

LatCrit has been used to disrupt exclusionary practices, biases, and stereotypes. As a framework, it can be used to theorize about the ways organizational structures, processes, and discourses affect people of color, especially in the Latina/o community (Yosso, Villalpando, Delgado Bernal & Solórzano, 2001). The Latina/o community may be affected emotionally or physically because of these exclusionary practices. Through the historical experiences, and the contexts in which Latinos have lived, there is a communal hurt and pain that resonates throughout the community. Building trust with others is difficult, especially when others, who have unequal power, have betrayed Latinos in the past (Anzaldúa, 2002). The dialogue is often hard because differences in power and privilege still exist in organizational structures such as higher education.

Plática

The means by which LatCrit ensures that the "voices of all 'out' groups are heard and interconnected" (Revilla, 2001 p. 2) are crucial to this study. One of these ways uses storytelling, counter storytelling, and naming one's own reality (Delgado & Stefancic, 1997), a practice where the Latino culture incorporates a long rich tradition of storytelling, otherwise known as *plática* (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2013). One way to empower others is by documenting the experiences of successful Latina women through their storytelling. This also allows people whose "experiences are not often told" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 26) to tell their stories by providing a powerful approach to challenge stereotypes (Delgado, 1989) and give a voice to people of color, women, and other minority groups. Stories are not told for their own sake. Instead, they shed light on

masked social realities and bring about corrective action (Aguilar-Valdéz, 2013). In addition, allowing for counter stories and *testimonios* to be told provides safe spaces for people of color to feel comfortable to share their experiences on culturally relevant issues and provide support, advocacy, and empowerment to other Latina staff (Murakami, 2015). Guajardo and Guajardo (2013) use what they term as the "power of *plática*," as a way to learn from other's experiences. For some *plática* may also be known as simple conversation. However, within the Mexican American culture, *plática* is used as way to educate and advocate through the use of storytelling. It is through these stories, or personal *testimonies*, that knowledge is passed from one generation to another. It is how younger generations learn from their elders (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2013). *Plática* also provides a way to name and honor realities of the Mexican culture that is so often unrecognized in school curricula (Delgado & Stefancic, 1997). People can learn much through *plática*; it provides another way to learn instead of relying solely on the traditional ways of learning through classroom settings or reading textbooks (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2013). *Plática* may also serve as an impetus for action, leading others to create change in their environments.

Valdes (2005) stated that LatCrit builds communities and coalitions within the Latino identity while embracing commonalities, yet respecting differences. The mentoring experiences of the participants, serve as a venue for this community building. The camaraderie, support, and sharing of experiences through *plática* forms a special Latina coalition and removes the aspect of isolation once felt before. Having someone to rely on provides a level of comfort that was once lacking, and the increased level of support may bring about a sense of value and empowerment. The idea of community

building is centered on being a good colleague, friend, or neighbor, working to create relationships and equitable partnerships with others, sharing information, and ultimately having a goal to make something or someone better (ACUI, 2016; Valdes, 2005).

Mentoring

Despite 30 years of research, the notion of mentoring is still hard to define. Mentoring is mostly defined as a relationship between a senior and junior staffer who meet to assist the junior staff member with her or his career advancement (Kram, 1985; Welch, 1996). Three key theorists, Erik Erikson, Daniel Levinson, and Kathy Kram have been noted for developing mentoring frameworks. Erikson's frame included "caring for others through guiding future generations" (ASHE-ERIC, 1995, p. 17). In 1978, Levinson and Darrow built upon the concept of fulfilling the "dream" by mentoring young adults through the social and work environments. And, in 1985, Kram furthered these foundations and created a hierarchy of mentoring (Figure 3) which included four phases termed initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition (ASHR-ERIC, 1995; Sugimoto, 2012). Kram's mentoring model is described below.

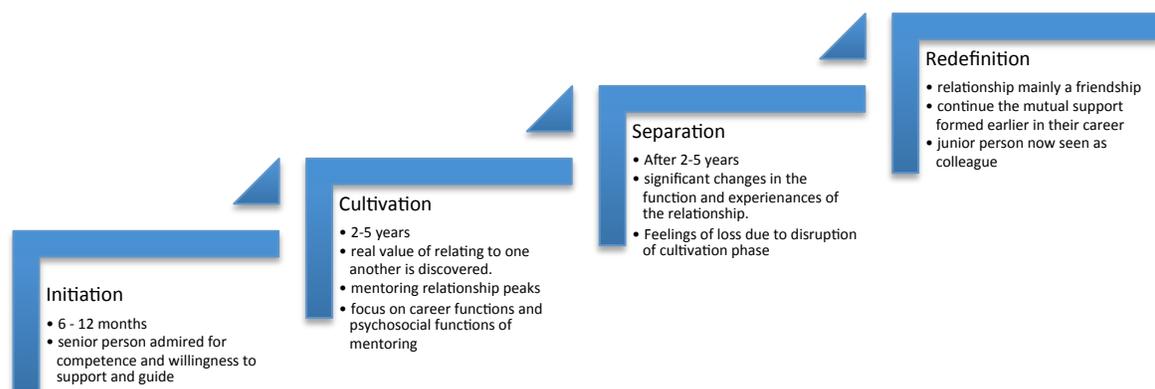


Figure 3. Mentoring Model. Adapted from Kram's Phases of the Mentor Relationship (1983).

Kram's (1985) mentoring model is one that occurs over time. It begins with the initiation phase, which can be described as the stage in which the relationship begins, typified by the mentee imagining that the mentor will provide the guidance and support that the mentee needs to advance in their career. According to Sugimoto (2012), in this phase the mentor also dreams about the desired role that the mentee will take to emulate the values and perspectives that are expected from engaging in the relationship. This part of the relationship can last from six to 12 months.

The cultivation phase, which can last two to five years, is where the expectations set forth by the mentor in the initiation phase, are tested with reality. Within this phase, the mentor focuses on the career functions of coaching, exposure, visibility, protection, and sponsorship, and the psychosocial functions of modeling, acceptance, confidence, counseling, and friendship with the mentee. Depending on the strength of the mentoring relationship, at some point, mentees and mentors move into the next phase known as separation.

In the separation phase, Kram points out that significant changes may begin to occur, especially as they relate to the emotional experiences of the mentee and mentor. Feelings of loss and anxiety are displayed during this phase due to the disruption of the cultivation phase. The separation phase is characterized by displays of independence by the mentee and a realization that close guidance and support are not needed as much by the mentor. Also in this phase, career and psychosocial functions are no longer the same, and the transition into the redefinition phase begins.

Kram noted that in the redefinition phase, which can cover an indefinite period, both mentee and mentor establish a genuine friendship as they now appreciate each other

as colleagues, on equal footing, rather than as mentee and mentor. The mentor takes pride in the success the mentee has accomplished in their career and may continue to provide support and guidance, but at this point, it tends to be from the periphery. The mentee has redefined her or her role and reached a position of appreciation and gratitude for the all the support provided by the mentor.

Formal and Informal Mentoring

In addition to the phases of mentoring that Kram (1985) provided in her model, mentoring could also be described as either a formal or informal (Raggins & Cotton, 1999) process. The key distinction between the two is in how the relationship forms. With informal mentoring, a natural relationship develops in social networks, or at work, based on common interests or attraction to one another. Formal mentoring, by contrast, usually occurs over a period of time in some type of structured environment, such as the workplace, and involves a matching process (Bynum, 2015; Ramaswami & Dreher, 2010; Ragins & Cotton, 1999).

Bynum (2015) suggested that informal mentoring may involve peers, family members, or collaboration with others, and may be just as valuable as formal mentoring programs especially when relationships are difficult to form in the formal setting. Peer mentoring is a relationship formed with peers who are usually around the same age, or in similar work positions. Each person involved in the relationship may feel more comfortable providing guidance and support to one another without fear of judgment because of the similarities they share in the workplace. Research (Bynum, 2015; Inzer & Crawford, 2005) has also found that family mentoring has been critical to the success of educational leaders. When leaders achieve upper level positions, they usually find it to

be quite lonely. While family members may not understand the technical aspects of the job, they are quite adept in providing emotional support, through listening, guiding and counseling, needed to endure tough situations. In collaborative mentoring relationships, the focus is on bringing in multiple people to guide and coach the mentee. Collaborative mentoring may also provide a few more benefits to the mentee because support, guidance, and flexibility may be found in a variety of potentially diverse perspectives (Bynum, 2015).

In order to make mentoring more inclusive and accessible for all, it is recommended that formal mentoring programs be established (Boyle & Boice, 1998; Gardiner, 2005). However, research indicated that formal mentoring programs in higher education have struggled to acquire sufficient mentors especially in the areas of education, medicine, and business, and are less effective (Angelique, Kyle, & Taylor, 2002; Ramaswami & Dreher, 2010). Mullen (2000) suggested there is a need to develop more collaborative mentoring models, and Turner (2015) suggested that cross-race, cross-ethnic, and cross-gender mentoring is also needed to “help in diversifying the academy” (p. 348). Kram (1985) first proposed the idea of people having more than one mentor over 20 years ago. Now the literature shows that individuals learn best in relationships with their supervisors, other managers, or with those whom they directly supervise (Kram, 2004).

Benefits and Disadvantages

The need for mentoring by women is a clear necessity, especially as was reported by faculty who found the work environment to be stressful and isolated, did not have support or guidance, and felt discriminated against (Wunsch & Johnsrud, 1992). Booth

(1996) suggested, through her research, that there are some disadvantages to mentoring. From the perspective of the mentor, the relationship may be too time consuming, and presents potential risk if the mentee does not live up to her or her potential. From the mentee's perspective there is also risk involved with being aligned with a mentor who may not be regarded positively in the work environment. Having a support system to help navigate the political nuances of the environment is essential and mentors can provide this support.

Mentoring is a critical component to assist women within their professional roles. Women should be given opportunities for networking and to be mentored at various stages in their career and by leaders within the organization (Ballenger, 2010; Fochtman, 2011). In particular, women who help other women are crucial to understand what others have encountered and what resources are available to them (Ballenger, 2010). Through formalized programs, mentoring has been used as a recruitment strategy and as a way to meet the needs of the institution. Mentoring can be used to help develop skills, establish collegial relationships within the community, and influence inclusion and respect among peers (Wunsch & Johnsrud, 1992). Mentoring is advantageous for women mentors and mentees. As a result, higher education needs to review their operations to see how they provide opportunities for this to occur (Ballenger, 2010). In addition, if the purpose of mentoring is to achieve a goal such as career advancement, or to understand how mentors give back to others, research into how women mentors use their positions of power (i.e. upper administrative positions), share their experiences, and cultivate the development of their mentees is needed (Welch, 1996).

Research has shown that having a mentoring relationship provides benefits for those involved (Kram, 1985; Welch, 1996). However, there is also research that indicates having and not having mentors and role models, plays an important part in the professional development of educational leaders (Amey & VanDer-Linden, 2002; McNair, Duree, & Ebbers, 2011, Turner, 2015).

Mentoring can offer a good introduction into a profession, such as Student Affairs, and can contribute to the work satisfaction and commitment of women in Student Affairs. Just as development of students is important throughout their college years, it is equally important for Student Affairs professionals in their careers. Becoming a mentor can assist in contributing to both the mentor and mentee's work satisfaction and commitment. Through an engaged mentoring relationship, transforming leadership begins and both parties involved work toward reaching their potential (Rogers, 2005). Turner (2015) also pointed out that the main goal of mentoring should not only be about teaching the system to the mentee but changing the system to have more accessible pathways, and to be more accommodating to the needs of the mentees and mentors.

Although mentoring is beneficial, only about one third of women studied in the Student Affairs profession had a mentor (Blackhurst, 2000). The small number of women available to mentor continues to be a barrier (Ballenger, 2010). Despite the benefits that mentoring can provide to women in Student Affairs, Blackhurst (2000) pointed out that there was not enough empirical data to support these benefits.

Blackhurst (2000) also claimed mentoring relationships did not produce the same results for women of color as they did for White women. For example, Blackhurst stated women of color “perceive more sex discrimination and lower levels of organizational

commitment than White women with mentors” (2000, p. 582). Benishek, Bieschke, Park, and Slattery (2004) noted that individuals desire mentors who are like them, but it is difficult to find mentors within their professions with whom they identify in regard to gender, race, and ethnicity. There are also perceived and real issues associated with being mentored by someone who is not of the same race or ethnicity such as being viewed as a token” or not being afforded the same professional development opportunities as others (Benishek et al., 2004). Surprisingly, not having a mentor may be a disadvantage for women of color in the profession and may “make it even more difficult to deal with the systemic discrimination,” (Benishek et. al, 2004, p. 432.)

While there has been some progress in the way society views women, still today, women continue to face the same issues of being silenced, fighting to be considered equals, and lacking representation in positions of higher education administration (American Council on Education, 2012; Hamrick, 2003; Nicholson & Pasque, 2011). Throughout history men have, and continue to, dominate society; however, there have been several attempts by women to advocate for equal representation. It is through actions of women who have taken risks and stepped out to be noticed to advocate for what they believe to be right and just, that spaces have been created for women to speak and no longer be vulnerable to the inequalities that have been perpetuated by individuals who thought women were inferior. Progress has been made in the advancement of women in society through the business and entertainment worlds; however, in the field of educational administration, there has not been as much progress. This slow change in the advancement of women, in particular Latinas, is what has led me to my study. The higher education environment should be a space where equal representation is visible, especially

if institutions strive to value diversity, equity, and inclusion. Núñez, Murakami, and Gonzales (2015) noted that “by challenging hierarchical notions of mentoring and broadening opportunities for those from marginalized groups to support one another” (p. 89) an opportunity for a sense of belonging and more inclusive environments may be created. Based on recommendations from Ballenger (2010) and Welch (1996) this study looks at the mentoring experiences of Latinas who have achieved success within Student Affairs to help inform practices and policies as well as contribute to the literature.

Chapter Summary

The chapter provided a review of literature with regard to the history of Mexican American women in Texas, women in higher education administration, the intersection of Student Affairs and women of color, and theoretical frameworks of feminism, Critical Race Theory, LatCrit Theory, and *plática*. The review closed with literature covering mentoring. Literature exists to support there are race and gender issues within the organizational structures of institutions indicating Latina women do not reach upper level positions at the same rate as men do. Little research has been conducted into how Latina women have been mentored by other Latinas who have achieved upper level positions within Student Affairs, to enhance the likelihood of their success. Knowing how mentoring relationships are developed and sustained can provide insight into the ways that professionals of any generation can seek a mentor, or how they might become effective mentors to others. The study provides an opportunity to understand Latina mentoring experiences, through feminist, and LatCrit lenses, enabling the participants' voices to be heard and recognized.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

This chapter presents an explanation of qualitative research, specifically ethnographic collective case study, followed by a description of *plática*, as the primary data collection instrument, as well as arts based representation. In addition, the methodological frameworks, research design, data analysis process, and examples of trustworthiness and rigor are offered.

In qualitative inquiry the research questions are formulated to investigate complex topics, in context. Data are collected that provide rich descriptions of people, places, and conversations (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The purpose of the study was to describe and understand the mentoring experiences of five senior Student Affairs administrators, who are Latinas, at universities and colleges in Texas. More specifically, this study included Latinas who have been mentored and are presently providing, or have in the past provided, mentoring to other Latinas aspiring to achieve professional success in administration. The following research questions guided the study.

1. How do the participants describe their experiences as a mentee?
2. How do participants describe the ways in which they have mentored aspiring Latina professionals?
3. What are the perceptions of the participants regarding the impact they have on mentoring aspiring Latina professionals to achieve professional success?

Qualitative Research

In qualitative research, the researcher is interested in finding out about the in-depth experiences of a person or group of people. According to Creswell (2007),

qualitative research is a "process of understanding based on a distinct methodological tradition of inquiry that explores a social or human problem" (p. 249). The intent of qualitative research is not to generalize but to describe, explore, or understand particular life experiences and give voice to those who have experienced the phenomenon under review (Bhattacharya, 2007). In qualitative research, researchers work with participants to share their stories and experiences. Participants make meaning by sharing their own experiences and, in doing so, provide a different perspective or lens through which others can peer (Crotty, 2004). Different people construct different meanings from their experiences over time and this may be influenced by their culture and environment. As such, communicating the context in which Latinas rise to senior level positions in higher education and the role mentoring experiences played in their career trajectory requires *rich descriptions* as well as an understanding from an individual's own *frame of reference* (Wolcott, 2008).

The nature of qualitative research gives voice to shared experiences. This differs from quantitative studies where the focus is to systematically present the facts and characteristics associated with a specific phenomenon by describing how much or how many, and exploring correlational relationships that may indicate cause, and enhance the ability to predict certain outcomes based on specific circumstances (Merriam, 2002b). Quantitative studies are designed to seek *the truth* and see reality as something *out there*, outside of the objective, separate, if not detached from the researcher. However, numbers tell only part of a story; qualitative inquiry gives the researcher the opportunity to present a more vivid, comprehensive, and detailed account of the participants' experience. This process embraces the ontological assumption of multiple truths or multiple realities. As

such, qualitative inquiry does not provide one truth, but multiple truths, showing that the participants' experiences provide highly individual meanings that impart unique interpretations based on the values, assumptions, and beliefs each individual has experienced (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2002b).

According to Merriam (2002b), “qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (p. 5). Qualitative research fits this study well because the participants were asked to recount their experiences through interviews, journal reflections, and elicitations of their lived experiences, both as a mentee and a mentor for other Latinas who aspire to achieve professional success. While distinctions and definitions among the various forms of qualitative inquiry exists and are in fact complex, perhaps even confusing (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 2002b), telling stories and relating experiences creates space for voice that enhances our understanding of the mentoring experiences of Latinas who have achieved executive administrative positions in higher education.

Furthermore, using a qualitative research design for this study made it possible for the researcher to “move between more conventional forms of social science reporting and narrative forms that communicate emotionality” (Ellis, 2004, p. 199). Certain emotional scripts that we follow are socially, culturally, and historically situated, and may well in fact, influence larger social and cultural narratives, that contribute to the societal rules, norms, and expectations for Latinas who aspire to senior level administrative positions. As such, a unique essence of this qualitative inquiry depicts the voices of not only the participants, but of the researcher as well (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983). Through voice,

emotions may be expressed that involve communicating circumstances, thoughts, and feelings about certain mentoring events. As such, Latina voices, both the participants' voices and the researcher's voice, were used as a medium to project meaning and interpret the social, cultural, and professional relations and events encountered in mentoring in higher education administration.

Subjectivity Statement

According to Peshkin (1988), subjectivity is a researcher's quality that affects the results of all investigations. A researcher's subjectivity is influenced by "one's class, statuses, and values interacting with the object of investigation" (Peshkin, 1988, p. 17). Peshkin further asserted that a researcher's subjectivity should be disclosed and shared with the reader so as not to interfere with the outcome of the research process.

I am a Latina. There are not many like me in senior-level positions in higher education, specifically in Student Affairs. I have a passion for helping others grow and develop and in doing so, want to assist more Latinas to achieve professional success in higher education. For this study, I focused on understanding the mentoring experiences of Latinas in Student Affairs who have attained professional success. Until most recently, I have not had Latina mentors in my professional career. While an undergraduate student working in a Student Affairs department, my supervisor, a Caucasian female, introduced me to the fact that I could pursue a career in Student Affairs. She provided me with many opportunities during that time to learn a variety of skills that would make me more marketable as I planned my profession. During my senior year, she offered me a chance to attend a national conference to interview and pursue a graduate assistantship, and the Vice President of Student Affairs sponsored the

funding for me to participate. That moment in time was a turning point for me. Having their support and knowing that they saw the potential in me to be a future Student Affairs professional was an enormous confidence booster. Much like my mentor, I have the desire to help and mentor other Latinas reach their potential.

Attending graduate school away from home and learning more about the field continued to pique my passion for pursuing a career in Student Affairs. I knew then that working in higher education, was what I wanted to do. Following graduation, I married and returned to my hometown with my master's degree in education to look for employment in higher education. Unfortunately, there were no openings. Because of the lack of higher education positions in the area, I worked as a teacher and coach in a public school district, but I always kept my eyes open for a position in higher education. Finally, after four years of working with the district, I was offered a position as an assistant director in a Student Affairs department and have been working in higher education ever since. I have now been in the field for 16 years as a professional and am currently in a Senior Executive Director position. But, I have not yet achieved my ultimate goal; there still is a desire within me to achieve a Vice President of Student Affairs position. Yet, when I look at people from my institution and other universities who are in Vice President positions, I do not see many Latinas or people of color. I have asked myself many times, why is that? The constant questioning led me to create this poem and has also been a motivation to selecting mentoring as a research topic.

Why? Porque?

Why are there not many Latinos represented in the upper echelon of higher education?

Why do we not support our own? Why are we depicted as not being capable?

Why don't we move up? Why does it have to be a pride thing?

Why do we let our pride get in the way?

Why can't we support one another instead of bringing each down?

Why do we tend to act like crabs...pulling each other down when we see one of our own, making it to the top?

Why do we have to be machismo?

Why is it that when I go to conferences there are not many like me?

Why is it when I look at the leadership of professional organizations, we are not represented?

Why do we talk about not being heard, but yet do nothing about it?

Why don't we make an effort, or why do so few only make that effort?

Why?.*Por que?...dime porque?*

So many whys unanswered.

Until we can begin to understand, why we don't make an effort to move forward, we will be in the same place...still asking why?

Entonces, dime porque somos asi?

How can we begin to help each other out?

How can and do we mentor each other?

Methodological Framework

The study's methodological framework is interpretivism, which is a "theoretical perspective that attempts to understand and explain human and social reality" (Crotty, 2004, pp. 66-67). Through this perspective, people try to understand the world they live in and make meaning from the interactions they have with people and with their environment. The assumptions associated with interpretivism suggest "reality is socially constructed, is complex and is ever changing making it difficult to measure" (Glesne, 2011, pp. 8-9). Unlike the positivist viewpoint found in quantitative inquiry, interpretivism allows for multiple realities and multiple truths to be heard through multiple voices. Interpretivism as a framework is well situated for this study since I have explored the different perspectives of Latina administrators to gain an understanding of their mentoring experiences and how they mentor other Latinas to achieve success.

This philosophical stance surfaced in the 18th century through the social sciences with work by Immanuel Kant and later by philosophers Wilhelm Dilthey, Max Weber, and Edmund Husserl (Crotty, 2004; Glesne, 2011). These philosophers were also known as idealists and believed that people interpret the world through their mind. Meanings are made based on the way a person interprets experiences, actions, and intentions in a particular context. The way a person socially constructs meaning is centered on his or her beliefs and background and what is socially accepted within a particular environment. The thoughts of others from a larger group play a significant role in the creation of social reality for that person (Glesne, 2011).

Given the lack of representation of Latinas in these senior level administrative positions, and the fact that student demographics in higher education are shifting as the

numbers of minority students, especially Latinos, increase, it is incumbent upon us to explore how mentoring experiences may or may not influence the advancement of Latina/os in administrative positions in higher education. If we cultivate a better understanding of the dynamics and implications of mentoring by way of individual experiences, then perhaps a mentoring model may be (re)developed and (re)implemented to assist with the recruitment and retention of Latinas to fulfill senior level administrative positions within Student Affairs.

Research Frameworks

The study focused on participants who are Latina and have reached success in higher education administration, particularly in a Student Affairs setting. The methods used in this study included three intertwined frameworks: ethnographic collective case study, *pláticas*, and arts-based representation. Using these frameworks I was able to interpret how the participants made meaning of all their experiences based on their environment, values, beliefs and assumptions, and began to look for patterns and concepts across the cases (Stake, 1995). Generalization was not the intent during this process. Rather, I allowed for multiple truths to be reported through a descriptive representation that included artistic expressions as a way of understanding and examining mentoring experiences through both the research and the people involved in this study (Knowles & Cole, 2008).

Ethnographic Collective Case Study

The research design of the study lent itself to an ethnographic collective case study approach due to the cultural-sharing of the cases (Merriam, 2002a), mentoring as defined as a sociocultural process (Taylor, Bogdan, & Lutfiyya, 1995), and the intensive,

holistic description and analysis of the mentoring experiences of five collective cases defined by context and setting (Stake, 1995), which involved Latinas in senior level administrative positions in Student Affairs at Texas universities and colleges. It was in these settings that I explored how mentoring developed, was utilized, and experienced. Without context, a true picture of mentoring as experienced by senior level Latina administrators in Student Affairs would not have emerged.

Within an ethnographic framework, elements such as shared meaning, shared language, shared experiences, and shared sense of values, beliefs, and assumptions (Bhattacharya, 2007) helped illustrate, describe, and explain the participants' experiences, including their roles as mentees and mentors. This approach helps readers understand the experiences of the participants through the perspectives of a Latina, and give the reader the opportunity to choose to apply the context to their lives, taking in or leaving out information that is useful to them (Merriam, 2002). For example, readers may be able to relate to similar family backgrounds, economic status, or educational experiences as they make meaning of what they have encountered in their personal life and use it to make decisions on how to approach future experiences on their pathway to achieving professional success.

A collective case study is a qualitative design used to explore a particular issue or behavior, within a particular context (Creswell, 2007). Stake (1995) stated there are three different types of case studies: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective. Intrinsic case studies involve the researcher having a genuine interest in the case and studying the case for its own sake. Instrumental case studies explore a certain group to observe a pattern of

behavior, and collective case studies gather and analyze data to generalize findings of larger groups.

In case studies, a small number of participants are used to study and explore a phenomenon or issue. This allows the researcher to provide an in-depth illustration of the issue at hand and tells the participant's story at a detailed or micro level (Zaidah, 2007). In conducting a case study, the researcher describes the issue within a setting using multiple sources of data, which usually include interviews, observations, documents, and artifacts.

Anthropologists, sociologists, and other social science researchers use case studies to explain, explore, or describe certain problems, laws, or reports (Creswell, 2007). In particular, they are used to report on real-life situations to help explain why or how certain things are done (Yin, 2003). Although there are skeptics who do not value case studies, there are successful instances in literature (Hamel, Dufour & Fortin, 1993; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003), in which case study methods were used to help investigate real-life issues, problems, or situations to provide an opportunity to tell the participant's story without relying on quantitative data. Many times, case studies are used because they offer a practical way to provide insight into an issue when it is difficult to find large populations of participants (Zaidah, 2007). For this study, it makes sense to use a case study approach, because few Latinas are represented at the upper administrative level within Student Affairs divisions across Texas. Using a case study fits well in studying this underrepresented group. It seems fitting to use this approach since the profession, as a whole, quite often uses case studies to better understand the experiences encountered within the field to work through practical issues or concerns.

Case studies can also be classified by different categories such as exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory. Exploratory case studies are usually pilot studies where researchers take the opportunity to explore an issue of interest. Descriptive case studies are those in which the researcher describes the phenomenon in the data. Typically, in descriptive case studies, the researcher's goal is to describe the data as they occur (Zaidah, 2007). To explain the phenomenon in the data at both a broad and detailed level researchers use explanatory case studies (Yin, 2003). This study is exploratory. It was used to investigate how Latinas have been mentored and how they are mentoring other aspiring Latinas to achieve professional success.

Pláticas

Pláticas, or conversations, are a practice the Latino culture incorporates into a long rich tradition of storytelling and counter storytelling to name one's reality (Delgado & Stephancic, 1997). In this study, they were used to explore the meaning of each participant's stories of career and mentoring. Within the *pláticas*, dialogue, reflection, and emotions provided the means by which to explore their lived experiences of mentoring (Senge, Kleiner, Roberts, Ross, Roth, Smith, & Guman, 1999; Waite, Nelson, & Guajardo, 2007). Over the course of ten months, the *pláticas* took place in a variety of environments throughout the state of Texas, using both face-to-face meetings and technological platforms like Skype. True to the nature of *pláticas*, the meetings were informal, comfortable, and transpired with ease.

Arts-based Representation

In arts-based representation the intent is to provide varying perspectives or new ways to see the phenomenon being studied (Butler-Kisber, 2002). Several arts-based

approaches, such as artography, ethnodrama, portraitures, paintings, and poetry are used to represent analyzed data (Cahnmann, 2003; Irwin & de Cosson, 2004; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983; Saldaña, 2003). Through the use of found poetry, "the words of the participant are used to create a poetic rendition of a story or phenomenon," (Butler-Kisber, 2002, p. 232) an authentic representation of the participants was produced. The notion of taking the participant's words to create a poem was the starting point that led to arranging and putting concepts together in a manner that may help others construct meaning from the participants' experience.

Cahnmann (2003) stated that using phrases and sentences, and looking at the order in which they are used, helps make meaning and could be used to form poems. I used repetition in my process of creating the poems to stress the importance of points made by the participant and to also create rhythm. Through this method, I hoped the reader would paint a picture in his or her mind, just as the participant attempted to paint a picture for me of what mentoring has looked like from her point of view. Utilizing poetry in this manner provides an opportunity to "enhance the perspective" (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 96) and provides a way to say something that "might not otherwise be expressed" (Cahnmann, 2003, p. 31). I also used a painting that one of my mentees painted for me as a way to represent the overall concepts gleaned from the study. As I was drawing conclusions in the traditional manner of words, I took the concepts described by the participants to provide a different representation of the study. The painting, which I have entitled *Nuestras Raíces*, is shared in Chapter 5.

Research Design

As mentioned earlier, the study focuses on the mentoring experiences of Latina administrators, first as a mentee and then assuming the role as a mentor. It is designed as an ethnographic collective case study. As Creswell (2007) asserted, the study includes examining the behavior of a "culture-sharing group" (p. 96), which is bounded within a particular setting. The case involves Latina senior Student Affairs administrators who work at different Texas institutions within higher education.

Selection of Participants

Five Latinas who serve as senior Student Affairs administrators at universities or colleges in Texas participated in this study. Their pseudonyms are Angela, Isabella, Julia, La Mera Mera, and Santa. Angela works in Southwest Texas as a Vice President, Isabella in East Texas as an Assistant Dean, Julia in North Texas as a Vice President, La Mera Mera in South Texas as an Associate Vice President and Dean of Students, and Santa in Central Texas as an Assistant Vice President. All of them are over the age of 48 and have been working in Student Affairs collectively for over 100 years. Because of their extensive experience in Student Affairs, meeting the criteria that follows, and their willingness to participate, they were selected as the participants of choice.

Purposeful sampling is used in qualitative research because it provides the researcher a better understanding of the research problem. As Creswell (2007) pointed out, it is through purposeful sampling that the researcher chooses an individual who has extensive knowledge and understanding of the research purpose and can provide insight to the study. Participant selection begins with the researcher determining "who or what

will be sampled, what form the sampling will take, and how many people or sites need to be sampled" (Creswell, 2007, p. 125).

The participants were selected based on the following criteria: (1) being Latina, (2) achieving professional success as a senior Student Affairs administrator in higher education, and (3) having been mentored, and having mentored a Latina who aspires to achieve professional success. The criteria helped provide quality assurance for the study. Once the criteria were determined, the researcher used the membership directory from the Texas Association of College and University Student Personnel Administrators (TACUSPA), the state association for Student Affairs professionals, which contained approximately 800 members, to identify women who held positions such as vice president, associate vice president, assistant vice president, dean of students, associate dean of students, assistant dean of students, dean, etc. Once that list was compiled, I narrowed the list down to those women who had Spanish surnames or were known to the researcher as identifying as Latina. This list quickly shortened to approximately 25 women. I then categorized the list of women by position and regional areas within Texas to get an understanding of which positions were represented throughout Texas. I wanted to include participants from different regions of Texas if possible. Based on the categories created, an email was sent to approximately 10 potential participants to describe the purpose of the study, the criteria for being included in the study and soliciting their participation. Only five participants responded to the email, and it was determined that I would move forward with those five women as part of the study.

Gaining Access to Participants and Research Sites

While conducting a research study, gaining access to the participant as well as

selecting a site is important (Creswell, 2007). Prior to our first meeting, I obtained verbal permission from the participants via electronic communication and then received written confirmation with a signature on the consent form during our initial meeting. In some instances, trust and rapport had already been established because of our relationship, having worked with each other through our state association, or having been introduced in previous meetings. For others, building trust and rapport began with the initial personal communications I had with them. Rapport building was an on-going role and I used the initial meeting to discuss the project, review the research purpose and questions, and provide a brief overview of why I was interested in conducting the study. In addition, I allowed the participants to ask any questions and I discussed the practicality of using different sources for gathering data. Establishing rapport with the participants is paramount prior to conducting the study because there may be a time when the participants share information that may be sensitive.

Finding a comfortable yet professional location to conduct the study is essential especially if the researcher does not have a close working relationship with the participants. The sites for the study were varied, diverse locations throughout Texas mutually agreed upon by both the participants and me. Because of the hectic work and personal schedules of all involved, I attempted to schedule *plática* sessions that were convenient for everyone. The first round of *pláticas* took place on the second floor of a hotel lobby, in a meeting room of a hotel, and in my hotel room in Arlington, Texas during the course of a state conference in October 2014. Once the conference was over, I drove to a North Texas college campus and met with another participant in a conference room. Within a span of four days I was able to meet with four of the participants. It was

not until the end of October when I was able to meet with my fifth participant at her office in South Texas.

The second round of *pláticas*, which took place between November 2014 and February 2015, also took me throughout Texas. I had quickly established a rapport with my participants and while their schedules were hectic, my participants provided assistance in meeting at locations that were also convenient for me. One participant met me in my hotel room while I traveled to Houston for my son's baseball tournament; another met me at a small diner in San Antonio so as to cut down my travel time; I travelled to South Texas and Southwest Texas to meet with two others in their offices, and finally, I was able to connect with my North Texas participant using the Google Hangouts platform to meet using our webcams in our respective offices.

The third round of *pláticas* took place from March 2015 through June 2015. Meeting face to face with each of the participants became more and more difficult due to personal and work schedules. Again I was fortunate to be able to work around multiple challenges that came up either in my schedule or theirs. This is when it was determined that for the majority of the remaining *plática* sessions, technology would be used. In March 2015, while traveling to Houston for my daughter's volleyball tournament, one of my participants met me in a hotel lobby. For all four of the others, I used my webcam on my iPad to connect via Skype and Google Hangouts to have our last *plática* session. Three sessions were conducted at various times of the workday with the participants connecting from their respective offices on their campuses; the other was only able to connect at night around 7pm. To reduce potential distractions, I stayed in my

office for the meeting, however my participant made herself more comfortable, and connected from her bedroom in her pajamas.

Membership Role

My membership role was primarily as an interviewer and observer. During the interviewing process, I clearly defined my role as a researcher and learner, and emphasized that I am not an expert (Glesne, 2011). During interviews, I asked questions to elicit responses from the participant, ensuring that I listened more than I spoke. While having our *pláticas*, I made it a point to allow the participant to share as much information and as many experiences as she was willing to provide. I also became a participant observer, utilizing the time to take note of the participants' body language, tone, and gestures to help produce an alternate form of data.

The participants' role was significantly more active as much of the data collected came from the experiences and stories that were shared during the *pláticas*. The participants also shared other meaningful data through documents and resources they received while being mentored, or from resources they had used with their mentee, through elicitations, and reflective journal prompts. For example, Isabella shared a program booklet that she and one of her mentors produced together. This program has had a lasting impact on who she has become, and it reminds her of the importance of mentoring others. The participants' role also included providing feedback of the study as well participating in member checks.

Data Collection Procedures

In qualitative research, Merriam (2002b) stated there are three primary types of sources for data collection: interviews, observations, and documents. Creswell (2007)

added a fourth type, which is described as audiovisual materials and in case studies also includes "archival records, direct observation, physical artifacts" (p. 132). All of these sources serve to provide information that has helped the researcher answer research questions. The primary source of data collection was taken from the transcripts of the interviews. Journal writing, artifacts, and elicitation were also used to gather data. Entries from my reflective journal and analytical memos were further sources of data.

Interviews Through *Pláticas*

Interviews with my participants are described as *pláticas* throughout the study, as they took on a more conversational approach. Merriam (2002b) suggested interviews can take on a formal or informal structure. Similar to formally structured interviews, I went into the *pláticas* with a few questions prepared ahead of time to be asked in a particular order. However, over time, and with a growing familiarity between the participants, and myself these structured interview questions led to a more informal conversation albeit I still guided the direction of the conversation.

Appointments were scheduled with the participants to arrange a time for the *pláticas*. For the study, initial *pláticas* began with leading statements such as "Tell me about yourself and your family" or "Tell me about the mentoring experiences you had." These statements were used to encourage the participants to begin having a dialogue with me and to describe and explain the mentoring experiences, they encountered throughout their career. As Glesne (2011) suggested, the research questions are those, which the researcher wants to understand and the interview questions are those, which are asked, "to gain the understanding"(p. 104). No other formal questions were developed as it was the intent to get the conversation started and then ask follow up questions as the stories

developed. This approach was used to provide an unstructured interview with the participants (Glesne, 2011; Merriam, 2002b). A digital recorder was used to help with data collection. Follow up *pláticas*, semi-structured to unstructured, were generous and open, accentuating the conversational approach and giving me the opportunity to ask questions that were "developed on the spot" (Glesne, 2011, p. 102) based on the experiences the participants shared. Here is an example of a part of Angela's *plática* during our second meeting,

Angela: So you take from these young girls what they bring, and you just (makes a cracking sound), crack the nut and let them keep going. You know, it's a matter of them believing. And so you push forward. My girls are strong. So are my guys, but these girls are...

Me: They've got a good role model, huh?

Angela: Well, I mean I try.

Me: Did you find yourself kind of seeking them out or do they seek you out?

Angela: It's both.

Me: Both?

The *pláticas* continued into the third round and even then the conversation provided a continuous flow. With Julia, I was able to ask more in depth questions as a follow up to the experiences she was sharing. Here is an excerpt from our third *plática*,

Julia: It is very important, and the other thing that it is though is it gives me a lot of hope and a lot of happiness to do it, too. So the mentor-mentee relationship is a positive, I think for both individuals, because I get a lot from it as well, and sometimes we'll talk about research that is being done, and I will learn about

research that doctoral students are doing that I wouldn't otherwise know about, and also it just inspires me to work with the students that way, because I know that they are really dedicated like you to your future and your career and your families. And so, it's fun for me in that way.

Me: From that inspiration, what do you find, or how do you find yourself behaving or acting from that? What does that do to you?

Julia: Well I think that is a good question, and first of all if you're a mentor and you have a terrible mentee relationships, even one of them a lot of times people might say, "Oh no. I don't want to do that ever again."

Me: Right

Julia: Cause that just didn't feel right. And so, having really positive and inspiring relationships with mentees then inspires you to have more. So that's part of the inspiration is that if you have really good feelings about the way that you have helped the doctoral students, I have helped a lot of them over the years, then it makes me want to help more because I realize that there's a lot of benefits to society in doing that and that it make me feel good too. And so that's a positive and win-win for everybody; then why not do it? So that's part of the inspiration. That's how it fuels my desire to continue to help people that way.

Me: Gotcha. Do you feel Julia that you would always be in this type of role? You know serving others and helping others? Has that always been a driving force for you?

Julia: Mm, hmm.

Me: Yeah?

Julia: Yes I think so. I think so, and I think that I realized that interest when I was about eighteen to twenty years old.

In addition, influenced by LatCrit approaches (Delgado & Stefancic, 1997) to the actual *plática* interview process, a non-hierarchical relationship was achieved by maintaining a certain degree of personal presence in the *plática* sessions. For instance, if and when appropriate, I responded to questions posed by participants. In turn, this active role in the interview captured the essence of *pláticas* as well as providing responses with the aim of offering participants “pertinent ways of conceptualizing issues and making connections” (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997, p. 125).

Artifacts

In tandem with the *pláticas*, I used artifacts that were produced and used by the participants as a data source. While each of the participants was asked to provide artifacts, documents, or records of any sort that reminded them of their mentoring experiences or experiences in mentoring others, photos and knick-knacks sitting on desks and shelves, allowed *plática* opportunities to come about naturally. Santa referenced the burros that she had displayed in her office as a reminder of the struggles that her mentor had, that she has had, and that her father had; they served as a symbol of pride. Isabella described the many plaques that she received throughout her career and has prominently displayed in her office to show that she has reached milestones as a Latina woman. As Merriam (2002b) stated, artifacts provide evidence that allows the researcher to understand the topic they are studying and can be quite useful in identifying a phenomenon. Participants were also asked to share documents as artifacts, which they

received while being mentored or used for mentoring other professionals. Angela references a story that she uses many times in her mentoring. She describes it as such,

It's from Leo Bescaglia's book called *Love* and is about the animal schoolhouse story. The moral of the story is that the person who was valedictorian of his class was a (I'm going to use this word even though it's not PC anymore, but) mentally retarded eel who could do everything in a halfway fashion. But the educators were all happy because everybody was taking all of the subjects, and it was called a broad-based education. We laugh at this, but it is what it is. It's what you did. We really are trying to make everybody the same as everybody else, and one soon learns that the ability to conform governs success in the educational scene. And so, what I tell my kids is it's okay to be different. It's okay to be, to want something else and not be like everyone else as long as you're not taking anything away from someone else, as long as you're not hurting yourself or anyone else, and as long as you are able to take care of you and your family. And so being different doesn't mean that everyone has to be a doctor or a lawyer, even though Mommy wants you to be. And so mentoring becomes part of that. For me, becomes allowing people, giving people wings to be who they think they should be, and learning what they love to do is only going to make them a greater success.

The use of artifacts as an additional data source provided, helped the researcher to gain insight on how and for whom the artifact was created, what was included, what was not included, and how the artifact was used relating to the mentoring experiences of the five Latinas.

Participant Observations

Ethnographic methods include participant observations where the researcher, as observer, participates in ongoing activities and records observations (Given, 2008). Participant observations typically take place in locations and settings believed to have some significance to the study's research questions (Creswell, 2007). In this study, participant observations occurred on university and college grounds, out in the community either in hotels or at a small diner, at professional association conferences, and in the comfort of one's apartment. Participant observation occurring in the participant's environment is distinct from other data collection methods because the researcher goes to where the participant is rather than the participant coming to the researcher. This allows for the researcher to engage with the participant in ways to learn more from an insider perspective.

Field Notes and Journaling

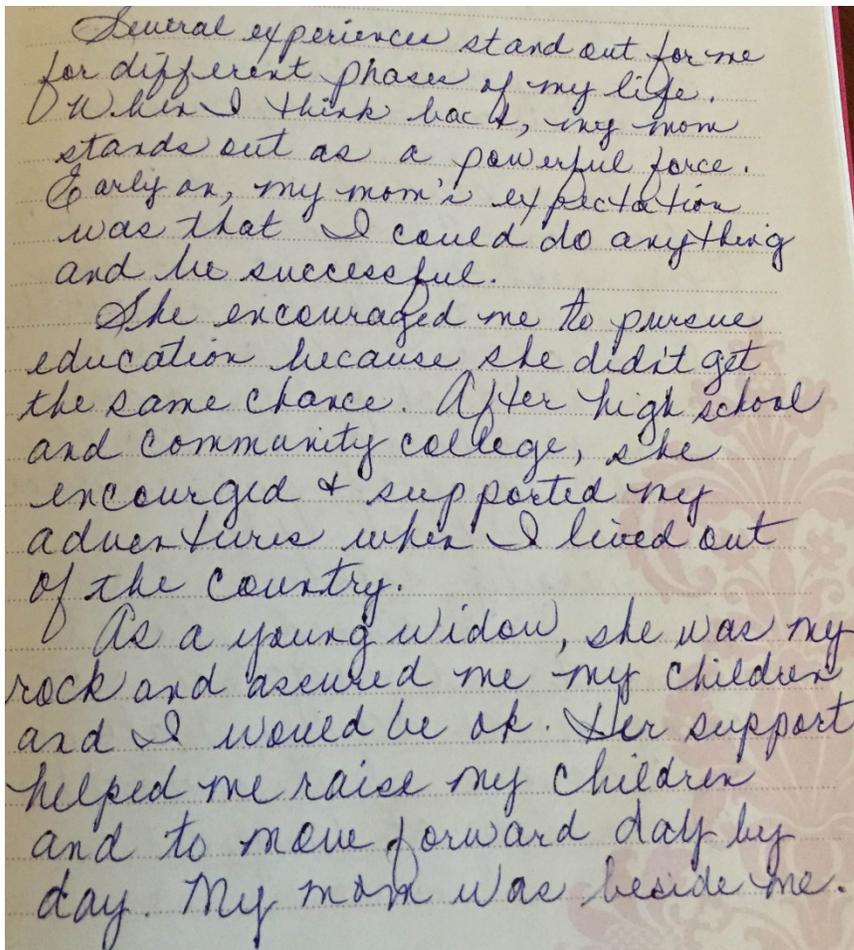
Glesne (2011) pointed out that writing notes of what the researcher is feeling, writing ideas that present themselves, or impressions which are gathered is essential in gaining a deeper understanding of what the participant is trying to reveal. During my data collection, I wrote two types of notes: first, while in participant environments, I made careful, notes about what I saw, recording all accounts and observations as field notes in a field notebook. Second, alongside the *plática* transcriptions I kept a journal and wrote things that occurred to me while I reviewed the transcripts and documents. Below is a piece from my field notes dated October 15, Sunday evening, written while sitting in my hotel room and reflecting on the conversation I had with Santa.

While at a conference I was able to also meet with Santa on Sunday afternoon. She came up to my hotel room and we sat in the 2 chairs that were in the room next to the window. Santa's enthusiasm to help me with my study has been great. From the start, she said she would do whatever she could to help me through this process. I first met Santa when I traveled to her previous institution and a mutual colleague of ours introduced us to each other. I remember thinking then...yes another Latina in the field, but didn't do much at that time to reach out to her. It was around a year later when both of them came to present at our university for a staff development session that I approached her and greeted her as if we had been family...the usual *abrazo* and asking how are you doing? She was approachable and from there a relationship was blossoming. From then moving forward, we would connect at conferences and just check in with one another...again relationship building and having a common bond with one another, being Latina seemed to bring us together. I hadn't worked closely with her, but she was willing to help. When I contacted her via email to see if she would be a potential participant, she said she definitely remembered me and wanted to help out whichever way she could. She opened up today day putting things out there; everything from how people were in the environment to her personal struggles. She is no longer married. During this *plática* session, she shared many things...it was interesting to hear all of her stories. I was especially interested in her family's background. I thought again, here are some similarities to my family's history (Grandpa Julio)..except she knew much more about her grandparents' history than I did of mine. So how I wished that my mom had written everything

down like she said she once would. I want to be more connected to my culture...I feel like I'm an outsider looking in...a product of my environment...I got mixed messages growing up...when was it ok to be Mexican American?

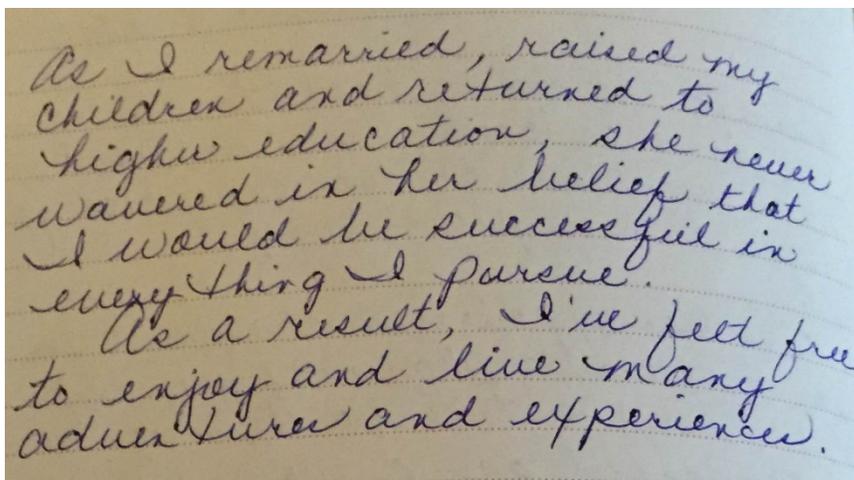
I also used the time to reflect during the research process as well as to write memos on the transcripts to capture my thoughts and begin a preliminary analysis (Glesne, 2011). As an example, during the review of La Mera Mera's transcript, I wrote down memos such as "1st Latina boss described as oppressive," "another Latina seeing her as a mentor," and "emotional story here." Mruck and Breuer (2003) offer that through journaling, researchers can talk about "their presuppositions, choices, experiences, and actions during the research process" (p. 3).

Another form of data collection was participant journaling. A journal was also provided to the participants so that they might reflect as well on the process of the study or to respond to journal prompts. Elizabeth (2008) offered that participant journaling as an adjunct to speaking, might challenge the privileged place interviewing occupies. Journaling itself fits well within the feminist theoretical frame, in that writing is a mode that can incite, if not require "individuals to speak about and reflect on hitherto silenced, experiences and inner-most feelings" (Elizabeth, 2008, p. 16). However, not all participants used their journal. In addition, if a participant did partake in journaling, some elected to send me information electronically in a word document for fear that I would not be able to read her writing. The candidness of the participants who participated in the journaling exercise varied. For example, Isabella used several pages in her journal to provide insight and describe how her mentors supported her, as she became a widow with children at such a young age. In her journal dated November 10, 2014 she wrote,

A photograph of a handwritten journal entry on lined paper. The text is written in cursive and describes the influence of the author's mother. The entry is divided into three paragraphs. The first paragraph states that several experiences stand out for the author in different phases of their life, with the mother standing out as a powerful force. The second paragraph describes how the mother encouraged the author to pursue education because she didn't get the same chance, and supported the author's adventures when they lived out of the country. The third paragraph describes the mother as a young widow who acted as a rock for the author and their children, helping them move forward day by day.

Several experiences stand out for me for different phases of my life. When I think back, my mom stands out as a powerful force. Early on, my mom's expectation was that I could do anything and be successful. She encouraged me to pursue education because she didn't get the same chance. After high school and community college, she encouraged & supported my adventures when I lived out of the country. As a young widow, she was my rock and assured me my children and I would be ok. Her support helped me raise my children and to move forward day by day. My mom was beside me.

Figure 4. Excerpt from Isabella's journal.

A photograph of a handwritten journal entry on lined paper. The text is written in cursive and describes the author's mother's unwavering belief in her. The entry is divided into two paragraphs. The first paragraph states that as the author remarried, raised their children, and returned to higher education, their mother never wavered in her belief that they would be successful in everything they pursued. The second paragraph states that as a result, the author feels free to enjoy and live many adventures and experiences.

As I remarried, raised my children and returned to higher education, she never wavered in her belief that I would be successful in every thing I pursue. As a result, I've felt free to enjoy and live many adventures and experiences.

However, for Angela, the journaling exercise was more difficult to complete.

While she provided insight and answered the prompt that was provided, she also alluded

to how this exercise took her to a vulnerable place that she had not been to for a while. Her entries started off with a descriptive story but then moved to a list of bulleted points. I took this as a sign that this was all that she was willing to share at that point.

Data Management

Glesne (2011) stated "qualitative researchers have used computers primarily as a tool to assist in collecting, managing, sorting, and presenting data" (p. 203). My laptop and the virtual cloud in the sky were my primary sources for maintaining and storing data. I relied heavily on software such as EndNote X7 to help maintain and reference documents. An audio digital recorder was used to record the interviews and the audio files were stored electronically on my laptop and in Dropbox. Transcriptions of the interviews were stored electronically in Word documents. All items, which were stored electronically in the virtual cloud, were secured with a password that only I know, and access to the electronic files on the laptop can only be obtained by unlocking my laptop with a passcode.

Data Analysis

A general inductive analysis of data from *pláticas*, journals, documents and artifacts was employed. Inductive analysis refers to the use of "detailed readings of raw data to derive concepts, themes, or a model through interpretations made from the raw data" by a researcher (Thomas, 2006; p. 238). As Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggested, "the researcher begins with an area of study and allows the theory to emerge from the data" (p. 12). Inductive analysis approaches were used for this study to first code and then categorize the raw data thus allowing research findings to emerge from the frequent,

dominant, or significant themes inherent in the raw data. Emerging themes were established to make meaning (Saldaña, 2009) of the participants' mentoring experiences.

My first attempt at making meaning from all of the data collected was by way of listening again to the audiotapes along with rereading the transcripts of each of the *plática* sessions. While reviewing over 400 pages of raw data in the form of transcripts and journal entries, and looking at photos of the artifacts the participants shared, I used coding methods that included preparation of raw data files, close reading of text, and highlighting key words and phrases. According to Saldaña (2009), coding is the process of simplifying data into short words or phrases in order to recognize patterns. These words and phrases were first typed out as a list so as to have the opportunity to move the words around and begin forming categories. Over time, with multiple readings, a coding framework began to take shape. Initial coding frameworks included preset codes derived from the conceptual framework of LatCrit, the research questions, and mentoring models. Examples of these preset codes included, *mentors, culture, mentees, descriptors*. My own prior knowledge of being a Latina in a senior level administrative position also contributed to using pre-set codes related to *access, barriers, and nurturing*. Over time, another set of codes emerged from rereading and analyzing the data. These emergent codes were those ideas, concepts, actions, relationships, and meanings that came up in the data, which were different from the pre-set codes. Guiding these emergent codes, I used questions such as *What was trying to be conveyed? What is this saying? What does it represent?* As transcripts were reread, new codes materialized and as such the coding frame changed according to the new structure.

To illustrate the coding process, I offer the following examples of excerpts from Angela's and La Mera Mera's *plática* transcripts. In the first cycle of coding in vivo coding was employed, in which codes were drawn from the participant's own language (Saldaña, 2009). In vivo coding is the practice of assigning a label to a particular section of data, such as a *plática* transcript, using a word or short phrase taken from within that section of the data. King (as cited in Given, 2008) states that this coding strategy helps to "ensure that concepts stay as close as possible to research participants' own work or use their own terms because they capture a key element of what is being described" (p. 472). When coding Angela's *plática* transcript I highlighted the following text.

Have you ever heard the saying in Spanish that says "Candida en la calle, obscuridad en la casa?" On the street you're the shining bright light but at home nothing. You know what I mean? So my mother, my grandmother used to tell me that all the time and she used to say, "El candel tiene que bria en la casa igual que la calle. (The candle needs to shine as equally bright in the house as it does in the street.)

You have to go do it. Pa te no te plátican (So no one has to explain).

From La Mera Mera the following texts were highlighted:

The African American lady, I intimidated her. My Latino VP wasn't intimidated by me and he thought "Quien eres tu? (Who are you)" Like what can you tell me?

My mom is still somebody that coaches me. You need to cut your hair every four weeks; you need to get your nails done. You need a dress to wear. Wear solid colors so your gorda (fat) doesn't show up so much.

In both cases, I coded these particular texts three ways: Spanish was used to share a particular story about a collection of advice from powerful mother figures. In qualitative research, language is used to express meaning and it also influences how meaning is constructed. As such, when Angela and La Mera Mera (and others) used Spanish to share their stories, it was important that I honor the richness of the experience that is captured in a particular language and its cultural context. At the same time, translation from Spanish to English required that, as a researcher, I interpret the findings in such a way to remain as close as possible to the participants' experiences and meaning and communicate in a way that others may understand the meaning as it is expressed in the findings, when originating from data in the Spanish language. (Van Nes, Abma, Jonsson, & Deeg, 2010).

After developing a preliminary list of pre-set and emergent codes, I then went through the process of second cycle coding to help narrow down codes into categories. In second cycle coding the goal is to reorganize the data placing codes together to form succinct categories or concepts (Saldaña, 2009). Categories that were developed during this round of coding included *family backgrounds*, *discrimination experiences*, *why mentor*, and *when and how mentoring occurs*. Applying Creswell's (2007) coding process in inductive analysis, categories were eventually combined or linked under themes when the meanings were similar. These themes were used to represent the findings of the study. The following diagram attempts to represent the process of data analysis for this study. This process can be described as cyclical and without end (see Figure 5 Data Analysis Process) as there was a constant back and forth of restructuring of

codes and categories. Further reduction of the data continued to the point where I was able to develop themes that helped to answer the research questions.

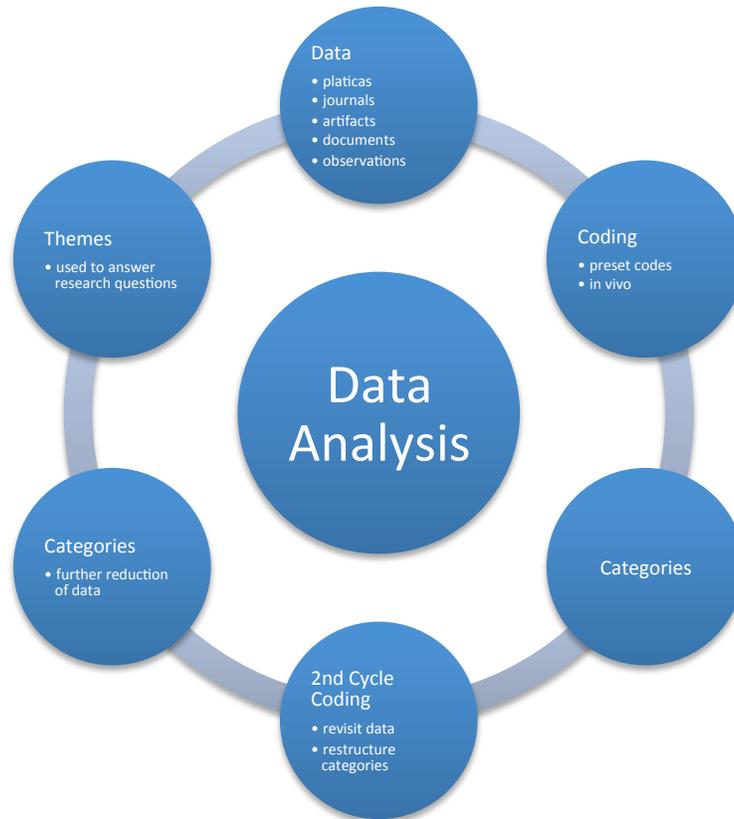


Figure 5: Data Analysis Process.

Data Representation

Since the study is designed as an ethnographic collective case study I represented the findings as Creswell (2007) suggested through rich descriptive narratives supplemented by tables, figures, and with the use of other art-based approaches (Leavy, 2009). What follows in Chapter Four are participant profiles presented in narrative form with rich descriptions centered on how five Latinas who achieved success as senior level administrators in Student Affairs division experienced mentoring. Following Sandelowski's (1991) work where she explains that "narratives are understood as stories

that include a temporal ordering of events and an effort to make something out of these events to render, or to signify, the experiences of persons-in-flux in a personally or culturally coherent, plausible manner” (p. 162), the profiles include the re-telling of certain events for each of the participants. The re-telling of events was selected based on meaning as they relate to mentoring experiences the participants encountered. These narratives were then presented in a manner giving cohesion and direction so that they are made to flow in a semi-linear manner that mirrors participants’ experiences along a continuum of mentee advancing to mentor.

Art-based approaches, specifically the arts as product (poetry, drawings, and paintings), were used to re-present findings of the data. Similar to that of conventional qualitative inquiry, art-based approaches can provide “rich description, highlight lived experience and meaning, attend to contextual factors and enhance understanding” (Boydell, Gladstone, Volpe, & Stasiulis, 2012, p. 21). The intent of using the arts to re-present the data in this study was a way to enhance engagement for self, participants, and the audience. Plus, as Boydell, Gladstone, Volpe, and Stasiulis (2012) suggested, research may be more accessible beyond the academy when using the arts. One way that I used the arts to enhance the re-presentation of data is through the visual representation of found poetry, I took “the words of the participant to create a poetic rendition of a story or phenomenon” (Butler-Kisber, 2002, p. 232).

As I began analyzing and figuring out ways to represent the data and also add to the narratives produced by each participant, I referenced the data from the *pláticas*. I picked out words that stood out to me, some of which included codes from the initial analysis. I took these words and typed them as a list. Since my participants used many

examples to illustrate points during the *pláticas*, I was deliberate in choosing words that seemed to tell a story. I wanted the poem to help illustrate important points my participant made about her mentoring experiences. For example, Angela shared how the advice given to her by one of her mentors has continued to provide guidance to those she mentors. I used her words to create this poem.

Oye (Listen)

Be prepared for anything

Be able to survey a place, group, event

Be able to assess, plan, mobilize

Ya no hables, Oye, (Don't talk, listen)

Be gentle and kind

Be smart and proud

Help Others

Ya no hables, oye (Don't talk, listen)

Protect those you Love

Hace Caso (pay attention)

Hace algo (do something)

Oye (Listen)

Another way the arts were incorporated in this study was through the use of drawings and painting to represent overarching themes. These can be seen in Chapter V. Chaplin (1994) argued that visual representation is increasingly influential in shaping our view of the social world. For instance, in trying to capture the essence of how the

participants described their mentoring experiences as a whole, I used a painting that symbolizes the family tree that is created through the mentoring experiences described by the participants. The colors used in the painting reflect the stories and concepts shared by La Mera Mera, Isabella, Julia, Angela, and Santa.

Reciprocity and Ethics

Giving back to participants for being a part of the study, or reciprocity, is an important facet to consider while conducting qualitative research (Creswell, 2007). Participants spent valuable time, and put much effort into providing items that I requested through journal writing, documents, and sharing stories that at times resulted each of them experiencing a range of emotions. From tears to laughter to joy and frustration, each participant revealed personal and professional aspects of their lived mentoring experiences. In turn, I made certain that I was fully *present* while listening during the *pláticas* and reiterating how their stories are of great importance (Glesne, 2011). While a price can't be placed on the data produced by the participants, I chose to give them an appreciation gift card in the amount of \$25. I also provided written acknowledgement through personal thank you cards.

Because of the close-knit relationships that are established in the field of Student Affairs, there were minor ethical issues that emerged during the interview process. This included stories of individuals whom I know. I learned of things that were "potentially dangerous to some people" (Glesne, 2011, p. 168) in regard to working environments and relationships. When this occurred, I reassured the participants that all the information I gathered was kept confidential and their confidentiality would be maintained through the use of pseudonyms.

Trustworthiness and Rigor

In order to maintain trustworthiness and rigor, I worked to ensure that the following items were part of the research process: time in the field, triangulation, peer review and debriefing, research bias, member checks, rich thick description, and external audit (Creswell, 2007; Glesne, 2011). As a qualitative researcher, it is important to spend a great amount of time engaging with the participants and observing many things over a period of time. Over the course of ten months, each participant was involved in three *pláticas*. In some cases, all three *pláticas* were held at their respective institution. For other cases, a *plática* may have been held after hours at a professional conference or via Skype or Google Hangouts. In all cases, the *pláticas* provided opportunities to build rapport with the participants, build trust, and better understand the culture. By spending an extended amount of time in the field, I was able to learn more about the participants' mentoring experiences as well as about them as a person. The multiple *pláticas* with each participant allowed for enhanced dialogue to occur and brought out different perspectives. Additionally, the extended time spent with one another supported the notion of being able to continue the story, pick up where we last left off, and allowed me to follow up on details or questions I had from previous *pláticas* that needed clarification. I also continued to collect additional data, which was helpful in analyzing and presenting my findings. Contributing to the trustworthiness of the themes that emerged was that participants were from different institutions of higher education. Having a group of participants from diverse educational settings provided an opportunity to "look at the data from different perspectives and viewpoints to get a holistic picture of the environment (Jensen, 2008, p. 139). Triangulation, the process of using "multiple data collection

methods, multiple sources, and multiple theoretical perspectives" (Glesne, 2011, p. 49), also occurred in this study. My colleagues who work with me in the field of Student Affairs and those who have gone through the doctoral process reviewed my study and provided peer review and debriefing. The feedback and critiques I received held me accountable and assisted in ensuring that my own subjectivities were not taking over in the writing I produced. By presenting my subjectivities or research biases, I became aware of my own preconceptions and values that I brought to this study (Creswell, 2007). Disclosing it to the readers and keeping it in check through reflections in my journal helped me address my own notions and diminish any personal influence on the outcome of the study.

Throughout the research process, the participants were active members as well. They functioned as a pre-editor, while I conducted member checks. Member checks involved sharing transcripts, data analyses, and drafts of the final study with the participants and having them review it. This step was critical to ensure that I was not misrepresenting the information which I gathered and gave the participant an opportunity to provide feedback for accuracy (Glesne, 2011).

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I provided an overview of the qualitative study, described qualitative research and my subjectivity, used interpretivism as the methodological framework, and ethnographic case study, *pláticas*, and arts-based representation as the methods. I further explained and described the research design of the study, data collection methods, data management, data analysis process and spoke to how the outcomes of the study were represented. Finally, I presented ethical considerations that

occurred and outlined the items, which I used to provide trustworthiness and rigor for this study.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to describe and understand the experiences of five senior Latina Student Affairs administrators at higher education institutions in Texas who have been mentored and have provided or are providing mentoring to Latinas who aspire to achieve professional success in administration as well.

Three research questions were addressed in this study. They were: (1) how do the participants describe their experiences as a mentee; (2) how do the participants describe the ways in which they have mentored aspiring Latina professionals; and, (3) what are the perceptions of the participants regarding the impact they have on mentoring aspiring Latina professionals to achieve professional success? The literature suggests there is a paucity of research related to mentoring of women of color, Latinas in Student Affairs in particular, during the past several years.

Organization of the Chapter

This chapter provides an in depth description of each participant, presented as a case. First, advanced graphic organizers introduce the reader to each woman. Each participant was given the opportunity to choose her own pseudonym. Pseudonyms represent a person in their personal lives and are described in Figure 6 in this chapter entitled, “All in a Name.” Figure 7 provides a brief descriptive overview of the participants, how they self-identify culturally and ethnically, their approximate age at the time of the study, their educational background, and the educational background of their parents, as well as the current professional position held at a particular type of higher education institute. Figure 8, entitled “Participants’ Mentors,” provides a visual of the

type of mentors each of the participants had, categorized as familia, professors, administrators, or other. The last graphic organizer (Figure 9) “*Experiencias Tutoría* (Mentoring Experiences)” presents the themes that emerged from each of the cases.

Second, thick, rich descriptions of each case, detailing family ties, educational background, and respective careers are presented as a narrative. Interwoven within each case are descriptions of the participants’ mentoring experiences, the mentoring they have provided to other Latinas, as well as offering their reasons for mentoring. Periodically, within these Latina stories of mentoring I enter the conversation with my own narrative and reflections. As each participant shared some personal experience I found certain themes either resonated with my own mentoring experiences as a Latina senior level Student Affairs administrator or challenged me to think about things differently. Together, these shared experiences may help others benefit from our knowledge and experiences. These narratives are especially important because as the literature has shown Latina mentoring in Student Affairs has not been well documented and according to Guajardo and Guajardo (2013), Latina voices are often excluded. In addition, as Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) recommended, this type of study provides an opportunity for minority voices to be heard and contribute a different perspective to the deficit mindset that is usually portrayed for minority groups.

Participants

Pseudonym	Reason for Name
La Mera Mera	Being the one in charge or at the top
Isabella	Wanted to be a princess/queen; a woman in charge
Angela	Honoring her grandmother and recognizing her strength
Julia	Honoring her sister whom she wants to honor
Santa	Researcher's mom's name; honoring the generation that came before her and paved the path for those who followed

Figure 6. All in a Name.

	Approximate Age	Identifies as:	Education	Parents Education	Position	Type of Institution
La Mera Mera	48	Mexican American	PhD	Mom-Master Dad-Master	Associate VP & Dean of Students	4 year public
Isabella	65	Chicana	Masters	Mom-some HS Dad-very little	Assistant Dean of Diversity	4 year public
Angela	54	Mexican American	PhD	Mom-Master Dad-GED	Vice President	4 year public
Julia	65	Chicana	PhD	Mom-HS Dad-HS	Vice President	Community College
Santa	60	Mexican American	Masters	Mom-GED Dad-Associate Degree	Assistant Vice President	4 year public

Figure 7. Educational Background.

	Familia	Professors/Faculty	Administrators	Other
La Mera Mera	Mom		African American Male Exec. To President Latino Provost Latina President Latino VP Latina VP	
Isabella	Mom	White Female Jewish Male	White Female	TACHE members German Woman
Angela	Mom Dad Grandfather		Latina Principal White Male President White Male Dean	
Julia	Mom Dad Sister	Latinos Chicanos	Chicano Administrators	MAYO members TACHE members
Santa	Grandmothers Dad	Latinos	African American Female HR Director Mexican Female	Latino VP of Major Company HACU members

Figure 8. Participants' Mentors.

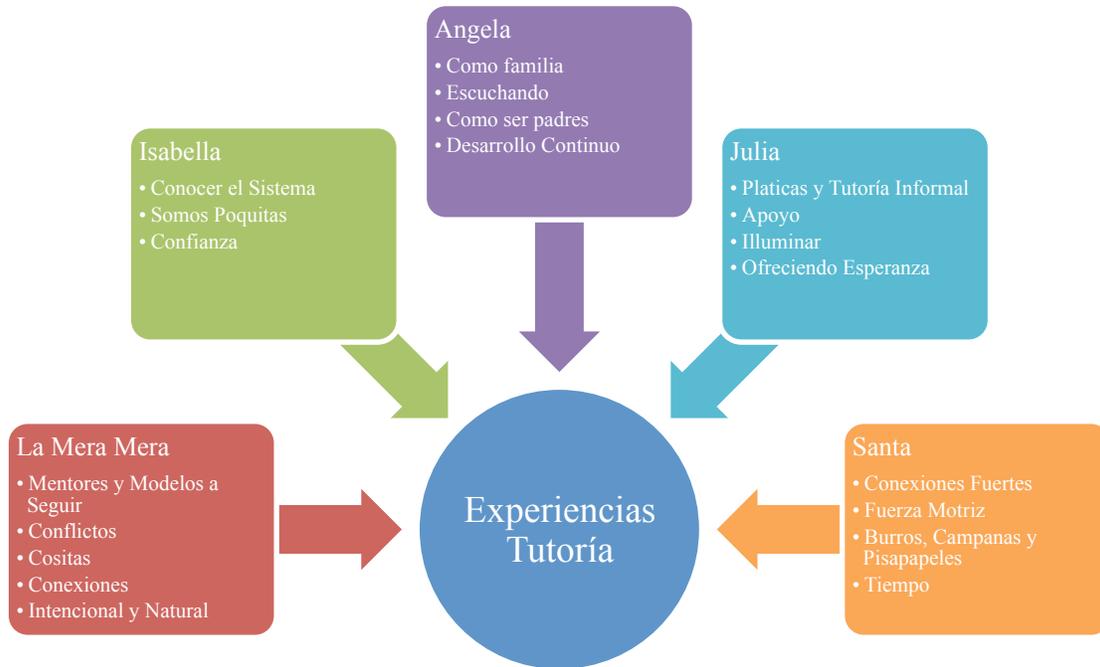


Figure 9. *Experiencias Tutoría* (Mentoring Experiences).

La Mera Mera

La Historia de La Mera Mera (La Mera Mera's Story)

La Mera Mera was raised in the Rio Grande Valley. She is 48 years of age. Her story is a little different from others in the study in that she is not a first generation college student. Her parents were migrant workers but they graduated high school and also attained their master's degrees. She grew up in an environment where she saw many Latinos holding professional positions in her community since the majority of the community was Latino. She was involved in extracurricular activities and when she graduated high school, she attended an out of state 4-year private university. It wasn't until her senior year in high school when she came to the realization that she was privileged compared to other Latinos in the community. She was exposed to a different environment when she left home. From her perspective, being Latina was actually an

asset. She was hired because of her Latina identity to help recruit other minorities to the institution where she first worked.

She has a strong character and attributes that to the upbringing she had from her parents and her Catholic faith but yet is sensitive and emotional when it comes to genuine interactions with individuals. Throughout the time spent with La Mera Mera, I observed her move through a range of emotions. At times she would smile happily when she reflected on the positive interactions she had with students and staff and then there were times when her face would grimace, causing her forehead to wrinkle and her eyes to squint when she would tell of the disappointing or frustrating moments she encountered as a mentor. Several times, her eyes would tear, or she would choke up as she tried to continue her story, when speaking of proud moments or those that caused much pain and sorrow.

Her success in her career has been in higher education serving in many roles but her passion lies in working with students who attend Hispanic Serving Institutions. She is the type of person who wants to make a difference or impact in people's lives, especially those who may not have a role model/mentor to guide them in the right direction. She feels that she is lucky to have been mentored by others who looked like her in her life, but knows that is usually not the case. La Mera Mera has her doctorate degree and serves as an Associate Vice President and Dean of Students.

Mentores y Modelos a Seguir (Mentors and Role Models)

As a young undergraduate student, La Mera Mera identified as a Chicana. She was recruited to a private 4-year private university out of the state of Texas. While on campus, she quickly learned that there was only one Latina professional on campus and

she sought her out. La Mera Mera would frequently visit the Latina, the “only brown face,” during her freshman year mostly to say hi and to keep a connection. At the end of her freshman year, the Latina she looked up to was leaving. Prior to leaving, she asked La Mera Mera to interview for a position and, as a result, she became a minority student recruiter. From that position, La Mera Mera was then recruited for an alumni association position. At this time the alumni association was looking for a Latina representative and La Mera Mera fit the description. She sat in that position for a short while and when the director was fired the Vice President offered her the first Assistant Director of Minority Affairs position.

Shortly thereafter, the Executive Assistant to the President, invited La Mera Mera to breakfast and he began to tell her that she had the talent to be a leader in higher education and being a Latina was advantageous. He encouraged her to earn her master and doctorate degrees. This interaction was the first time La Mera Mera had someone begin to mentor her within her professional career. While she realized that she was “a token Latina at a lot of things” she felt empowered and learned to say, “As long as I have a voice and a vote, I’ll serve. If I’m just here for window dressing, I won’t.” La Mera Mera attributes this conversation from an African American male as the change to everything in her life. He was someone who was thoughtful and for the first time she heard that she was important and had something to give to others. She later completed her Master’s of Business Administration with the help of her first true mentor.

La Mera Mera’s other mentor was the director of the alumni association, who was the “epitome of leadership” and was a supervisor whom she held everyone else to because of his supportive and encouraging demeanor. He was also the one from whom

La Mera Mera learned that names and relationships matter. He knew how to work a room, how to establish personal relationships, and knew many things about the people with whom he was engaging; he was a “charismatic and transformational leader.” La Mera Mera wanted to “emulate him as a person” and still aspires to do so.

La Mera Mera recalls another crucial mentor was a Latino male who happened to be a provost. The provost recruited her for both a position and the doctoral program where he worked. He recruited her hard and said “I need you” and she knew she wanted to work for him especially since his campus was a Hispanic Serving Institution. She figured out that Latinos at other colleges and universities needed her as a role model so she decided to move back to Texas especially after working for a female Black boss in Student Affairs who was “a tyrant; very oppressive” and did everything to put her down. La Mera Mera credited this to *celos* (jealousy) and insecurity. Her boss was not from “higher education” nor did she know the “system” of the university. There was not much that her boss could relate to but yet La Mera Mera could. She learned how not be a good mentor/role model and that relationships matter.

La Mera Mera’s next supervisor, whom she also considered as a mentor, opened many doors for her especially through professional organizations. Her mentor introduced her to many people and helped make the connections easier by being around and teaching her how to network with other colleagues. It was from attending conferences and having her mentor guide her that La Mera Mera was able to learn how to navigate the dynamics of meeting new people and continuing those relationships even when they did not entail day-to-day interactions.

Conflictos (Conflicts/Struggles)

After her experiences in working with male mentors, La Mera Mera moved on to work with her first Latina boss. She thought it was going to be great working for a Latina Vice President but quickly realized that the VP's leadership style was oppressive and within a few months, La Mera Mera knew she made a mistake. She tried for several years to find other job opportunities; interviewed with several other universities but learned that the VP kept her from developing professionally. "She didn't like my relationships with people. She didn't like my popularity with people. She didn't like my success at project management and creativity and marketing. So I didn't go anywhere. I didn't go to any national conferences." However, there was an opportunity that couldn't be taken away from her. La Mera Mera was nominated by the university president to an executive leadership training experience. Part of that experience was to have a university president as a mentor. She met with the president of her current university to discuss possible mentors and decided on another Latina. Over the course of the training, the Latina University President and La Mera Mera charted out the exposure she would have. It involved several one-day development meetings, visits with university and higher education organizations, shadowing, and personal and professional conversations. During these *pláticas*, La Mera Mera learned about "her sacrifices in her marriage, raising her son, her career choices" and how envy can play a huge role in dismantling the legacy of a president through the political climate of higher education.

After twelve years of what felt like a constant set back, La Mera Mera moved on to another university where she would work again with another Latina VP. This time her experiences were much better. La Mera Mera worked with someone who was not

insecure and let her do things her way, allowing her to solve problems and take the lead. After about a month into her new job, La Mera Mera received praises such as “You’re great. You’re golden.” In just a short period of time, the positivity continued. La Mera Mera heard the following during her sixty-day evaluation, “What I appreciate about you is you’re in charge. Your people are following you, you know how to make decisions, and you know how to carry them out.” She was so overwhelmed with appreciation and was grateful for being acknowledged that she cried. It was a long time coming. La Mera Mera forgot that felt like...she had “scars.”

Scars have been a part of La Mera Mera’s life not only in her professional career but also within her personal life. While La Mera Mera acknowledges that her mom has been a role model for her she also serves as a mentor. Her mom is still someone who coaches her. “You need to cut your hair every four weeks. You need to get your nails done. You need a dress to wear. Wear solid colors so your *gorda* (fat) doesn’t show up so much.” She stresses that her mom is very critical of her and she doesn’t need to hear the things that she says but knows that she is very proud of her and the things that she has accomplished.

Cositas (Little Things)

La Mera Mera also recalls the *cositas* (little things) that her mentors provided throughout her professional career. One of great significance that she described had to do with a sentimental gift she received from a Latino male mentor. She was quite surprised in him giving her such an intimate item, a necklace with the university seal on it. Receiving this gift from him made her cry. The gift itself was a contradiction to the love/hate relationship that they had. “So he never held me back, but he did question me

and he did criticize.” The necklace has reminded La Mera Mera that his mentorship was a special relationship and one that helped her through her professional success. “He remembered, and he acknowledged me as an alum, and as a colleague, it just felt real special.”

In addition, she also recollects another *cosita* (Figure 10) that was given to her from her most recent mentor, a Latina female. The trinket, an angel holding flowers, symbolizes the gift of thanks. It was during her mentor’s last day at work that she met with La Mera Mera to thank her for all the work she had contributed to the organization as well as the great working relationship that they had. What surprised La Mera Mera the most was that her mentor was giving her a gift instead of it being the other way around and providing a gift to her mentor. This *cosita* constantly reminds La Mera Mera of the empowerment she received from her mentor as well as the professional growth she reached after many years of being stunted.



Figure 10. Thank You Angel Statue.

And yet what seems to have been the most significant *cosita* that La Mera Mera remembers of her mentors was the acknowledgement page of her dissertation. When I asked why she thought of this as another *cosita*, she stated that her dissertation still means a lot to her even though it was completed 18 years ago. “I stood on their shoulders to get there. I had reached a significant milestone for me professionally and personally, because of them. So I mean, where else do you acknowledge somebody so permanently?” These *cositas* from her mentors and the one she provided seem to be an indication of the respect that they all had for each other; mentors becoming peers throughout the relationship.

Conexiones (Connections)

La Mera Mera continued her connections and relationships when she became a mentor to others. While an assistant director for multicultural affairs, she recruited former students who had recently graduated. With them she emphasized the importance of succession planning and using their cultural connections to recruit and hire for positions.

When connections are lacking in the relationship, mentoring will not occur especially when two people do not have the same vision or goals. La Mera Mera shared this about one Latina with whom she had to break her connection. The young woman who worked with her began to show signs of poor judgment, treating people mean, and lacking in interpersonal skills. La Mera Mera became less accessible to her and as a result of this she knew she couldn't continue to guide, coach, or devote time to someone who was not flexible or willing to adjust. She did not want someone who was exactly like her, but rather, someone who would "at least listen to feedback and try do to something better or productive by it."

The loss of connections plays an important role in the mentoring of others. As La Mera Mera described this incident it reminded me of a similar situation that occurred with a previous mentee of mine. After several years of not working closely together, my mentee reached out via email to ask for a letter of recommendation for a nomination to a position within our professional association. During our previous mentoring relationship the constant advice and coaching I provided to him dealt with his interpersonal communication skills. This was his weakest trait, and people he interacted with took notice of it. It was not a good thing. So for him to reach out to me via email and ask for

support was not something I could do. For one reason, I hadn't interacted with him in over five years and secondly I didn't think it was the right thing to do since I could not speak of his current abilities. In addition, my view of him using such an impersonal way to request a nomination, in my opinion, revealed that he hadn't viewed the coaching and guidance, which I provided to him years before, on interpersonal communication skills important. I denied his request; the connections we had once before were no longer in place.

Intencional y Natural (Intentional and Natural)

La Mera Mera aptly describes mentoring as being intentional and natural and reinforces the idea that natural relationships are the ones that she puts in more time and energy. La Mera Mera has been described before as maternal, and she asserts that, "It fits how I feel, you know, passionately about helping and caring about somebody."

When I asked La Mera Mera what stands out the most about those that she mentors, she passionately answers

A real sense of pride about their success and my role in it. You know when one of my mentees got the job as an assistant vice president, I'm like, 'That's so frickin' awesome. Like I had a little bit to do with that because I hired her.

La Mera Mera coached her in her professional success from an advisor to an assistant director, to director and now assistant vice president. She feels proud knowing that she has reached an assistant vice president position and will continue to be proud wherever it is that she goes in her career.

La Mera Mera exhibited the pride she felt through her gleaming eyes and her radiant smile as if again one of her own children had reached such a pinnacle. And while

there was no blood relation, she was still very proud of the success her mentee had achieved. As we continued to have our *plática*, I could not help but notice all of the *cositas* she had arranged in her office. The pride is also evident in her office with articles gathered all around. They are *cositas* (little things) that have been given to her from mentees over the years. They are prominently displayed around her office as a reminder of those mentoring relationships she has had. The tree picture frame (Figure 11) holds pictures from previous staff that she has mentored. They gave it to her when she left her last position and they put pictures of themselves in it as a way for her to remember them. As she described who each person was in the picture there was again a sense of pride about her. She continued on as she pointed to each picture, “She’s followed me here; he’s a director; she has to finish her degree and get a real job; I call these two my mini-mes. She’s a Latina mini-me.” And then there was a huge beautiful painting (Figure 12) that I couldn’t help but notice when entering her office suite. As we walked out of her office on the way to the departmental potluck lunch that afternoon, La Mera Mera reminded me that the painting on the wall, had been painted by one of her mentees and given to her when she left the university where they both worked. It was something that she cherished very much and proudly displayed. She takes it with her wherever she goes and ensures that it is with her while at work. There was not much more described about the painting besides its meaningful impact that it has had on her as a mentor and that her mentee would produce something so beautiful to gift to her.

Sitting and reflecting on the things that La Mera Mera provided as artifacts that reminded her of her mentors and mentees, I couldn’t help but notice that there were angels present in several of the pieces. The obvious one was the angel holding flowers

trinket, the Someone Special frame with a small angel in the middle of the frame holding her hands out (Figure 12) given to her by someone who considered her as a role model. The text reads “You are someone very special an Angel in disguise. Thank you for always being there with a listening ear, a caring smile, and gentle words so wise.” It was displayed so prominently near her workspace in her office. The last piece was the abstract colorful painting. Trying to interpret the painting, I cannot help but see an angel spreading her wings wide, providing the care, guidance, and support that are seen in the mentoring relationships that La Mera Mera has been involved in with her mentees.

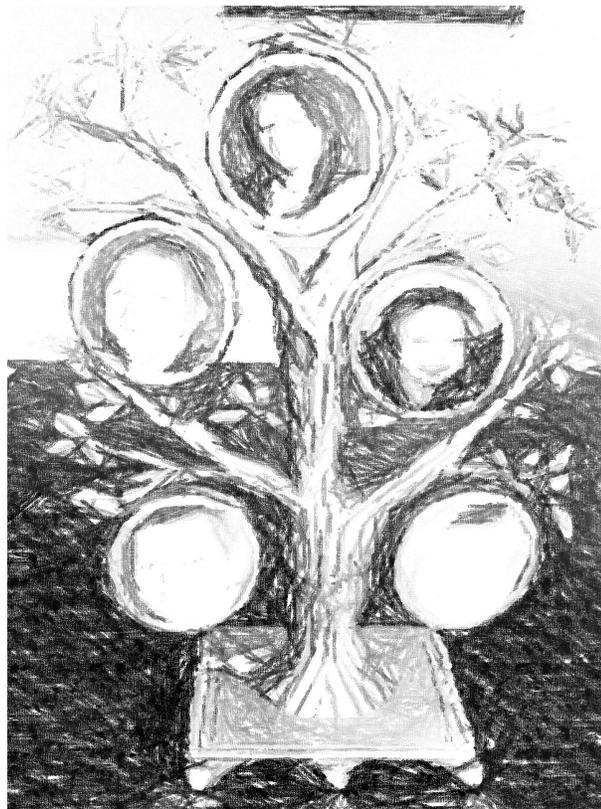


Figure 11. Tree Picture Frame.



Figure 12. Someone Special Frame.



Figure 13. Mentee Painting for La Mera Mera.

Isabella

La Historia de Isabella (Isabella's Story)

Isabella was born and raised in a South Texas town along the Gulf of Mexico. Her mom was born in north Texas and her dad was from south Texas. Isabella's mom moved to San Antonio during the 1930s to live with relatives in San Antonio to attend public school because the one room school back home had taught her all they could. She continued her education and went to the "big school" but did not finish high school. Most of Isabella's dad's family died young. He worked the oil fields at the young age of 16, helped to raise his siblings, and at the age of 19 began to raise his 11-year-old niece because his sister had died. Isabella's dad had very little formal schooling.

Despite her parents not having much formal education, Isabella graduated high school at 16 and went to a community college, where she finished in a year and a half.

Isabella grew up in a neighborhood in south Texas never knowing she was different. “There were a lot of Mexican American kids and there were White kids.” The first realization that she had that she was Mexican was when she was a junior in high school, working at the library when a senior boy, came to ask her out on a date and she said she couldn’t go out with him. The boy responded, “What’s the matter with you? Don’t you know you’re Mexican?” Isabella was shocked that he would say such a thing to her, so she went home to tell her mom about what had happened. “Mom this boy told me today that I was Mexican,” and her mom replied, “You’re not Mexican you’re Mexican American.” Angela stood there looking at her mom and pondering what does that mean. She grew up not really knowing that she was supposed to be different and then all of a sudden from this one incident in her life, she realized she was different and it gave her a whole new perspective and awareness about her culture and the world around her.

After finishing community college, Isabella decided to become a stewardess and worked for an airline company. She lived in South and Central America and Europe and it was during this time that she became much more aware of her Latina identity. She witnessed the discrimination within her own cultural group between the wealthy and the not so wealthy and would empathize with the people, who were labeled as the “lesser” people. Angela was very aware that as a Latina female, as a whole, we were all treated the same and were supposed to be submissive and she did not really like that.

After a couple of years as a stewardess, she came back home and married a Navy pilot and began to travel the world again. This time she saw different types of discrimination with groups such as the French Canadians and the Native Americans. Being exposed to these different types of discrimination she began to question why this was happening. She just did not understand and decided that she would not stand for any type of discrimination. From these experiences in her life, Isabella made it a point to try to educate others on discrimination and its effects on others.

At 27 her husband died in a plane crash and she became a widow with two children. She moved to Houston to be closer to family and then remarried eight years later. After Isabella's children grew up she decided to go back to college at an upper level division public institution and has been on that campus ever since working in some capacity. While at college she became quite involved in student organizations often holding leadership positions. She was recruited to become a staff member at her college and has moved up the ranks ever since, starting out as a coordinator and then becoming a director, and assistant dean.

Isabella's passion lies in helping Latino students overcome the barriers that are in place in getting into college. In her current role as the senior diversity officer on her campus she works hard and is persistent to ensure that students of color, and especially Latinas, are provided the necessary support and resources to succeed. Some of her former students have become employees of hers as well. She has a master's degree and has no plans to further her education. She looks forward to retirement in the next few years.

Conocer el Sistema (Know the System)

As we sat in the hotel lobby *platicando*, Isabella recounted her first experience with a mentor, a German woman whom she met while living in Italy. During that time she was not allowed to fraternize with enlisted men's wives, so she looked elsewhere for guidance and support. This woman was the one who mentored her while she was in Europe, "teaching me the ways and mentoring me to a different kind of life." When Isabella attended a community college during a later time in her life she was then mentored by a White female professor, who "took me under her wing." She "always encouraged me and kept telling me that I could do this and I could do that. She was somebody in the profession that I really admired."

As Isabella continued her education as a non-traditional student her mentoring relationships continued. She had a male Jewish professor, whom she considered to be her first true mentor, push and support her to take risks. They began a scholarship program at her university and although the university was not financially supporting the program, Isabella and her mentor reached out to other organizations such as LULAC and SHAPE. These groups saw the importance of providing scholarships to minorities who wanted to attend college. She worked out of her house on this project for about 14 years until finally they were able to get a little support from the multicultural services office on their campus. The project was a grass roots mission, and her mentor was the one who taught her how to confront and stand up to, and push and ask for what was needed. Isabella learned a lot from him, especially how to negotiate the system, because up until then she really did not know how to do that.

Isabella's mentor's modeling of persistence seemed to rub off on her as she continued to use this model of navigating the system to her benefit and ensure that she was represented or heard throughout her life and career. In particular, reminiscing on her life experiences, which play a huge role in who she is today, she recalls the time when she had to be persistent to make a point about the discrimination she witnessed while attending a Navy officer function with her husband.

I remember I was very pregnant with my son, and there was an attorney, a navy attorney from the squad there, and I was kind of walking by, and I heard him say something about those 'f-in spics' and I'm thinking, 'Spics, what is that?' I had never heard that term before, so I turned to my husband and asked 'what does Spics mean?' and he says, 'That means Puerto Ricans' and I said, 'why do they call them that?' He's like, 'I don't know' So I go to the attorney and I said, 'Excuse me, but what does that mean?' and he says, 'What?' I said, 'You just said spics,' and he said 'Oh those are a couple of words for Puerto Ricans.' and I said, 'So why do you call them that?' and he says, 'That's just their name,' and I said, 'No. They're Puerto Ricans.'

Isabella laughs at this point indicating that she was not going to back down and emphasizing that she would continue to be persistent in making her point. Her husband was glaring at her and could not believe that she was making a big deal of the situation. He was scared that Isabella would get him fired and but she assured him that they could not fire him because he was in the Navy. She approached the officer again and said, "Oh. So it's like a nickname?" and he said, "It's just what we call them," Isabella said, "Well, what do they call you?" He looked back at her strangely and then hesitantly said, "They

don't call me anything,” Isabella responded, “Have you ever heard the term White trash?” At this point Isabella’s husband tugged on her arm and the officer said to her, “That's offensive.” Staring back at him, Angela replied in a matter of fact manner, “I know! Just as I would think that Spics would be offensive. I'm just wondering if you ever thought about that?” Angela turned away and walked off with her husband and her husband whispered to her, “You're just going to get me in trouble.” She closed by saying, “Well, you didn't say it. I did.” Isabella and I are laughing together, indicating our approval and celebration of her persistence to stand for others who are different. Once we stopped laughing, she assured me that her husband did not get fired.

Isabella also takes me back to a time when she was at a conference and recalls the keynote speaker being a Latina university president. As she was listening to her deliver her message, Isabella was amazed at her being older than she was and remembers thinking about how this woman was so well respected and how she had made it to her position. She noticed that president’s last name was a little bit different than most Spanish surnames, and Isabella thinks that sometimes when Latinas have the “traditional” names of Martinez, Garcia, or Rodriguez people tend to have this trigger that puts Latino/as in a different space. This is something that really raises an issue for Isabella and she feels that it is something that should be addressed by the Latino/a community. She explains, “It’s very obvious that it is a very Latino name, and I think automatically people have this, if you don’t know what you look like they’ll have this vision of what you look like.” So Isabella tackles this issue in her own way, it’s a trick that she has used for several years. She goes by her married name, which happens to not be a Spanish surname, if she needs to gain access to a group or do something in a group, and then once

she has gained access she uses her full name which includes her Spanish name. “Yeah, I use it when I have to.” Again we laugh together at the point she makes and I think she is a genius; she is persistent and navigates the system as her mentor has taught her to do.

Somos Poquitas (We Are Few)

Isabella made it a point to remind me that she has not had a lot of Latina mentors, “because we’re not in place. There’s so few of us, and we’re so scattered that it’s hard to find them.” She also thinks that Latina mentors are hard to find because as a group Latino/as have always had this, “I-can-do-it by myself attitude.” Isabella however did not let that stop her from forming other mentoring relationships to help her along the way to her success. Her persistence to find what she needed was established by a different type of mentoring relationship with other colleagues through professional associations such as the Texas Association of Chicanos in Higher Education (TACHE). She and others who belong to the association have been this “group of mentoring each other.” The people in the group serve as mentors to each other, building partnerships and learning from one another. For Isabella, this is the only place that she has really gotten that type of mentoring.

And while Isabella has shown her determination in finding mentors whom she can relate more with in regards to the Latina culture, she also received persistent mentoring from someone who did not have similar cultural experiences. Isabella also shared an experience with another mentor who was a White female and also happened to be her supervisor. Specifically, her current mentor was one who would not give up on her in helping to achieve her professional success. She would constantly encouraged Isabella to do things that would help her succeed such as applying for jobs that would situate her in a

better position to move up. Her mentor was one who would never give up, she consistently asked Isabella to apply for a particular job, however Isabella was not interested. At this point in her life, Isabella was teaching at several community colleges, working on the scholarship program, and was happy with what she was doing. It was a constant barrage going back and forth of no, no, no, and yes, yes, yes, in the end her mentor prevailed and Isabella finally got the job.

Confianza (Confidence)

In addition to the persistence that occurred in Isabella's mentoring relationships she also experienced gaining *confianza* (confidence) in believing that she was capable of becoming a successful Latina. Her mentor nominated Isabella for a prestigious award given by the Texas Association of Student Personnel Administrators (TACUSPA) (Figure 14).



Figure 14. Isabella's Award.

Isabella recounts how her confidence was finally realized. Her mentor kept insisting she attend a conference but Isabella declined her suggestion since she had other obligations at work and family to attend to. Again just as she was persistent in asking Isabella to apply for a job, she also convinced her to register for the conference and attend. As they both were sitting at the luncheon, to Isabella's surprise her name was announced as being the recipient for the Outstanding Mid-Level Professional's award. Being nominated and honored by receiving the award was confirmation that Isabella's mentor had confidence in her and the work she does for Student Affairs at her university. Isabella opens up and becomes a bit vulnerable by sharing that she knew she was smart enough, but she hadn't had the confidence in herself as a Latina woman to get things done, because she really hadn't seen anybody like her doing anything big; they were absent in her life. The award was a stepping-stone for Isabella, she was able to bring forth her confidence and wear it proudly knowing that someone had the confidence in her and was now recognizing her for all of her efforts.

Isabella knows it is important for Latinas to be visible in high achieving positions and she wants people to see her as a Latina doing positive things, so she has always strived to move into the top spots in organizations with which she has been affiliated. She was the president of the student government association, and then was president of the professional group on campus and then she was president of TACHE and continues to serve in various roles. In her office she also has her plaques of recognition prominently located in her office at work so those that don't see her working hard for her people outside of her university, can see them when they walk into her office.

Isabella's experiences remind me so much of one of the mentoring relationships I have had with my Latino mentor. He was the one who would insist that I try new opportunities or provide my name to others when they were looking for someone to fill a position. He had confidence in me before I realized that I did. Why is that? Why did I not believe in myself? Was it because of how others saw us Latinos as a group of not being competent? Was it my own self-denial of the fear of failing? I'm still not sure, but I think of the similarities Isabella and I share in this situation. How we didn't believe in ourselves until others did.

Ironically, Isabella also mimicked the way that she was mentored with the way that she mentors her mentees. She tells of the time when she realized that through her position as a professional, and as her mentors did with her, she could create more change by now being in a position of authority. From the beginning she pushed her mentees to be the best they could be and always had high expectations of them. One of her mentees, is a director for a Trio program, another one is a director at a university, and yet another one is working in Washington, DC. She knows that each of her mentees have had the capability and the intelligence to be successful, but she thinks so many Latinas go through the system with no one really paying attention to them. In her perspective she feels that higher education is an avenue to begin to mold, develop, and mentor them to be successful

I asked Isabella why she mentors Latinas and she quickly states, "I want to mentor and feel it's my mission, my responsibility to mentor Latinas to do what they need/want, to do, to get to where they want to be." Some of the women that she has mentored continue to keep her posted on what is going on in their lives. She has brought

a picture to show me (Figure 15). She is gratified by the fact that they still keep in touch with her especially over the years and it really makes her proud to see their success.



Figure 15. Photograph Card.

As I observe her facial expression, Isabella is radiating; there is this glow about her and I ask her, “When you receive these things or hear from your mentees, what’s happening with you?” Isabella simply states “Pride.” Then she gets emotional and her eyes begin to tear up. As she states this, my emotions are ignited and my eyes well up and tears begin to fall down my face. “My granddaughter gave these to me, because I am a shoe freak.” Isabella is referring to the tissues she has reached into her purse to hand to me.

So many that have done so well, and, you know they were going to do it anyway; they just needed somebody, they have it in them. We all have it in us. They just need somebody to kind of remind them. I think that they can do it.

Isabella refers to the *confianza* she has for those that she has mentored. All the while in my mind, I’m thinking of the fight, the struggle that is real for so many of us. The lack of

confidence and the need to have someone who understands what it is like. If only I had met Isabella earlier in my career. She is the type of mentor I have longed for.

As we wrap up our third *plática* session, Isabella ends by saying, “I’m really proud of you for what you are doing. You have a husband and children and work and you’re pursuing your doctorate and I’m really proud of your ability to be able to navigate your system and to be where you are.” It was as if Isabella was inside my mind reading my thoughts about her being my mentor. And just like that she was instilling a level of *confianza* within me.

Angela

La Historia de Angela (Angela’s Story)

Angela is from Texas as well. She is approximately 54 years of age. She has attained her bachelor, master, and doctorate degrees. Prior to working in higher education she worked as a teacher and coach for public schools. She was a dance instructor, worked for a publishing company, and also did consulting. She currently serves as a Vice President at her institution overseeing many areas of Student Affairs.

Angela’s dad received his General Equivalency Diploma and entered the Army. Her mom completed her bachelor’s degree, became a teacher, pursued her master’s degree and became an administrator in public schools. Like La Mera Mera, Angela has been fortunate to be exposed to successful Latinos. Her parents also own a business; her siblings do well for themselves; one is a dentist and the other works in the business industry after attaining a degree in business. Her father and grandfather always pushed their children to get an education. Angela lives by the motto that her dad passed down to her

you have to be educated enough to take care of yourselves in case the need ever arose. My dad was of the opinion that education was not an option. It was a must, and he said ‘The only thing I can give you is your education and what you do with it after that, that’s up to you.

Angela had positive and supportive role models in her parents and has always had a hard work ethic. She described how she observed her dad being very supportive of her mother who continued to pursue her master’s degree when Angela was about 13 years old. Her parents owned a flower shop, her mom worked as a second grade teacher during the day, tended to the flower shop in the evening, and drove two hours away on Saturdays to attend classes. Her dad would stay back to operate the shop while Angela would drive with her mom early in the morning and late in the evenings. From this, Angela learned that if she wanted something bad enough she could do it. Having seen the dedication and perseverance of her parents, she too has been successful in her career, which is evident by the position she holds now as a vice president.

As a high school student, Angela was fortunate to travel to Europe and was exposed to different cultures. She has used her experiences abroad to form who she has become. In meeting with her I have learned that she is a gentle spirit but one who holds authority and is respected by her staff and students who work with her. You can hear it in her voice and see it in her actions as I observe how she interacts with her staff and students when I enter the office suite. “*Como estas?* How are classes going?” They look up to her, give her hugs and genuinely treat each other like family.

Como Familia (Like Family)

For Angela, familia has been a big part of her mentoring experiences. Throughout the *pláticas*, some type of family figure was present in the stories she shared. When I asked her to tell me about the mentors who have helped her throughout her career, she first names her parents as being an inspiration to her. As a middle child, she didn't want to disappoint her father and mother, and she knew disappointing them was probably a stronger motivator than the mentoring she received, but she admits to learning so much from them. They were masters at making ends meet with the little they had, appreciated life so much, and definitely were an inspiration for her.

As she continued to describe other mentors, she spoke of the very first female Latina assistant principal mentor she had who helped her while she was a middle school teacher. Angela recalls how through talking with her she learned to be accountable for her actions and the students' actions in the classroom. She was the one who controlled learning or misbehaving to occur. It was a message that she has not forgotten. Now that she teaches others she uses the same message, "Things will happen in your life, and you're either going to cause them to happen or you're going to permit them to happen. And so it's taken me a long way." Then Angela moves on to tell me about the mentors she had while she was in college and the ones who really propelled her to do things she never thought of doing. The majority of the mentors she had were men, a political science professor from Cuba, and a history professor, and when she transferred to the university, she had other male faculty and administrators who continued to support her and encourage her to not hold herself back. They saw the potential in her even when she did not believe and began building her up and nominating her for all sorts of awards. The

lack of belief she had in herself came from a statement made by one of her Hispanic high school counselors who said she would not make it.

Through the time that she is sharing this with me, I am disappointed to hear of how her counselor, who happened to be a Latina, was not more encouraging about what Angela could achieve in her professional career. The counselor was in a professional position yet did not encourage Angela seek out higher education or something more to pursue in her life. Angela's fiery eyes were piercing through me as she went back to this time. And as she mentioned she would never forget the encouraging words from her mentors, I could see that she had not forgotten the discouraging words either. Those words set an intrinsic motivation and determination in her to prove her high school counselor wrong. Angela has all three diplomas hanging on her office wall to show this accomplishment and they are an affirmation to her accomplishments. She stares at them and says,

I really did that, and you know, coming from a kid who was told she would not make it, it just...there's a really wonderful feeling of appreciation and certainly satisfaction that you know, I did things right, and God guided me in different ways, and I was blessed.

Angela then turns to describe others who mentored and helped her through her professional career in attaining her doctoral degree.

Dr. R had already said 'if you are going to stay in higher ed you're going to need to get a PhD, and you will do it, because you have a future here, and you're going to have to do this.' So I go to Mrs. C who is the dean of the college of education at the time, happens to be my father's first cousin, so I said, 'Tía, what do I do?'

And she said, ‘I’m going to look for a school for you. You’re going to do it online, it’s the latest thing. You’re going to get your PhD, and we’re going to help you do it.’ So she did.

Angela continues to describe how her aunt and a couple of other professors continued to come together like family, support and mentor her through her doctoral journey asking questions and frequently checking in on her. She felt blessed to have such a cooperative group of people around her helping to shape her into a successful professional.

Escuchando (Listening)

When you talk, you are only repeating what you already know. But if you listen, you may learn something new. –Dalai Lama

Do not talk; listen. These are the words that Angela seems to bring to the table as she continues to describe her mentors and the advice they have given her over the years, leading her to her success. The encouraging words and guidance she has received thrust her to where she is today. She has taken those life lessons from her mentors to form who she has become as a professional and mentor to others. Angela even remembers a time when she was guiding one of her mentees, who first started as a student worker and moved into a professional role, currently holding an associate director position, to listen.

I would say ‘Lisa, listen. Don’t talk anymore.’ I’d sound like my father. We’d be in meetings and she’d blurt something out, and I’d say, ‘Wait, wait, wait.’ It was weird but at the same time I wanted her to get in a position to where people would respect her when she spoke and I think that was critical.

During our second *plática*, I noticed that interwoven through our conversation I am also listening to the messages that she is giving me. Angela, like Isabella, used the time that we had together to mentor me. I listened to the thoughts in my mind thinking

how many of the things that she shares with me connect to my life, and how can I apply them in my current position. I take advantage of this time, listen, and reflect on the questions she asks, “What is your goal? Do you have a calendar up on your wall? Can you afford to take more time?” Here Angela is not only mentoring me with my dissertation but also looking out for me as a parent does for her own child.

Como Ser Padres (Like Parenting)

Ironically that is also how Angela approaches her mentoring with others, taking on a parental role and caring just as her mentors did with her. She was fortunate to have family, faculty, and administrators who were genuine and caring. She learned from their example and also emulates a parental mentoring style with her mentees. Angela points to a picture frame (Figure 16) that sits on a shelf near her desk in her office. It’s a picture of Jessica, one of her mentees that she has known since she was an undergraduate student and who is now a graduate student.



Figure 16. Angela and Jessica.

Angela is in the green dress and Jessica is the aqua dress. From the closeness they are displaying through hugging each other as well as the close proximity of the picture frame near her desk in the office you might assume they were mother and daughter. Angela speaks of her in such a positive manner and gives her compliments of being amazing, respectful, and also doing things asked of her to the “tenth power” indicating that Jessica would strive for perfection. As Angela continues to speak of Jessica she tells of how Jessica, along with other young ladies that she has mentored, have paid her the highest compliment of saying that they want to grow up to be like Angela, and yet she responds as perhaps a mother might, “No. You want to grow up to be better than me.” Angela continues to brag about Jessica telling me that she will be graduating during this semester and that she has done exceptionally well.

Like parenting, Angela realizes that mentoring is a balance between caring, high expectations, parenting, teaching, and bringing them altogether with a responsible, honest, unbiased, professional act.

I believe that my ability to fight like a lioness is that I’m protecting and I’m watching over people who I really do believe have much to offer, and they are very talented and very smart. They just don’t know it.

Angela smiles as she finishes this statement and it is then that I realize that she has been quite successful at mentoring many Latina/os and notice that there are several mementos in her office to show these accomplishments. It is like a mother showing off her pride and joy. Her cherry wood colored bookshelves (Figure 17) are lined along one side of her office displaying many pictures and small sentimental things that remind her of her mentees as well as resources that she has used to help mentor others.



Figure 17. Angela’s Wall of Mementos.

Desarrollo Continuo (Continuous Development)

Angela also talks of times when she approaches mentoring as a continuous development process. She is constantly imparting wisdom to her mentees through one on one talks or through group time. It’s a learning process for the younger staff. Angela uses an example of one of her female staff members who serves as a director. Her director dressed in miniskirts, wore five-inch heels, and was just generally kind of different, so she had to have a discussion about dressing more professionally since she was serving in this position and needed to look the part. I laugh about the comments she has made, and Angela continues with “No, no. I tell them. It’s an expectation. Again, you want to be respected? Then you have to respect others by respecting yourself. She got it.” She goes

on to say that how she develops colleagues is in the same way ensuring they know her job is to protect them as she expects them to know that their job is to protect the university. She believes the way she develops her team through meeting every other week as a group provides an avenue for them to say anything to each other and be able to negotiate amongst themselves better. For now, this mentoring approach works for Angela.

Other times Angela has had to have serious talks with her mentees. She says, So the difficulty, and I talk about this a lot with my mentees because this is where they get caught up, how do I balance being the boss... the mom..., the wife..., the daughter..., the sister? How do I balance that with doing it all? And the girls think you do it like nothing. You do it so seamlessly like it's just going to happen and it doesn't. This is what I tell them, you have to give yourself permission to know that today you may be a really good daughter and a shitty boss, and tomorrow you may be a great boss and not so good mom, and the day after you're going to be a great mom and a great boss but maybe not such a good wife, but you have to give yourself permission to understand that every day you can only get better, because what you learned yesterday and what you did the day before is going to influence how you handle tomorrow. It's the only way. Allowing yourself to forgive yourself for mistakes that you have made, know that you didn't do it with ill intentions, knowing and understanding that your heart is open to loving everybody unconditionally regardless of whether or not you've failed them. You have to love yourself unconditionally too. And I think that is the greatest lesson and we don't tell each other that.

So throughout listening to her stories of things she does with her mentees I ask, “What has been the most rewarding part?” Angela responds looking off to the distance and speaking pensively,

I think the thought of knowing that I have a little bit, just a small piece, of all of their lives and being able to encourage or influence or suggest a different way of looking at things and giving them permission to experience their lives or their plans for careers, for their dreams and hopes in a different way makes me very, very proud.

I am curious and interested in a different perspective, so I ask about her most challenging experience mentoring Latinas. Angela hesitates to answer this question, and becomes silent for a while and then I notice her eyes tearing up. She finally says, “It’s going to make me cry.” As I apologize for taking her to this vulnerable place, Angela continues,

Some of those cultural issues or family issues or social issues, I’m not really sure, I guess they fall into all three of those things in some cases, but knowing that someone is not going to fulfill their goals and dreams because they give up and nothing you do and nothing you say and nothing you try to convince them of is going to change it because they don’t see the full picture, and it’s unfortunate. She adds that there are people who, “Sometimes dream big and never have any intentions of fulfilling those dreams, and others can’t even dream. And it’s the ones that don’t even dream that make me the saddest.”

To ensure that Angela is talking about Latina mentees I ask her for clarification and she answers that it is her Latina director who is brilliant at all she does. She has been

encouraging her to pursue her PhD but she doesn't want to because she earns a higher salary than her husband and she doesn't want there to be any other trouble in the household. Angela was surprised to hear this and even more so that the director wanted to be demoted into another position so the problems would not continue at home. Angela was not happy to hear this and asked her why her husband was not looking for a job that would bring in more money. After years of talking to the husband about this situation and going through the process, he finally found a job that was paying well. And, while her staff member did not receive her PhD, she did earn her master's degree and it has helped in her development as a director. Angela feels that guiding (mentoring) her director's husband made the difference in helping her director succeed and also in being a positive role model for their daughters. Angela persisted and kept asking him, "What do you want for your daughters? What do you want your daughters to do? How do you want your daughters to see their mother?" It ended up being a challenge that turned into a success and Angela made a small impact in bringing another Latina forward.

Julia

La Historia de Julia (Julia's Story)

For me, Julia represents a strong woman. She has worked hard all of her life and through her hard work has achieved success professionally and personally. She was born in Texas along the United States-Mexico border; her parents were from Mexico and were "undocumented" ...she prefers to refer to them as such. Julia, however, was raised in a little central Texas community and was poor. She is one of eight children. Her oldest three siblings were born in Mexico and had a harder time learning English. Growing up she identified as Mexican or Mexican American living in a predominately Anglo

community that was not very progressive or understanding of cultural differences. She attended a school where the students were primarily White and grew up during a time when speaking Spanish was not allowed in school.

She remembers seeing lots of acts of discrimination against Mexican Americans, Blacks, and other people who were different. She especially remembers a time when she was younger and how people discriminated against her father for having a Spanish accent and how they called him “Poncho” which was not his name. She was so upset by this, that she stood up to her father’s supervisor and said that “Poncho” was not his name. While she was sharing this story with me, Julia made me think how at such an early age she was willing to stand up against discrimination...it is almost like a sign of who she would become later in life. She knew at a young age that there was much discrimination going on in her environment and she did not like it.

Julia did well in school and received many accolades for doing so. Her dedication to doing well in school became a mantra for her...she realized education would be the key to get out of poverty. In 9th grade she was invited to be part of the honor’s society and from that point on she continued to stay dedicated to her studies and determined to go to college. She went to a central Texas college and worked summer jobs to help with expenses. In college she earned a 4.0 average after the first year, and it was within that year, after taking 40 credit hours, that she began looking to transfer to a university. Although she knew she would be admitted due to her academic prowess, she worried about how she would be able to afford to attend. When she received her acceptance letter, she was happy but not surprised by it. What she wanted most to hear was whether or not she would receive financial aid. She shared how she would ride her bike to the

post office daily waiting for the letter to come in. On one particular day, she noticed that the small post office box had a letter from the financial aid office. She quickly ripped it open and learned that she had received all sorts of financial aid in the form of grants and work-study. She was so excited she could not contain herself, jumped on her bike, pedaling as fast as she could to tell her parents the good news. Her parents were ecstatic because now they would have two daughters attending the university.

As Julia tells this story, I see the sense of ease in her eyes as if she no longer had to carry the burden on her shoulders anymore worrying about where the money would come from to attend the university she dreamed of attending. In addition, there was a gleaming sense of pride and accomplishment radiating throughout her presence. She also received a scholarship and it was a reassurance of the high expectations she had of herself in doing well in school but also a relief of the financial burdens she was exposed to in her life.

I experienced a similar situation in my life. While I did not think at the time that I grew up poor, I always knew that it was very difficult for my mom to raise a family of five children on her own. She provided all the necessities with shelter, food, and safety, but money for other wants was not as accessible. I attended a community college and was fortunate to receive grants and scholarships as well, to help with the educational costs. While Julia was describing her bike ride home to tell her parents of the financial aid letter she received, I had a flashback to the time I went to my mailbox and opened my letter from the National Hispanic Scholarship Fund (NHSF) and almost fell to my knees when I saw a scholarship check written out in my name and sent to me. I ran home, opened the door, dropped my backpack by the entryway and yelled to my mom, that I had

received the check. It felt as though I had won the lottery, I was jumping up and down and screaming, without end, in happiness. The check was enough to get me through the remainder of the school year and at that time, my mom and I did not have to worry how we would pay for school. What a sense of relief, even if only for a small period of time. Like Julia, my undergraduate degree was paid for through scholarships and grants; I was fortunate, and I too saw throughout my childhood and high school years, listening and observing others, learning that education would be the key to moving forward and being successful in my career and life.

Julia attended a large university during the early 1970s, and attained all three of her degrees (bachelor and master in speech communication, and doctorate in higher education administration) from there. Upon graduating with her doctorate, Julia was fortunate to be sought out by the president of the university and worked in his office. While working in the president's office, she decided to attend law school and graduated with her law degree. After this she also practiced law with the Texas Legislature.

Julia is also very active with professional organizations holding offices and serving on committees within the Texas Association of Chicanos in Higher Education (TACHE) and National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) and has been named for one of the highest awards given by NASPA. While working for a large university in central Texas, she knew she wanted to work with community colleges and after her time practicing law, she became a Dean of Students and then a Vice President of Student Services at a community college in north Texas.

Through it all, family has been a central part of her life in providing the support

she needed to get where she is today. Julia's older sister helped her along the way as a role model and support system. Her older siblings helped her to understand family culture especially in learning English as a pre-school child since her first language was Spanish. It has been through family life lessons that she has also learned much about life. Her parents were very supportive of her pursuit of education and are deceased. In addition to her role as a Vice President, she serves as the caregiver for one of her sisters.

Pláticas o Tutoria Informal (Discussions/Talks or Informal Mentoring)

Julia sought out her mentors when she was a student. She describes the mentoring she received as learning from others through *pláticas*. The discussions she had with her mentors entailed learning about protesting, about what César Chavez was doing at that time, and about civil disobedience. She also learned how she could make a difference, how to empower herself, how to organize, how to represent people, what it meant to be privileged for attending a large university, and how she should not forget where she came from. This knowledge came from her early mentors, the graduate students she attended school with, and the Latino, Chicano, and Mexican American faculty that she met. A few of the faculty were women but the majority of them were male Mexican American faculty. She also had some administrators who were Chicano, and she felt that they all had a big influence on her. Julia was also very fortunate to have the president of the university mentor her. Julia includes him as one of her early mentors and describes how he and her other mentors provided opportunities for her, had faith in her, and supported her through her success.

Apoyo (Support)

It was through the informal mentoring relationships that Julia had with faculty members and others, where she continued to receive support in various ways. The people she interacted with were very understanding about civil rights and very involved in changing the world through their research, presentations, and involvement in civil disobedience, and she felt supported knowing that others had similar interests as she did. Julia also received support from a variety of people whom she considers mentors through her leadership in various organizations. It was through being known in these organizations and by people's connections that she was provided opportunities such as attending law school and being introduced to other influential people within the organizations. She met wonderful people within the legislative council and also later got mentored by Mexican American males who were retired university presidents from the northwest and southwest regions of the United States. They have remained good friends. The support Julia received from these individuals continued through the connections she made from her various roles in higher education and all stemmed from the large university she attended in Texas as an undergraduate. She continued to receive support and be introduced to other influential people through her work, as well as from keeping in touch or reconnecting over the years at conferences such as TACHE or HACU (Hispanic Association of Colleges & Universities), because this was the place where they could come together all at once.

During our conversation, Julia emphasized that her family were supportive mentors too. Family has always been very important to Julia. Her mom and dad were big mentors in their own ways because they gave her lots of support and encouragement,

and they were always there especially in times when she needed it the most. She tells me of the time when her deaf sister, mom, and dad drove up to see her and helped stuff envelopes with the surveys she was using for her quantitative study. Her other sister has also been very involved with supporting her, her career, and her family. She reminds me that Hispanics, Latinos, Mexican Americans, and Chicanos, hold the concept of family being a very important, central part of their lives. Julia's family was always helping and supporting her in some way, especially when she was growing up, going to school, and even now, working as a professional. Fortunately for her, she had a lot of people who showed *apoyo* (support), especially her *familia*. She realizes that her strong family support structure has been important to the success she has achieved.

Julia and I end our first *plática* session and I cannot help but believe how much I already feel so comfortable with her. Her willingness to be so open about her life and wanting to get to know me made this meeting much more pleasant. The regret I had before on making the long drive from my hometown of Corpus Christi to north Texas does not seem so bad after all. I was excited and glad to have met her. Her genuine demeanor and excitement for my study ignited a spark in me. I cannot wait to have our next *plática*. I am glad I sought her out. Something tells me that this connection we now have through my study will continue.

Iluminar (Illuminate)

Julia and I meet again, but instead of meeting in her conference room at the community college where she works, I am sitting in my temporary office on campus and she is at her desk in her office. With both of our hectic work schedules and with the great geographical distance between us, we are using Google Hangouts this time to reconnect.

We met briefly, the day before, to ensure the technology would work correctly and to also remind her of what our *plática* would entail. As a Vice President her schedule is packed, but I am ever so grateful that she makes time for us to meet.

As we ensure that our web cameras are connected properly because at first we can only hear one another, we are finally able to see each other and both laugh that we are keeping up with the times by using technology. I ask Julia if she is ready to share any artifacts that remind her of being mentored. She is and begins by telling me that she originally thought of something else but when travelling to Hawaii a few weeks before for her son's wedding she had an epiphany. When her daughter used a flashlight app on her phone to light the way to the car from the house they were at for the wedding reception, she realized this is what she wanted to discuss during our next meeting. The flashlight reminded her of her mentoring experiences. She explains,

I think about the fact that mentors light the pathway for professionals. We do the same thing as professionals for students. We light the way to help illuminate their path into their future. And so, the old technology that was used when I was being mentored was more like a flashlight. It was more in person, one-on-one, maybe by phone, which is of course representative of old technology like the flashlight is and now-a-days when we mentor we use social media and we use technology like we're using today. I brought both of them (Figure 18), so you can see.

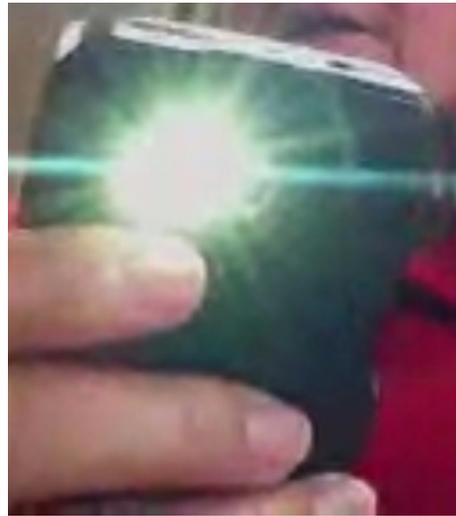


Figure 18. Iluminación de la Vía (Lighting the Pathway).

At the time of this study, Julia was not “lighting the path” for Latinas, but she had in the past so I asked her to share her experiences having Latinas as her mentees. Julia’s mentoring experiences were never the same. Sometimes the relationships lasted for a short time, and other times much longer. For those relationships that lasted longer, the conversations would pick up from the last time that they were in contact and would happen at all sorts of times. Sometimes at conferences, sometimes through email or phone calls. She tells me of an informal long-term mentoring relationship she has been active in for over six years and every now and then, they reconnect via email. Julia further explains that she has not been in contact with her mentee for some time, because she approaches the relationship as being available when she is needed.

What I find is, as they need me for advice or as a reference they’re in touch, and that happens with a lot of other people that I mentor. I pretty much leave myself open and say to them ‘If there’s anything that I can do for you, if I can help you in

any way let me know.’ One thing I have actually learned with mentoring is it’s best not to push yourself on anyone.

Julia uses this approach because she knows that people are busy and they will reach out to you when they are ready and when you are needed. She has experienced formal structured mentoring processes over the years and has seen how they have “fizzled out” in part because of the lack of natural connections with one another. She has learned from that experience that it is better to allow mentoring to be more organic and natural. Most of her mentoring relationships that have lasted have come from the connections she has made at NASPA, or TACHE or AACC, the conferences she attends. She tells me that Latinos tend to reach out more and will tend to engage her as a mentor for longer periods of time because what has happened is that there is a kind of natural connection with each other.

Ofreciendo Esperanza (Offering Hope)

I am intrigued by the fact that Julia, as a Vice President, has mentored so many people throughout her career and finds the time to do so. In my position, I struggle to balance handling all my administrative duties, developing staff and making time for students; so finding time to mentor others besides the staff I supervise is difficult. Hearing Julia’s story of how she makes the time and that her motivation is in mentoring Latinas gives me hope. I am curious about how she handles it all and Julia responds simply by saying, “Well, I love it.” She has made a commitment to help Latinos and feels that more underrepresented students need to complete their doctorates so she supports those she can. She also enjoys doing it and feels it is a way of giving back to the community. Julia continues to explain how rewarding it is to engage in a mentoring

relationship with Latinas because, “I know that I am sharing knowledge that could be useful to them.”

She illustrates this point by sharing her perspective,

Today, Latinos are the fastest growing ethnic minority in the US, and Mexican Americans are the fastest growing ethnic group in Texas and the US. For Texas and the US to thrive, it makes economic sense for all of us to work together to better educate Hispanics, Latinos, and/or Chicanos. I have mentored Latinas (Mexican and other Latino descent) and Latinos due to this personal commitment. I've learned it promotes the common good to have as many of us, as possible, well educated.

As an example, to illustrate her commitment to helping Latinas succeed and the impact she has had with her mentees, Julia turns to her computer and asks for some time to find an email she would like to share with me. She received it about a year ago from one of her mentees who was working on her dissertation and needed assistance with the job search process. She finds it rather quickly and reads aloud,

Hello Julia. I hope this email finds you well. I wanted to let you know that I have defended my dissertation and would like to thank you for all of your support. I was looking at the job board and saw that there is a position and was wondering if you think I should apply? Well, I would like to thank you for your support and your encouragement during my journey. Take care.

Julia shares with me that this email, as well as countless others she has received, are a reminder to her of how important it is to help other people. She realized that the time committed to mentoring is difficult but she continues to mentor because it is part of

giving back and more importantly as she states,

it gives me a lot of hope and a lot of happiness to do it too. So the mentor-mentee relationship is positive I think for both individuals, because I get a lot from it as well. Having really positive and inspiring relationships with mentees then inspires me to have more and help more. It fuels my desire to continue to help people that way. That's a positive and a win-win for everybody. Why not do it?

Santa

La Historia de Santa (Santa's Story)

Santa and I meet for the first time to have a *plática* in my hotel room in October, 2014. She and I are both attending a conference for our state association and we find that this is the best place to have our conversation. Since she and I live in different parts of Texas, this conference provided the best opportunity for us to initially meet. After explaining what my intent was for our gathering, Santa began to share some of her background with me so that I had a better understanding of who she was. While she and I knew each other from work connections, I did not know much more about her. Both of her parents are from Texas and her grandparents are from all over Mexico. She speaks of how her grandmothers were such strong women taking on multiple roles to contribute for their families. Santa had a very strong relationship with her maternal grandmother who lived to be 94, and she was influenced by her hard work ethic.

Santa was born in 1956 and grew up on the west side of San Antonio. Her house was at the intersection of two school districts and she was bussed to predominantly Anglo schools. She identifies as Mexican American and was a born again Chicana when she was a student in college. Santa does not like to be identified as Hispanic “because it is a

designation from the government” and she is not from “Hispaniola.” Santa is very straightforward, will tell you like it is, speaks her mind, and does not really think twice about it. She loves to talk and has many experiences and stories to share. At times her story telling meanders and makes it difficult to follow but in the end I am able to follow her.

Santa’s mom attended school through the ninth grade. Her father obtained his GED in his late 20s and eventually received an associate’s degree when he was about 35 years old. Santa also attended college, but did not do well the first time; in fact she flunked out. She ended up working in different places before enrolling in college classes again to try to figure out where her strengths lie. When she made the connection of what she wanted to do with what her strengths were, she decided on an English degree and actually did very well. After attaining her degree, she worked on a university campus, was offered different positions, and was asked to take on a leadership role. Instead of taking that offer, Santa decided to get married and followed her husband who was offered a job out of the state of Texas. Her husband worked at an Ivy League school and she was fortunate to secure a job on the same campus. Santa reveals that this is where things began to change for her. “Everything was new and different and people were interested in me because I was Latina.” She first worked as a secretary in the Vice President for Student Affairs office, and while she did not identify as being ambitious, she was a hard worker. She began to work her way through and up to leadership positions. Her next position was working in the Human Relations office, and from there she moved on to a housing position in Student Affairs.

Santa currently works at a large public university in Texas and is an Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs. She has two children, and is divorced. She is a very independent woman and is committed to all she does. Santa has earned her master's degree but at this point in her life, does not desire to pursue a doctorate degree. She says she is too old and that a doctorate degree "sucks your brains out." I can definitely relate.

Conexiones Fuertes (Strong Connections)

As we continue our discussion, Santa begins to tell me about the mentors she has had throughout her life. She begins by referencing those she had in college and how fortunate she was to have professors take on that role. "I had the godfather of Chicanos in higher ed as a professor." In her eyes being able to take classes from the man who was all about the Chicano Movement and also having another faculty member who later became a Vice Provost in California was like hearing messages from prophets. At this point in her life, Santa's mentors in terms of academics were all Latino males. She was fortunate to have had a very strong relationship with them and stressed the importance of them trusting her with their work and the tasks that she was given. Another Mexican American faculty member who served as the director of the library also noticed Santa and began to mentor her as well, promoted her several times, and showed trust in her professionally. Each of the faculty encouraged her to continue her education to become a librarian but instead Santa got married and moved to Pennsylvania.

While living in Pennsylvania, Santa engaged with the next wave of mentors, the first being a female African American Human Resources Director. Their connection with each other was strong and they could relate with one another culturally. For example, they were ethnic minorities, had lived in low socioeconomic neighborhoods, and used

similar cultural language, like ghetto and barrio. Because of this connection, Santa recalls how this woman took a chance on her and helped her advance in her position. Santa did not have any background experience in human resources, yet the director hired her and told her she knew she was smart, could relate with people, and only needed to learn the technical aspects of her job. Santa was appreciative of the job, and learned the position by jumping right in and being provided professional development opportunities.

Santa considered her supervisors as mentors. They supported her and let her do things the way that she wanted to. She was fortunate to have mentors who gave her flexibility to complete the job, thought she was mature, trusted her judgment, and never doubted her. She knew she could get help if she needed, but always seemed to find a way or work with her mentors to figure things out. She attributed this to the strong connections she had with each of them.

I am perplexed at how Santa, being a new person on campus and to the state of Pennsylvania, describes the way her mentors were so giving, so I ask her what does she think this is all attributed to and she responds,

I am an outsider but that's a good thing to them at the university that I worked at.

They were great proponents of diversity, so nobody thought that I was a political appointment because my husband was hired first to work in the inclusionary multicultural center.

She goes on to describe how the university had many people from diverse backgrounds working on campus and she never once felt as though she was being treated differently because of being a Latina. She admits that she wondered why they would spend so much time training her, but they did and she "always knew they had my back."

Realizing that she may have gone off topic a little bit, Santa brings the conversation back to describing the types of mentoring relationships she had. For her, the mentoring she received was about learning a skill, improving her knowledge in a certain area, and being taught things or provided with opportunities, time, and resources to learn how to do them. She also expanded on how her mentors let her fail “graciously without beating me up.” Mentoring was in a one on one setting or with her peers, which provided an opportunity to learn from one another. It also took on the form of being about listening, observing, and using intuition. She related her mentoring experiences to the connections she had with the mentors and being “dependent on what she needed, what they thought she needed and what she thought she needed.”

Santa points out that she did not ask for people to be her mentor; it just occurred. She described that during her time, mentoring was used for students not for professional positions. If someone had come to any of my mentors and asked, would you be my mentor? They would have said,

Oh certainly would you like to go to lunch, every once in a while? Would you like to do this? But then they would have said, I can’t teach her. I’m way to busy for that! They weren’t looking for formal mentoring opportunities. When my mentors found someone that they could connect with they would take them under their wings and support them.

She does, however, remember there being conversations about bringing in “more people of color to certain positions.” She remembers that her mentors did not want to lose minority employees, so they provided more responsibility and challenges to keep them interested. She did not think that they saw it as mentoring but rather as an opportunity to

help employees progress in their jobs because not everyone had an opportunity to do so. Santa and I had reached a stopping point for the day. It was time to focus on the conference. As we got up to leave the room she laughs and says, “I told you I talk a lot.”

Santa and I met for a second time after a couple of months had passed, and decided to meet at a halfway point between our hometowns. While I offer to drive to meet her in the town she lives in, she insists that we meet in San Antonio instead; this is about an hour drive for her and two hours for me. Santa recommends a small diner that she is familiar with and we end up meeting on a Saturday morning. My mom has joined me because she does not like me driving out of town on my own. After introducing my mom to Santa, she sits quietly at our table sipping her glass of water as Santa and I catch up with things that are going on with work. My mom is just listening to the conversation and before I know it, Santa has included her in the discussion.

It does not surprise me at all. Having heard many of my mom’s work stories growing up, I knew that she would be able to relate to the conversation. Santa and I were talking about vacancies within our staff, addressing personnel issues, and such. My mom knew exactly what we were talking about since she was a personnel manager for a retail company for many years and had similar situations to deal with when she was working. There came a point in the *plática* where Santa and my mom were fully engaged in conversation and I was the one who was listening. It was amazing to see the connections they each had with one another and I was so pleased to see that Santa had included my mom. For a brief moment of time, Santa seemed to be taking on the role of researcher and my mom being the participant. I sat and listened and tried to learn from their story sharing, thinking of how I could apply some of the things in my work environment. Then

I remembered I needed to move the conversation back to our purpose for meeting. When Santa and I last talked, she had not finished describing her mentoring experiences. I asked her if we could pick back up to her moving back to Texas, and to tell me out the mentors she had then.

Santa began by saying that one of her major mentors came into her life when she moved back from Pennsylvania, and after meeting with me the first time, realized that her true mentors were not in her profession. Remember when she and I first met, she described her mentors as being supervisors. After reflecting on her previous meeting, she tells me that she has changed her mind and goes on to tell me how she met her true mentor. “My husband, while attending the annual HACU conference, introduced me to him. He was a Vice President for a major company that oversaw all of Latin America.” Santa recalls everyone wanting to meet him and that she was fortunate to be introduced to him. For the next few hours all she did was stay next to him and observe him. Lots of people were coming up to him, there were administrators, faculty, business people, and all she did was observe and listen. While this may have been a bit awkward, Santa didn’t care what others were thinking of her; it was her opportunity to listen and learn. She saw this chance as a way to “pay homage to him.” From this experience, she knew that she wanted to continue the relationship and asked him if she could have his card so that she could contact him at a later date. Santa could not let this opportunity pass her by because her working environment was not a healthy one.

Santa knew this strong connection that her husband had initiated would be beneficial for her in her career during the years of her upward mobility. Through the mentoring relationship she had with this VP, she was able to learn about how to navigate

and understand organizational dynamics and did not have to worry about the repercussions of these discussions, because this mentor was not her supervisor. For Santa this was critical, especially as it related to “knowing when it’s time for me to move, knowing when its time for me to stand up, and what to stay away from.” Other things she was able to take away from this relationship were how to be a good listener, how to approach different things encountered at work, and about perception. Santa remembers this advice vividly, “Perception is much greater than the facts, and that’s why you have to think of yourself as a leader.” Up until that point, Santa did not consider herself as a leader, although she carried a title. At that time in her professional career, she doubted her leadership especially being exposed to an unhealthy working environment. From the VP, she was able to realize she needed to believe in herself and began to amend her approach. Her perspective changed to everything now being about a leader representing her organization, representing a person, and every move that she made and everything she did was about being a leader.

Fuerza Motriz (Driving Force)

Because of Santa’s success in leadership positions, I am surprised to hear her say that she did not believe in herself. I asked if she would elaborate on what she attributed this to and she took me back to her elementary years. Santa is also surprised at the fact that I have asked her this but she answers as she describes a memory from so long ago as if it were yesterday.

Wow. In second grade I went to an Anglo school. There were like four Mexican Americans, one African, and one Black in class and there were very fuddy-duddy Anglo teachers and I only liked one teacher out of the six years I was there.

She remembers all of her teacher's names, but she especially remembers her second grade teacher. When she was in school she spoke English but because her mother only spoke Spanish there were times when she used Spanish words for items which she did not know were called something else in English. "At that time I didn't know the living room was called living room, I called it *sala* and I called dirty clothes *ropa sucia*, you know." She learned to say the words in English while she was in school but up until then, had only the Spanish words as their context. Because she learned words in Spanish speaking home, she at times pronounced English words with an accent. While participating in a class project Santa approaches the teacher and asks, "May I have the cosh tape?" As she began to reach for it, the teacher pulled away the tape dispenser and Santa looked at her in disbelief wondering why she would do such a thing. The teacher then said, "What did you call it?" Santa said, "Cosh tape." The teacher then angrily replied, "It's SCOTCH tape!" Santa said, "Okay," and then the teacher said, "Say it." Santa replied "Scotch tape" and finally the teacher replied, "Now you can have it." To this day, Santa tells this story as if it just occurred yesterday, and she says she will always remember it. She has had to deal with this and lots of other oppressive things throughout her life and has tried to find ways to cope. As a teenager she attended religious retreats to help with the hurt and pain she felt and she admits that with time, her sense of self grew stronger but she still has this one moment in time that cannot be erased from her memory and it takes her back to a place where she is vulnerable and hears the *gringa* saying, "You don't know our language. You don't know. You're not good enough."

The story that Santa has just shared with me raises the hair on the back of my neck, and makes me shake my head that yet again, here is another example of the

discrimination that has been placed on the Latino culture. I am disappointed and frustrated but I am also pleased to see that she, like the others, uses this experience as a driving force to keep moving forward and instead focuses on the positive aspects of her mentoring relationship. She further elaborates this by realizing that her mentors have provided her with a really strong sense and feeling of worth. They have taken the time, and effort to care, and instilled tremendous belief in her. From her mentoring experiences Santa acknowledges that her success, in part, has been because of her mentors.

Burros, Campanas y Pisapapeles (Donkeys, Bells, and Paperweights)

It has been several months since Santa and I have met. This time we have to rely on technology for our last *plática* since we were not able to find enough time in our schedules to meet in person. Santa has made it home from a long day at work and is now wearing her pajamas and relaxing in the comfort of her bed. I have decided to stay in my office to connect knowing that my home will be too distracting to stay focused on our conversation. As usual, Santa and I catch up on work related things since we have that in common with one another and then we refocus on what we hope to accomplish for this session. I ask Santa if she has brought any artifacts that she would like to share with me about her mentoring relationships and she begins to tell me about a huge folder that she keeps of thank you cards and birthday cards that she has received from significant people in her life, which also include her mentors. She does not have much to say about those cards besides the fact that she has kept them over the years, but she does move on to share a story about the burros she has received from an Associate Vice President and her dad, both mentors. The little burro, from the Associate VP, is from Trinidad, and the

other one is a black obsidian burro, that she took from the nursing home her father was in. He didn't know that Santa had taken it, but she wanted to have something that belonged to him and reminded her of him. She keeps the burros with her all the time on her shelf in her office, never out of sight, and they remind her of struggles she has had, that the Associate VP had as a farmworker in California, and also those that her father had.

The burros meant to us that we were proud. We rode those burros you know together and are proud of who we are and where we are today. The burros connected me to my dad's purpose and my struggle and my mentoring.

Santa also thinks of other artifacts and she continues to tell me about the Feng Shui bell she received. She rings it when she achieves some type of success. It is not a bell that she rings every day; It is only for special occasions. She also has paperweights given to her by her mentors and mentee. They represent each of the four universities where she has worked, and tell the story of her professional career, and the people who helped get her to where she is in her career. Like the burros, the paperweights sit on her desk next to each other. She uses them like a talisman, sometimes rubbing them in her hand as a way to help get through tough things at work. While in her hand, she reflects on the past and the present remembering, "this too shall pass." So for Santa the burros, the bell, and the paperweights, are all connected to success at work, and the people who have helped her be successful.

Tiempo (Time)

Santa switches her thoughts over to her mentees. She is trying to think of things that she has that remind her of them and says that she cannot think of anything.

However, her conversation continues and she realizes that while she does not really have tangible things, she does have the abstract concept of time, her most precious commodity. Santa admits that neither she nor her mentees give each other things, instead she describes, “It’s about sharing a moment; sharing the experience together; it’s talking through things together.” She uses her time to have *pláticas* with her mentees and will give them advice on how to work through things at work with people and projects, or modeling how she might respond in certain situations. Santa explains the conversations as being more holistic, focusing on overall wellness, being in the moment, and not rushing through life. She elaborates that it is important to work hard, but wants them to learn how to balance their time, to incorporate time for themselves, and to not put so much emphasis on moving up in rank so quickly. She also provides words of encouragement and tries to personalize her messages so as to be genuine with her mentees.

Because time is such a precious commodity for Santa, she tells me that as she moves forward with her mentees she is going to change her approach and mentoring style. Instead of the one on one mentoring she has done in the past, she plans to get the three of them together as a cohort. She ends by saying,

I’m really looking forward to it all because that is our future, and if there’s one thing that I can do, you know, while I’m here at the university, is help these women, you know, navigate it and move forward, it’s worth it. You know the stuff we have to deal with.

I can see Santa’s mind working as her eyes squint a little. She changes the direction of the conversation and we begin to talk with each other about our work and

how we are also balancing the things that are occurring in our personal lives. She provides hope and encourages me with the following, “You’re doing great. I don’t know how you juggle it all; you’re juggling a lot. I’m very proud of you.” As I thank Santa for her kind words and her time, I smile and think to myself that I am really blessed to be receiving support from her. She, like all of the other participants, has stayed true to the mission of mentoring other Latinas who aspire to succeed in higher education. I am confident that we will continue to stay connected.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a description of each of the participants, presented as a case. Graphic organizers were presented introducing the reader to each participant, providing a brief descriptive overview of participants, acting as a visual of the type of mentors each of the participants had, presenting the themes that emerged from each of the cases, and finally rich descriptions of each case were presented as a narrative.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter provides a summary of the purpose of this study, answers to the research questions, and conclusions by connecting the findings with the theoretical frameworks of feminism and LatCrit. Implications for practice, methodology, and scholarship are also presented. Additionally, recommendations for future research are offered and final thoughts from the researcher are presented.

Recall the purpose of this study was to describe and understand the experiences of five senior level Latina Student Affairs administrators at institutions of higher education in Texas who have been mentored and have provided, or are providing, mentoring to Latinas who aspire to achieve professional success in administration. The following research questions guided the study: (1) how do the participants describe their experiences as a mentee? (2) how do the participants describe the ways in which they have mentored aspiring Latina professionals? and (3) what are the perceptions of the participants regarding the impact they have on mentoring aspiring Latina professionals to achieve professional success?

Research Question 1:

Research question 1 sought to answer, “How do the participants describe their experiences as a mentee?” Unlike several pieces of literature (Boyle & Boice, 1998; Gardiner, 2005) that describe formal mentoring models as the preferred choice to help individuals achieve professional success and career advancement, the participants primarily described their mentoring experiences as being informal, rather than formal, and talked about sharing similar meaningful connections.

Informal Mentoring

The participants' informal mentoring has been about the informality of it all. One of the main things that Isabella and Santa mentioned was that the word mentoring was not part of their vocabulary. Santa stated,

... I didn't ask them to be my mentors, it just occurred. I never used the word mentor that language was not in the culture at that time; I'm talking '84 to '93.

Back then the mentoring was informal but the experience was rich.

Isabella shared this sentiment, "as a Latino group we don't talk about mentoring, or we haven't until now. Mentoring really wasn't a part, isn't a part of our dialogue." They described the experiences as people just looking out for them or helping them along the way while they were in school or at work. Julia describes it as "I never in those days officially asked anybody to be my mentor, but I was getting plenty of mentoring, because I was involved with all these very well educated people."

Their experiences support the research on informal mentoring, which indicated that "peer mentoring and collaborative mentors" (Bynum, 2015, p. 71) are valuable especially when mentors are difficult to find for formal programs (Gurvitch, Carson & Beale, 2008; Lane-Washington & Wilson-Jones, 2010; Wallace, 2014). For the participants, formal mentoring models were difficult to find, in part because within their settings and environments, they were nonexistent. The mentoring that occurred was informal in nature and happened when there was a need, when their mentor saw an opportunity to teach them about a certain topic, or to address certain issues within their personal or work life. Julia sought out her mentors and described the process as,

It was all of course informal before we even knew the word mentor existed. The informal mentoring was about just discussions in regards to what grad school was about, and what possible career paths there were, what people were interested in researching, and also who to know and who to meet.

There wasn't any type of matching process occurring between two individuals as in formal mentoring models. The mentoring that took place was natural. It happened instinctively in all different sorts of settings like their homes, schools, universities, the military, and in work environments such as the office, while at lunch, or passing in the hallway. It was usually done during regular conversations with one another or sometimes it occurred behind closed doors during meetings with their supervisors. As Isabella recounts, sometimes the conversations dealt with encouragement and confidence building,

And so, she's the one who really mentored me to move into this next step. She encouraged me. So she's the one who says, 'Yes, you can do it. You need to do it. You're the one who can do it,' and I did, and if she had not done that, I probably would not have applied.

Julia shares a similar description of her early mentors, "they were people who they'd open the doors for you, who believe in you maybe even more than you believe in yourself, and who just support you."

Similar Meaningful Connections

The participants' mentoring experiences can be described as having similar connections with others who have also been marginalized, oppressed, or *othered*. Isabella described one of her mentors as being a Jewish male faculty member. They had this

common connection of having been raised in a culture that was oppressed. Isabella was raised as a Mexican American woman in an environment that was rampant with discrimination from others who were not Latino, even when traveling abroad, and she saw the discrimination against others such as Puerto Ricans. The mentoring relationship grew over the years because of the connections they each had with one another. For La Mera Mera, her “first true mentor” was an African American male who told her she was the right type of ethnicity and gender and would be a good candidate for openings at their university. Another one of her mentors was a Hispanic male provost who recruited her to his university. And while La Mera Mera did not seek out these men, they went out of their way to help mentor her early in her professional career, preparing her for this next position that she would aspire to as she climbed the Student Affairs administrative ladder.

Julia’s early mentors were Chicano/Mexican American male faculty members. These men were passionate about the current state of Chicano rights and taught at the university Julia attended as a graduate student. She recalls how faculty members and other Mexican American graduate students reached out to her to become a part of their group, MAYO, the Mexican American Youth Organization. Her faculty mentors inspired her to become involved and to become an advocate for others. These experiences helped her continue with her professional development as she moved on with her career and have shaped who she has become as a vice president. Isabella mentions that “because she hasn’t had a lot of Latina mentors, because we are not in place”, she was fortunate to have a different form or mentoring relationship with other Latinas from professional organizations such as TACHE. For Isabella the association has been “a group of

mentoring each other. It's those partnerships that you build and learn from and the only place that I have really gotten that."

For Santa, her connections and mentoring relationships first came while a graduate student. She, like Julia, described her mentors as being Latino male faculty members. She was ecstatic to mention that she had "the Godfather" of Chicano Studies as her mentor. It was from these first mentors that she was able to build trust and confidence in her abilities; "they were the first ones to tell me that I could write." During her early professional career out of state, her first mentor was an African American female

and we had a connection going on. I would say that I'm just a little Mexican American girl from the Westside, she would say that she is just a little black girl from West Philly. She and I connected that way. I had no background in human resources but she was my biggest champion.

It was also through a Mexican American library director, whom she considered to be a mentor that her confidence continued to grow. This mentor saw the potential in Santa and pushed her to continue to apply for positions or advocated for her for positions that became available. One of Angela's mentors was a Latina principal, who provided her with advice that she still uses to this day, "Remember that in your classroom everything that happens is either teacher caused or teacher permitted. You have an option." This message connects with Angela and helps her get through tough times at work and in her life, and compels her to do something about the issue at hand. It is a phrase that resonates with her and holds her accountable for her actions and how she works to develop others.

The participants share and retell their stories in order to carry on the legacy with their own mentees. They set themselves up as role models to break the negative stereotypes that are prevalent in the Latino culture. They have taken the experiences from their mentors and passed them on to their mentees as a way to move the culture forward and advocate for themselves and others.

The informal mentoring and similar meaningful connections are in line with the research on how mentoring plays an enormous role in the career advancement of Latinas (Blackhurst, 2000; Brown, 2005; Stanley & Lincoln, 2005). The connections and informal mentoring that Angela, Santa, Isabella, Julia, and La Mera Mera engaged in with their mentors assisted in their success as senior Student Affairs administrators. The participants' mentors provided a way for mentoring to be part of a systemic change by assisting them in making their pathways to success more accessible and guiding them to serve in senior administrative positions (Turner, 2015).

Research Question 2:

Research question 2 asked, "How do the participants describe the ways in which they mentor aspiring Latina professionals?" The ways in which they have approached mentoring other Latinas are reflective of how they, themselves, were mentored. The data suggest that the informal mentoring as described by the participants may be "just as effective for professional and personal improvement" (Bynum, 2015 p. 71). All of the participants attributed using informal mentoring methods as a way to help their mentees achieve success in their careers. Julia indicated that she also participated in formal mentoring programs with a couple of her mentees but stressed those relationships did not continue and were not preferred. This does not support the research, which suggests

formal mentoring programs to be the preferred choice (Mullen & Hutinger, 2008). Additionally, findings for this research question are supportive of Darwin and Palmer's (2009) study which showed that mentoring "worked for those who felt comfortable in a collaborative group environment and not for those who felt uncomfortable sharing information with colleagues who have different personalities, values and motives from themselves" (p. 9).

The participants mentoring can be described as being informal serving as advisors, coaches, and teachers; as being natural and organic; as building strong bonds; and as mentoring through technology and groups.

Advisor, Coach, Teacher

Similar to their own mentoring experiences, the participants did not necessarily define themselves as mentors, engage in formal mentoring programs, or use a particular mentoring model. Rather, they identified themselves as an advisor, coach, and even teacher as they sought to help other Latinas who aspired to senior level administrative positions in Student affairs. Regardless of the label they used, it was apparent they each sought different ways to convey knowledge and experience to their mentees. Julia has used mentoring to discuss "what actions I have taken to be successful and what hurdles I have overcome and what advice I would give on various career oriented topics." Angela has approached her mentoring to include discussions on "how to balance being a boss at work, a mom at home, the wife in bed, the daughter, the sister." They are difficult conversations that must take place, and ones that will shape the mentees in pursuing their personal and career goals.

As a way to provide a visual of the continuous cycle of mentoring that has occurred within the participants' lives, I have created a visual graphic entitled "Waves of Mentors" (Figure 19). The graphic represents the fluidity of mentoring that has occurred with the participants. It starts with the foundation of the familia, and pushes out to other times in their lives when they were being coached, taught, or advised by a variety of people who took on the mentoring role but were not called mentors. These people were described as professors, members of professional organizations or even people they had met outside of the higher education environment. As the network of people grew, more waves continued to form and pushed out even further to the point where the participants, as mentees, became the mentors and took on the roles of advisor, coach, or teacher. In this study, these five Latina women have been on the leading edges of the waves and continue with the momentum of the wave, using their lived experiences as a way to mentor others. And, just as waves in the ocean are created by energy, the participants are doing the same by using their passion and energy about the Latina culture to form more waves of mentors, taking them through the cycle similar to the one they experienced, moving Latinas forward to success.

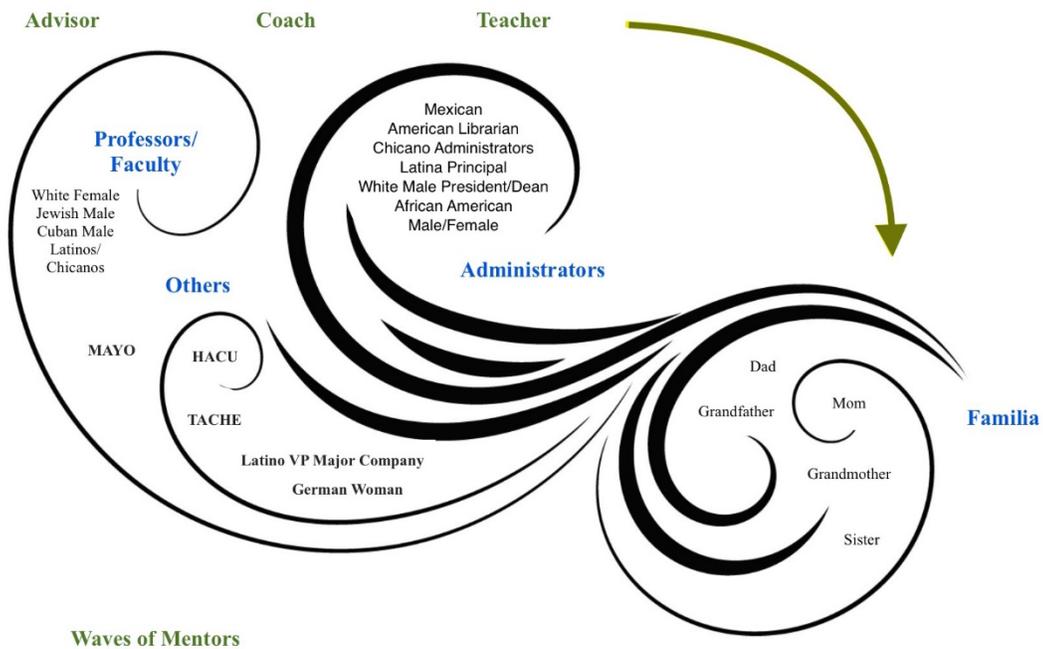


Figure 19. Waves of Mentors.

Natural and Organic

The participants have also described mentoring as being natural and organic, occurring instinctively. La Mera Mera states that she sees mentoring happening naturally, “It’s people observing how I do things, and some of it is really encouraging people to take risks, and challenging them to do things that they for some reason don’t think they are ready to do yet.” Their mentoring practices have been strongly influenced by how they were mentored. Julia straightforwardly states,

It was interesting for me to connect that my mentoring style reflects the way that I was mentored, because I do it much more informally. I have had more structured mentoring relationships over the years. It worked while the mentee needed advice

and then fizzled. I learned from that experience that it's better to allow it to be more organic and natural.

Isabella describes a situation similar to the one she was in with the mentor who saw potential in her.

I gravitated to those young people who particularly, the females, who I could see have so much potential that they didn't believe. So gradually that kind of mentorship began, began with a couple of Latinas who were really smart and good leaders but I felt like I had to keep suggesting other things and pointing out different things...they needed somebody to, I think acknowledge that they could do it.

Angela refers to a message that her mentor shared with her so long ago about holding yourself accountable and realizing that as a leader you are able to influence so many in both positive and negative ways. It has stayed with her throughout her career and "now that I teach others, I tell them the same thing." She continues by describing mentoring as being "A cycle. I think for me, knowing that Dr. C cared, Dr. M. cared and Dr. R. cared, there were so many people that I watched and thought when I grow up I want to be like that." La Mera Mera also shares a similar sentiment saying, "The mentoring relationships that matter the most are more natural. When you really care about someone and you're invested in their success, it matters a lot."

The natural informal mentoring that the participants have described also occurred with me while conducting my research. This is a testament to what they have described... it just happened whenever and wherever it was needed. Not that I asked

them to mentor me, but for some reason or other they made it a point to do so. They saw a need and used the time we had together. While meeting with Santa, she said

I'm going to mentor you now...the other thing that happens is that when you are in the role that you are in right now, I think those are the hardest roles, you know, that middle manager with lots of responsibility, because as you move on to the next position, you will have all of those people doing the job. It actually gets easier when you are at a higher position. It really does.

Santa was referring to stories we had exchanged with each other about our current working environments. She was providing hope for me. Isabella also used our time to instill words of confidence in me, as a mentor would do for her mentee, "I'm really proud of you. You will get there. You will, and it will be such an accomplishment for you and your family and the example for your daughter." Isabella has been supportive of me while on my doctoral journey. She has seen and heard about my overwhelming circumstances and instills a hope that I will continue the legacy with my daughter and others who I am mentoring or look to me as a role model. Meeting Angela for the second time, she questioned me on my progress with my dissertation, asking, "And how are things for you? So when are you going to finish? Do you have a timeline?" While the questioning was intimidating, I knew that her intent was about looking out for me and supporting me during this time. La Mera Mera would also check in with me either by email or phone to see how I was doing. The connections we established have gotten stronger through this study.

Strong Bonds

Mentoring is not a mere transfer of knowledge from one to another. It is about building a strong bond. It is an emotional connection that has lasting effects. The informal mentoring the participants have described led me to an understanding of where they place the value in helping other Latinas aspire to higher-level positions and how much energy and effort they put into others. It is a true passion and investment for the Latina culture as a whole. The *conexiones* (connections) they have and are creating are about building a long lasting bond. This bond is seen through the stories that were shared. Isabella talks about her mentees staying connected with her throughout the years. “So I just get all of these baby things from all of my young women.” I was also able to witness the long lasting bond that she has formed while at a conference that we both attended. One of her former mentees who is now in Washington, DC, was also in attendance. The smiles, hugs, and time spent with one another were evident of the strong emotional ties they have. It was as if a mother and daughter were reconnecting after years of not seeing each other. La Mera Mera confirms a strong bond as well. “For those I care about, I will defend them, and I will fight for them and I will coach them, and I will have an expectation that they succeed at what they’re doing.” She also talks about how the mentoring relationship can be quite consuming, and does not want to invest the time and effort when the bond is broken, or when a Latina mentee begins to show signs of poor judgment. “I knew eventually that we were just too different. I can’t invest myself in someone who is not adaptable, or not willing to do something better or productive.” Angela further explains the time and personal commitment put forth,

You develop these relationships that even when you least expect it you find yourself, again, it's that parenting, to me mentoring is like parenting. And people aren't going to believe you if they can't trust you, and if you guide someone in the right direction as if they were your own children and expect them to do well. I don't think they will let you down.

These women also described the pain, hurt, and disappointment felt when the mentoring relationships were disturbed by external factors which indicates the bond is much stronger than a mere process of transferring knowledge from one to another.

Tearing up Angela shares,

I think the hardest thing is knowing that someone has incredible potential and isn't going to, and knowing that that potential will never be filled because of a husband, because of a family situation, because of lack of self-confidence... I have had some give up because of their parents...that haunts me.

Isabella also shared of a story that entailed mentoring a Latina who she worked hard to advocate for, promoting her to other positions within her department and also helping her along the way as she worked on her master's degree. However, when her mentee married, Isabella noticed that her attitude started to change around the office. Her mentee began to treat others differently, with an air of superiority. Isabella noticed she became more isolated within the office and only thought of herself. She eventually left the department but for Isabella, this mentoring experience was one that provided grief and frustration. There was a disconnect between the two when her mentee started portraying individualistic behaviors instead of the more collective team building attributes. This was not the type of relationship Isabella wanted to invest in and although it had become

challenging, she was glad that it had ended. Isabella knew that this relationship would not be beneficial for other Latinas in the office to witness. However, she was able to use this situation as a learning experience for future relationships.

Mentoring Through Technology and Groups

Santa's approach to mentoring has been a little different from what she encountered while being mentored. Technology has assisted her with her mentoring but the type of mentoring seems to be similar to her experiences. For Santa, social media has been the natural tool that keeps her mentoring relationships going. She shares, "I think as I reflect on those I mentor, it's much easier to connect, you know, in social media now. It's the words of encouragement or being in a picture together or in a Facebook message." Santa has also said that time is her most precious commodity and the lack of time has made it difficult to have opportunities to share experiences together with her mentees. Because of the shortage of time, she wants to change her approach of meeting one on one with her mentees. She has told them that she will

introduce them to each other, and then I'm going to talk to them as a group. So they can all meet and ask questions of each other that I can't [answer] and can just talk about it and I'll listen to them.

Angela has also used a group approach with her mentees as a way to teach them and as a way to model how she mentors.

As was seen with the participants, mentoring was a struggle when mentor and mentee values or beliefs were not aligned, or when the relationship was not mutually beneficial. Furthermore, as was revealed through the nurturing mentoring experiences of La Mera Mera and Angela, their mentees' needs to achieve success in the workplace

were taken into consideration first, as compared to supporting the goals or mission of their organization (Bozeman & Fenney, 2007).

Research Question 3:

Research question 3 asked, “What are the perceptions of the participants regarding the impact they have on mentoring aspiring Latina professionals to achieve professional success?” The following themes emerged from the answers to this research question: *familia y construcción comunitaria* (family and community building), *teniendo las ganas y coraje* (having the desire and courage), *haciendo la diferencia* (making a difference) *cambiando la mentalidad* (changing the mindset), *un círculo de empoderamiento* (a circle of empowerment) and *nuestras raíces* (our roots). Spanish was used to capture the participants’ essence of feelings and emotions.

Familia y Construcción Comunitaria (Family and Community Building)

The notion of *familia y construcción comunitaria* (family and community building) has been an influence on mentoring other aspiring Latinas. It is as if each of the participants has been working throughout their professional career to grow the *familia* of successful senior Student Affairs administrators. They have used their past and lived experiences as Isabella stated, “*Que nunca se nos olvide de donde venimos*” (to never forget from where we came).

Their early life experiences have played a role in, and informed the mentoring they have provided. Angela confirms how her parents and other mentors influenced how she mentored others, “I think my parents were my first mentors providing support and guidance.” She also describes how other faculty members helped her in her career as well; “Dr. R was like a second dad to me and his wife is like a sister. It’s this constant

collaborative effort of building me up.” She has taken these experiences to inform how she mentors other Latinas. Some of it has come from what their family and their personal experiences were like growing up during a time when discrimination was rampant and civil rights were being fought for. For Julia, the incidents of her father being discriminated against for having an accent, and being given the stereotypical name of “Poncho” served as a motivation for advocating and mentoring Latinos. For Santa it was more personal as she too experienced the discrimination from a second grade teacher for calling the Scotch tape, “cosh tape.” This incident has left its mark on Santa throughout her life. She says, “Everyone knows my ‘cosh’ tape story. It’s been a driving force of don’t pigeonhole me.” Santa uses this example in her mentoring to provide “acknowledgment, validation, and self-worth” to others. She wants to help build others up, not tear them down. For La Mera Mera, her parents’ story is compelling in that they were migrant workers who went to school to get their high school diploma and then they continued on, earning college degrees. History shows under the circumstances of the times, it was uncommon for this generation of migrant workers to pursue high school let alone earn a college degree, yet for La Mera Mera not earning a college degree was not an option. Just as her parents set high expectations for her, La Mera Mera does the same in the mentoring relationships she established with other Latinas.

Teniendo las Ganas y Coraje (Having the Desire and Courage)

Mentoring has been about *teniendo las ganas y coraje* (having the desire and courage) to change the lives of Latinas in a meaningful way and continuing a legacy. The past has informed who the participants have become and also serves as a foundation for how they approach whom they mentor. As Isabella shares,

So all of these experiences pieced together, I think always gave me more of an understanding that as a Latina woman, I was looked at as ‘less than.’ And so when I mentor Latina women it’s always so that I can help them not only understand who they are and to be proud of who they are, to be able to push because we are not going to get anywhere unless we push even today.

All of the participants talk about the struggle they or their family have encountered. It seems to be a driving force in who they have become in their professional roles, and how they support their mentees by being resilient successful women in the field. For example, Santa speaks of the strong women she had in her life and how they have been influential in who she has become.

My maternal grandmother crossed the border. My other grandmother was a *reyleta*, a wife of the men who were in the skirmishes. She would go off and fight during the day, and then come back to camp, and help cook. I’ve always taken from that past, those two women and the strength of those two women, and being survivors.

While Santa tells of the struggles of positive women in her life, Angela recounts a negative experience she had in high school and notes how it has been an intrinsic motivator to keep moving forward, “My high school counselor told me to go to beauty school.” La Mera Mera has a similar negative experience and tells of the time when her supervisor did “everything to limit my opportunities” and for twelve years “I didn’t go anywhere.”

Haciendo la Diferencia (Making a Difference)

The mentoring the participants offer comes with a purpose, *para hacer la diferencia* (to make a difference) and *para cambiar la mentalidad* (to change the mindset) that has been perceived by society about Latinas. While discussing why Julia mentors she provides insight into the history Mexicans have endured.

Mexicans settled in Texas and were leaders prior to Anglos doing so yet, because Anglos won the right battles/wars, they took the lead in Texas as victors, unfortunately, discriminated against Mexicans. Latinos therefore, were set back considerably in educational and economic opportunities.

Julia, Isabella, Angela, and La Mera Mera feel as if it is their responsibility to help bring about this change.

Similar to Third Wave feminists aiming to give power to women to make change and gain equality, the participants have alluded that they are trying to create change and move the Latina culture forward, standing and speaking up for what they believe in, and trying to have more Latinas in the profession especially in the upper administrative positions (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 2002; Sandoval, 2000). It is an ongoing mission for the participants to debunk the deficit minded framework that society has associated with the Latina/o culture, and about moving the group forward. Julia states,

It is a personal commitment to increase the number of Latinas/os in higher education...as students and as professionals. I have this commitment because early on in my college days I recognized the disparity between the numbers of Latinos in Texas and the U.S. and the numbers/percent accessing and being successful in higher education.

The participants have felt that the only way to get change is by *haciendo la diferencia* (making a difference). As Isabella has clearly shared, “If I don’t do it, then who will?”

Un Circulo de Empoderamiento (A Circle of Empowerment)

Their efforts mentoring other Latinas are also about *rompiendo los esteriotipos* (breaking the stereotypes), bringing forth a new representation of successful Latina women in higher education, and creating *un circulo de empoderamiento* (a circle of empowerment). Incorporating the style of mentoring that the participants have shared is a way to create change within the campus culture in support of diversifying, and bringing representation to upper level positions. (Banning, Ahuna, & Hughes, 2000). La Mera Mera’s mentoring included pointing out the obligation to her staff, “It is our responsibility to replace ourselves with two or three people. So before you leave this institution, you need to hire other Latinos or be part of advocating for them to win positions and stuff.” Mentoring has been mutually beneficial for both parties involved.

Through mentoring, the participants have provided guidance; coaching, and advice to advance Latinas, and the mentees have received this transferred knowledge and developed a strong bond to use for their benefit in their careers and also in their lives. They have built up these women and been a positive influence teaching their mentees to not give up, not give in; to stand their ground so that they can continue toward success. For the participants, it has created *momentos orgulloso* (proud moments) in seeing their mentees achieve success. Some of them have stayed in Student Affairs and continue to be successful, others have moved on to become directors, attorneys, or continue their education to receive a terminal degree.

The participants serve as elders to those who follow and have begun a legacy of successful Latina women in Student Affairs. Isabella gets emotional describing that it is about knowing, "...that I guess our group is moving forward and it wasn't done for nothing." Julia shares an email that she received from one of her mentees illustrating how she has helped to build her and the Latino culture up.

Personally you are a WONDERFUL PERSON! I cannot thank you enough for all of your help. I will keep on trying and not give up, but know this, wherever I end up I will ALWAYS remember what you did for me, but also follow YOUR EXAMPLE at helping other people *especialimente nuestra gente* (especially our people), the next generation of leaders.

As Santa adamantly states,

I really look forward to [mentoring] because it is our future, and if there's one thing that I can do, you know, while I'm here at the university, is help these women, you know, navigate it and move forward, it's worth it.

Santa, Julia, Angela, La Mera Mera, and Isabella all spoke of how they charted the unsettling waters of academia as a Latina (Dahlvig & Longman, 2014; Eddy & Ward, 2015; Meyerson & Fletcher, 200). At times it was difficult and hard to endure, but in the end they learned how to make things work, became resilient, and continued to move forward in their own way. I realized from listening to their stories that they learned and used the concept of leveraging as a way to benefit others as a whole and widen the path of opportunities for all future generations of Latinas to forge ahead.

From their stories, I am reminded of a poem that I drafted (early in my doctoral studies) from my struggles as a Latina, and as a novice administrator, when seeking

advice from one of my mentors. I have added to it and arranged it in a way to highlight the essence the participants have captured through their experiences of guiding their mentees through the work environment as a Latina.

KNOW THE SYSTEM

Mentoring Latinos in Higher Education...

It's more conscious & deliberate

I tell about the struggles to get here

Latinos...

who did not want to get help

who were arrogant

who thought that they knew it all

who did not know how to work the system

who wouldn't listen

who thought they would make it through the school of hard knocks.

I say...

to be successful, you have to understand;

we think we know how to mentor but we don't;

we think *la palanca* works, but it doesn't;

we think we're doing good, but we're not;

we let our pride get in the way.

I talk...

about people pointing the way

about people helping me out

about people helping me to be successful.
about people needing to be vulnerable
about people not needing to know everything
about people not being EXPECTED to know everything.
It hasn't worked for them, but I haven't given up.

I continue to approach.

I continue to share.

I continue to coach.

Let's all continue to...

help each other.

stop the injustice.

take opportunities.

seek help along the way.

We need to...

Know the western culture.

Know how to navigate the western way.

KNOW AND WORK THE SYSTEM!

By knowing the system, and navigating through it effectively, the participants have become successful. Despite not having many Latinas to turn to for mentoring, the participants learned to play the game, gained confidence, and continued to move forward in what they were meant to do as Student Affairs professionals. They have developed the knowledge needed to negotiate the system and used this understanding to help other Latinas become successful within their careers.

From the beginning of this study there was an expectation that Latinas needed other Latinas to help them be successful. However, with Angela, La Mera Mera, Isabella, Julia, and Santa, very few Latinas were available for mentoring opportunities. Nonetheless, they have shown they were able to navigate a system where few Latinas were present, having received coaching, advice, and support from others to reach their positions. Nonetheless, imagine what might happen when similar culture and similar gender are brought into the mentoring processes. Having mentors, who are Latina, may help to empower other Latinas as they are brought together in support of each other by providing a “safe space, a common discourse, similar ways of knowing the world, and similar perspectives” (Suriel & Martinez, 2016, p. 161).

Nuestras Raíces (Our Roots)

As a way to capture the participants’ experiences and the impact they have had in mentoring other aspiring Latinas, I used a painting (Figure 20) to help illustrate and represent the overall findings of the study.



Figure 20. Nuestras Raíces. Artwork by Lily Gonzalez, 2015

Latina mentoring is like nurturing the family tree. It first starts with a seed (mentee) that is nurtured with water and sunlight (mentor). The seed is transformed into a seedling and eventually, with more nurturing, a small tree. As the tree grows, the rings of the tree form annually and indicate its history. The rings of a tree, as is the case with each passing year of mentoring, tell the story of those who have come before and build a history as more mentors and mentees are added to the family. Change continues to occur and the tree grows year by year. Eventually branches form from the tree reaching out and connecting to others who need help along the way. And, as the tree is continuously nurtured and supported, leaves sprout pointing towards things that are to come. Other leaves fall to the ground, those without support, guidance, or nurturing, and remind us that the mentoring relationships need to continue to achieve success.

The tree itself can also represent the history of the Latina/o culture, over the years building upon each generation and growing throughout the years. The dark reflection at the base of the tree represents the haunting struggles, the hurt and pain that many in the Latino culture have encountered. For the participants, this area of the tree may also represent the lingering memories the participants have had of mentoring experiences that were not as successful. In turn, this provides the motivation for them to continue to mentor others.

The colors of this painting also symbolize and communicate the emotions (Ellis, 2004) the participants felt describing their mentoring experiences. Reflecting on the painting, realizing I did not want to separate the participants' voice from their emotions, I knew that I wanted to accentuate the many colors in the painting, consciously aware that colors imply different things for different cultures (Incredible Art, n.d., para 1). I then listed out the specific colors used in the painting to research the variety of meanings they could represent and connected the meanings with words, which the participants provided in their descriptions of mentoring. Yellow represents the support that mentors offer and also the hope and wisdom that they impart on their mentees. Orange represents the energy and the long lasting relationships that the mentors engage in but also speaks to change that they wish to accomplish. Red represents the heart, soul, and passion that mentors invest in the relationships. Green is associated with the growth of the *familia* and the connections being created through mentoring relationships. At the top of the tree, purple represents the success that is achieved by some and visually shows that there is a pathway guiding others and letting them know that it is attainable.

Connections to the Theoretical Framework

The participants' stories, experiences, and the analysis of the data are supportive of the frameworks of feminism and LatCrit. The feminist framework is guided by the principles that women have something valuable to contribute; that women as an oppressed group have not been able to reach their potential, receive awards, or gain full participation in society; and that feminist research should do more than critique, by using the needs, background, beliefs, and concerns of women as a basis for systemic change to occur in our society. Feminist research should (a) work towards social transformation, from structural hierarchies in institutions of higher education dominated by male representation, to one where there is equal representation by both women and men; (b) work to discredit the stereotypes of women being perceived as inferior; and (c) promote actions within organizations to change policies, practices, and structures (Gill & Jones, 2013; Lopez, 2013; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 2002; Nicholson & Pasque, 2011; Sadowska, 2010; Yakabowski & Donahoo, 2011).

In this particular study, Isabella, La Mera Mera, Santa, Julia, and Angela, all Latinas, worked toward a systemic social transformation and somewhat disrupted the hierarchies that have been historically dominated by men by becoming senior administrators within their respective institutions. They continue to address systemic elements that resisted having Latinas in positions of power and authority. They continue to change the landscape of higher education. First by being successful Latinas, and second by mentoring, supporting, and advocating for others, to include Latinas, to become representative leaders of their institutions.

Even though the participants have made progress in their careers, oppression is still not far removed from their stories. Nor, do they forget those times where they experienced excessive exercise of power in their professional settings especially early in their careers. With LatCrit, as an extension of critical race theory, the focus is on the Latino culture and the forms of oppression they encounter (Creswell, 2007; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). In this study, the forms of oppression the participants encountered included the social pattern in which Latinas were treated differently from those who are non-Latina. Oftentimes, the participants had to challenge institutional barriers and tenuous relationships where the contributions of Latinas were not considered nor were their voices heard.

So while much of the literature on LatCrit points toward the oppression of Latinos produced from outsiders, not all acts of oppression necessarily occur from outside a specific culture. For instance, La Mera Mera talked about the power and privilege that her Latina supervisor had over her for so long. She was trapped for 12 years in a position of not being able to advance or fully participate in her profession. According to La Mera Mera, her supervisor treated her differently from other professional staff in the office by not providing the same development opportunities and making La Mera Mera's life difficult while at work. In her words, she attributed this to "*celos*" (jealousy). The 12 years was a time of long suffering and she felt as if she was drowning, being pushed further and further underwater. She did all she could within her own control to keep her head above water. This treatment threatened her ability to advance within the profession. Deep down inside, La Mera Mera knew she was capable of moving forward but it was a difficult journey since the nonvisible scars had formed deep within her core, leading La

Mera Mera to question so much of who she was and who she aspired to be. Despite the limitations that her supervisor placed on her, La Mera Mera did not stop what she believed in and worked through the adversity and acts of oppression. As a result of her “*ganas*” (internal will) she moved upward and onward to a better environment and position. Because of the hardness of the scars, which developed into calluses, it was difficult at first to see her worth in her new position. After praise and confidence building from her new Latina supervisor, La Mera Mera knew she still had much to contribute and was of value to other Latinas and to the field of Student Affairs.

The LatCrit perspective used in this study also ensures that the "voices of all 'out' groups are heard and interconnected through the use of storytelling/counter storytelling and naming one's own reality” (Delgado & Stefancic, 1993, p. 462). Their stories were a way to mentor by sharing what they actually encountered in their lives and how they used those experiences to challenge the stereotypes that are often associated with the Latino culture (Delgado, 1989). While, Santa, Julia, and La Mera Mera all shared personal stories that have had a positive impact on their career, how they approached mentoring others, and also how they learned from the mentoring they received to navigate the educational system that they work in to reach their success, it has not been without some challenges.

Throughout their lives, they felt the hurt and pain that they endured during the times in which they, a family member, or someone they knew was discriminated against. Santa recalls several times being called María, a traditional Spanish female name, alluding to how others perceived that all female Mexican Americans were named María. Julia experienced the same with her father being called Poncho, instead of his birth name.

La Mera Mera ensured her voice was heard and people knew she was of value indicating that she would not serve on committees if she were only being placed there to be the “token” Latina. The historical context of the era in which they lived, seeing positive family influences contribute to their personal and professional success, overcoming challenges that were presented as they journeyed to their senior-level positions, and receiving support and guidance throughout their careers continue to resonate in their approach to mentoring. The participants choose to be positive influences to Latinas in hope of changing the social realities that are often present and disguised in society (Valdes, 2005).

Similar to feminism, LatCrit builds communities within the Latino culture by bringing together commonalities while still respecting differences in order to produce knowledge to advance social transformation from a system where Latinas are not predominantly represented in Student Affairs leadership positions to one where they are (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Delgado & Stefancic, 1997). Through their personal and professional lived experiences, the participants are producers of knowledge and their mentees are the receivers of this knowledge, learning from these experiences and choosing to apply the knowledge throughout their careers.

During their time of being mentored, Angela, La Mera Mera, Isabella, Julia, and Santa witnessed the lack of representation of Latinas in senior-level positions in higher education, and had few Latinas to choose from to serve as their mentors. Now, over 20 years later, a few more Latinas, such as themselves, are represented in the senior-level positions and they have become the social transformation in the higher educational system. Their representation in visible positions of authority has played a significant role

in contributing to the persistent interest of mentoring other Latinas as a way to move the Latina culture forward. La Mera Mera, Isabella, and Julia have all advocated for other Latinas to fill positions and have spoken up when Latina/os were being viewed as less than. Angela also stepped up for her mentee when her husband did not want her to be promoted into another position. Angela knew that it would stifle the progress her mentee had made if she did not continue to be involved in the situation, not only for her but also for her mentee's daughters who would follow in her footsteps. Angela assumed the role of *madrina*, which expanded the mentoring relationship from that of professional to being part of the *familia*. As *madrina*, she advocated and supported her mentee in ways that included *plática* with her mentee's husband. In the end, from the *pláticas* with Angela, her husband started to see things differently and opportunities for career advancement served as a positive influence for their family and the Latino culture as a whole.

Implications for Practice, Methodology and Scholarship

Now that I have concluded this study I ask the questions, "So what?" What does this research suggest? Looking at Latinas in higher education, I would like to take the approach of asking all university stakeholders to think of these implications seriously when they make decisions on their particular campuses especially in regard to Latina mentoring. I have suggested the following:

Implications for Practice: Mentoring to Empower, and Coming Together

Implications for Methodology: Growing through Sharing

Implications for Scholarship: Being Seen and Heard, and Being a *Madrina*.

Mentoring to Empower

Recall that according to the NCES (2012), Latinas comprise 6.1% of the executive and managerial positions in higher education. There has also been, over a nine-year span (2005-2014), a 10% increase in the number of minority students enrolling in colleges and universities, with Hispanics showing the largest increase at approximately 5.4% (NCES, 2015). The literature (Rendon, 2003) also suggests that hiring Latinas/os as administrators in higher education institutions is important to the retention of Latina/o students; however, as the statistics show, there still remains a gap between the student and administrative demographics. As was mentioned earlier in the study, a practical question is, how are institutions supporting the advancement of Latinas? I suggest informal mentoring may be a way to support the advancement of Latinas to administrative positions.

At the institutional level administrators will say mentoring helps to acclimate or socialize individuals to know the behaviors, culture, and expectations of the university through formal mentoring programs (Ramaswami & Dreher, 2010). The purpose of these formalized programs is to meet the needs of the institution not the needs of the mentee. This is an interesting point because the benefit is focused on the institution rather than the mentee. The participants used informal mentoring relationships and did not indicate that they mentor for the benefit of the institution. Instead, the mentoring they provide is purely for the mutual benefit of the mentee/mentor and to help move Latina culture forward. As a result of this informal mentoring, the institution may benefit in several ways such as by helping to recruit and retain diverse employees, providing chances to

foster and alter the culture of the workplace, and enhancing leadership opportunities (Bynum, 2015).

With informal practices the goal is to help empower mentees and inspire others. There is a need to advocate for, support, and nurture more informal mentoring models in higher education. Informal mentoring models need to be effortless, ever changing, adaptable, and flexible to the needs of those being mentored. The model may look differently from one person to another or it may include a more collective approach to bring people of similar cultures and values together to develop connections with one another as a means to aid in their professional success. In addition, empowering one may lead to empowering many. All involved may benefit from this approach and perhaps a more inclusive, empowering environment can lead to a healthy sustainable one where all are valued.

Mentoring should be about giving mentees hope to aspire to bright futures and not about confining them to the philosophy of the institution. Mentoring should not just be about a structured process. It should be a process that is flexible and adaptable to fit the needs of each individual or even a particular group such as Latinas in Student Affairs. Mentoring is about creating a culture in which both the mentor and the mentee are mutually respected and recognized. The mentor's role is about offering support, advocacy, and sponsorship and at the same time providing autonomy to their mentee to make their own choices as they aspire towards their professional success.

Coming Together

For these Latina participants, spending time with one another to share similar experiences, build community, and familia are all things that are valued. There is a need

to create space or opportunities for a more naturalized mentoring process to occur. Formal models may work in certain instances, but did not necessarily work for these five participants. There is a need to recognize that these participants in high-level positions of power want to help develop staff to the level of affecting change on campuses. Formal mentoring models did not serve as the avenue for them to become the change. It was through informal mentoring processes that each of the participants was able to reach their success. Unlike the formal models, the environments associated with informal mentoring allowed trustworthy, honest, and genuine conversations to take place between the mentor and mentee. Through a shared sense of belonging and shared perspectives, relationships formed, continued, and for those involved in the relationship, also work toward common goals such as moving the Latina culture forward. As indicated by Julia, the formal mentoring programs she encountered briefly in her career did not produce long lasting relationships. An environment that is not conducive to long lasting relationships will suffer and inhibit building trust with one another. In order for the Latina community to come together and affect change, there is a need for informal mentoring models to be established so that individuals can bond and work towards a unified goal.

Growing Through Sharing

With the use of *plática* as a method of sharing meaningful experiences, we need to help others understand that learning is taking place. By using the power of *plática* (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2013) the participants aided the success of their mentees. When *plática* occurs in the hallway, offices, or even during extended lunches, know that as much learning may be taking place as if sitting in front of a computer from 8-5pm, conducting research in a library, or by sitting in a classroom. With this study I was able to

create an environment where *plática* occurred. The participants used *plática* as way to share and describe their mentoring experiences and it was used with ease even when technology, through platforms such as Skype or Google Hangouts, was the source for communicating.

In addition, professional associations are important for institutions to consider when implementing mentoring models. For instance, the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) recently created a program called ESCALERAS specifically for Latinos who aspire to advance to senior level positions within higher education. The program includes a series of panels, group-mentoring sessions and presentations given by keynote speakers. Having participated in the program this past year (2015), the most beneficial part of it was when given the opportunity to participate in the group-mentoring sessions, however the time allotted in my opinion was too short. During this time, we were able to engage in *plática* and more in-depth conversations about topics that were relevant to us in our positions as Latinas/os on campus. For many of us the *pláticas* continued in the hotel lobby as is depicted below (Figure 21). *Pláticas* do not need well-established boundaries. *Pláticas* are about providing a space, naming, and honoring our own realities within the Latino culture (Delgado & Stefancic, 1997), and allowing the process to develop and take care of itself. Through these *pláticas*, Latinas are able to help, guide, and advocate for our sisters.



Figure 21. Platicando con Nuestra Gente (Talking with our People).

Being Seen *and* Heard

It is not enough to just have representation of Latinas in senior administrative positions in Student Affairs, because Latinas still face obstacles in their environments. For too long, much of the advocacy has been on getting Latinas in these positions, but without voice ...now, that more Latinas are in...more opportunities exist for sharing ideas, albeit, limited. There is a great need for research on Latinas in higher education not only to let us know what these females think but also to provide confidence and support to other Latinas who aspire to these positions. The importance of being represented in these positions provides an opportunity for Latina/os to view others like them in positions of authority. Administrators and faculty, whether they realize it or not, are viewed as role models and potentially may provide motivation to other students and staff to remain in school or continue their educational or career pathway. In addition, having a Latina/o presence provides opportunities for others to seek advice that may be specific to the Latino culture. Research is a platform for us to advocate for these marginalized groups thereby creating a space for their voices to be heard and providing

visibility to those often left unseen. However, being visible is only one part of it...being heard and taking action is critical. Through their voice Latinas who reach positions of power and authority can work towards effecting change in policies and practice and also contribute to the social transformation that is so needed in higher education institutions.

Professional organizations, especially those whose mission and purpose are committed to the advancement, improvement of educational and employment opportunities for Latinos in higher education, and influence policy are an avenue for Latinas to be seen and heard. Isabella, Julia, and Santa stressed the importance of being involved in professional organizations or attending conferences provided by TACHE, AAHHE, and HACU. University officials have an opportunity to reach out to those individuals on campus who could benefit from establishing new relationships by attending conferences. One way to do this is to, take a look at the percentage of Latino staff and faculty positions on campus to determine and commit to the level of funding necessary to sponsor Latinas to attend. This should especially be a priority for those institutions designated as Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs). There is nothing more disappointing than an HSI designated university, which receives funding for reaching this designation, failing to commit to supporting efforts for Latina/o staff and faculty who directly serve the students.

Encouraging, advocating, and appointing Latinas to positions of visibility and authority, whether serving on committees, search committees, or through professional organizations, is a must. Being visible and heard in these positions provides an opportunity for Latinas to work on implementing change, and present alternative viewpoints to provide a more inclusive environment. It is a way to have Latina

representation, as well as, providing another avenue for potential mentoring relationships to be established. There is importance in recognition; it is a way to acknowledge that Latinas are being brought forward, being seen and heard in positions of significance.

Being a Madrina

Looking at this from a different perspective, consider the concept of sponsorship. Sponsors are mentors who take it a step further and will make you visible to leaders within the company, and to top people outside as well. They connect you to career opportunities. And when it comes to opening doors, they don't stop with one promotion: they'll see you to the threshold of power. (Hewlett, Peraino, Sherbin, & Sumberg, 2010, p.6)

Angela and La Mera Mera speak of how they have been become “sponsors” through the mentoring that first began with their Latina mentees who initially worked as student employees within their division. With their mentorship and sponsorship their mentees have continued to rise in their success reaching director or even assistant vice president positions.

In Spanish, the word *madrina* or *padrino* means godparent, someone who takes on the role during the baptism, first communion, or confirmation of a child. The term may also be used to indicate a sponsor for additional things in the Mexican culture such as *quinceañeras*, graduations, or other special occasions throughout a person's life. Having a *madrina*, as a godparent, or sponsor, is an attempt to give a child a continued network of caring people to advise, guide, and influence them. Similar to being a *madrina* in the Mexican culture, La Mera Mera, Angela, Santa, Julia, and Isabella have become *madrinas* to some of their mentees. Their process started by being an *ahijada*

(goddaughter) of their, *madrina* or *padrino*, and as they switched their roles to become a mentor to other Latinas, they also switched their positions to that of a *madrina*, or sponsor. Through the well-established relationships that formed, and the time invested with their mentees, they have become a network of caring Latina women who have worked to influence their mentees' lives in meaningful and successful ways.

Future Research

While mentoring has played a tremendous role in the professional that I have become, my interest continues to be centered on the how Latina/os achieve professional success in higher education. Part of this is attributed to the changing demographics across the nation and part of it is solely for personal reasons, wanting to understand and advance the Latino culture. With that, I continue to ponder what other research can be conducted to help add to and shape the scholarship for Latinos in higher education.

Below are some suggestions.

1. As this study was situated in Texas, the experiences of Latinas in other regions of the United States were not taken into consideration. Replicating this study to include other geographical locations throughout the United States may provide a different perspective.
2. The findings for this study only included the mentoring experiences of Latinas in Student Affairs. Including the mentoring experiences of Latinos or other marginalized groups in Student Affairs may provide other findings.
3. Another possibility is to conduct a cross case analysis of mentoring experiences between Latinas in Student Affairs and Latinas in faculty positions.

4. Similarly, a cross case analysis describing the mentoring experiences of Latino faculty, Latino administrators, and Latino students in higher education may also contribute to a broader understanding and provide other viewpoints.
5. Quantitative studies could be conducted to see how much does cultural experience influence one's success as an administrator in Student Affairs and does the concept of *plática* span across a larger group of identified cultures?
6. With the exception of Isabella and Julia, each participant had at least one parent who experienced formal education in college. What would mentoring experiences look like for participants who did not have parents who experienced formal college/university education? What struggles did the participants overcome to become successful in higher education?
7. There is also a need for research to consider the concept of sponsorship of Latinas and other people of color in higher education as a way to help move people forward. Hewlett, Peraino, Sherbin, and Sumberg (2010) conducted extensive research on the sponsorship effect in the business industry, but little has been done within higher education. With the need for more representation in the upper echelon of higher education, sponsorship will be key to reaching such positions for people of color (Hewitt, Jackson, Cose, & Emerson, 2012).

Final Thoughts

The intent of this study was to capture the different experiences and voices (Revilla, 2001) of each Latina senior administrator so that others who have similar aspirations may understand and learn how they used mentoring to navigate the path to success. Through *pláticas*, Latinas can show the importance of their personal social

experiences and also the expertise, training, and knowledge they possess within their role as senior level administrators. Two of the main purposes of LatCrit are to produce knowledge and advance social transformation (Valdes, 2005). Therefore, this study has showcased Latina voices, produced knowledge outside of the formal traditional settings of a classroom, allowed others to become aware of and understand their mentoring experiences, thereby giving other Latinas a way to construct their own knowledge and understanding of how to navigate the instructional structures and political climate within higher education. This study has sought to contribute to the literature and provide yet another piece of scholarship to the field of Student Affairs, which lacks information on the mentoring experiences of Latina administrators (Ballenger, 2010; Blackhurst, 2000).

The study has attempted to assist in advancing social transformation by providing a different lens through which to view Latinas as being capable of achieving success, especially in a male-dominated environment, and discredit the stereotypes of Latinas being perceived as weak or lacking abilities (Montoya, 2012; Yakaboski & Donahoo, 2011). Latinas can put a plan in place by utilizing the power of *plática* to build coalitions and take action toward ending the inequities they have encountered; creating a pathway to success in hopes of having the path be more inclusive and easier to travel. At times Latinas struggle to find their place within their family and work environments. Within their family there is a strong sense of maintaining a cultural identity, yet within the working environment there is also a strong sense of assimilating to the Anglo centric culture (Valdes, 2005). These two environments are contradictory in nature and make it difficult for Latinas to be respected and heard, especially within the confines of institutions of higher education (Luna, 2000; Turner & Myers, 2000).

As a Latina Student Affairs professional I have reflected many times on the lack of Latinas in the profession and wondered how other Latinas have been successful in achieving higher-level positions. Much of this questioning came from the isolation that I felt not only on the campuses where I have worked but also when attending professional conferences seeking to establish a wider network of Latina professionals. What has become refreshing, if not hopeful, is that I am not the only one that has felt this aloneness; the participants from my study have provided insights from their experiences and have shown that mentoring from an array of individuals, including family members, supervisors, colleagues from professional organizations, and administrators, has assisted in their success. Similar to Isabella, Julia, Angela, La Mera Mera, and Santa, I will continue to be a mentor to others, reach out to those who are near me or are coming up in the field, be a positive influence, advocate for Latinas, be the *madrina* I was meant to be, and continue moving us forward. *Adelante!*

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APPENDIX A

Participant Solicitation Letter

Dear Student Affairs Administrator,

I am a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Leadership, Curriculum & Instruction at Texas A&M University, Corpus Christi. Under the guidance of my faculty advisor and dissertation chairperson, Dr. Lynn Hemmer (361-825-3702), I plan to conduct a research study titled *Latina Mentoring: A Case Study of Latina Student Affairs Administrators Mentoring Aspiring Latina Professionals*. The reason for this study is to describe and understand the mentoring experiences of Latina Student Affairs administrators at universities in Texas. More specifically, with this study I seek to understand the experiences of those who have been mentored and are providing mentoring to Latinas who aspire to achieve professional success in administration as well. I am seeking volunteers to participate in the study. You have received this letter because you are a Senior Student Affairs Administrator at a Texas university.

If you agree to volunteer I will meet with you to discuss the research study in detail, answer any questions you may have and obtain your written, informed consent. As a volunteer participant, you may exit from the study at any point without penalty.

What will you be asked to do?

- Agree to be interviewed and audio taped by the researcher (Lisa O. Perez) during mutually agreed upon times.
- Agree to participate in journal writing for a specified time to reflect on current and/or past mentoring experiences and/or respond to questions asked by the researcher.
- Agree to provide the researcher with documents you deem relevant and necessary to convey your perspective.
- Respond to any follow-up questions the researcher might have when interpreting data (words said, intention conveyed) in an effort to maintain consistency and authentic representation of your input.
- Agree to review and discuss outcomes of the study with the researcher and

provide feedback.

- Agree that the data may be used for future presentation and publication purposes but all identifying information about my conversation with the interviewer will be removed.

If you are interested in volunteering as a participant for this study, please respond by completing the information below, signing this form and returning it to me via email at lisaperez1@gmail.com. If you are selected to participate in this study, I will contact you. Your time and consideration are greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Lisa O. Perez

Doctoral Student & Sr. Executive Director, Student Life

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi

Printed Name

Title

Email Address

Phone Number

Preferred Method of Contact (circle one or both)

PHONE

EMAIL

Signature

Date

APPENDIX B:

Informed Consent Form

Latina Mentoring: A Case Study of Latina Student Affairs Administrators Mentoring

Aspiring Latina Professionals

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. The Principal Investigator, Lisa O. Perez, will also describe the study to you and answer your questions. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything that you do not understand before deciding whether or not to take part. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Description: I understand that the purpose of the study is to describe and understand the experiences of four to eight Latina student affairs administrators at universities in Texas who have been mentored and are providing mentoring to Latinas who aspire to achieve professional success in administration as well.

Confidentiality: I understand that confidentiality about my personal information will be maintained. No information about me, or provided by me during the research, will be shared with others (apart from the Principal Investigator and Dr. Lynn Hemmer, Assistant Professor, faculty advisor and dissertation chair), except if it is necessary to protect my welfare (for example, if I were injured and need physician care) or if required by law. I will be assigned a pseudonym which will be used in the interview transcript and all other data documents. Hard copies of documents will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. Electronic documents will be stored in the virtual cloud or on a laptop. Items in the virtual cloud will be secured with a password that only the Principal Investigator knows, and access to electronic documents on the laptop can only be obtained by unlocking the laptop with a fingerprint swipe.

Compensation: I understand that participation in the study will not cost me anything and that I will not receive any money for my participation.

Risks and Benefits: I understand that the risk to participate is minimal and not greater than risks ordinarily encountered in daily life. There is a chance that I may encounter emotional discomfort when sharing my experiences or when reflecting through journal writing. By participating in the study I may benefit other aspiring Latinas in Student Affairs by sharing my mentoring experiences.

Right to Withdraw: I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and stop participating in the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits for which I may be entitled. I also understand that throughout the study, the researchers will notify me of any new information that may become available which may affect my decision to remain in the study.

Voluntary Consent: I certify that I have been informed about the study's purpose, procedures, possible risks and benefits; that I have been given the opportunity to ask questions before I sign; and that I can ask questions at any other time. Additionally, I know that if I have any questions about my rights as a research participant, I can contact Erin Sherman, Compliance Officer at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, at (361) 825-2497. I have received a copy of this form, and by signing it, I voluntarily agree to participate in the study.

Signature of	Participant	Date
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Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Principal	Investigator	Date
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Printed Name of Principal Investigator

APPENDIX C

Guiding Questions

1. How did you become a mentor?
2. Describe the type of influence you had taking on this role.
3. When you decided to become a mentor, what was your course of action with your mentee?
4. Why did you choose to mentor a Latina?
5. Describe the mentoring that occurred between you and your mentee.
6. How long was your mentoring relationship?
7. What impact do you feel you had on your mentee?
8. Describe the ways in which you mentored your mentee?
9. What were you trying to accomplish in your role as a mentor for Latinas?
10. Give me examples of the types of contact you have with your mentee?
11. What was accomplished during your meetings/contact with your mentee?
12. Describe your mentoring relationship with your mentee.
13. How did you determine what would be involved in mentoring your mentee?
14. What might be some typical phrases that I might hear when you are mentoring Latinas?
15. Was there ever a time when you mentored someone outside of being Latina? Tell me about that experience.
16. At what point in your career did you have a mentor(s)?
17. How did you identify who would be your mentor(s)?
18. Why did you have a mentor(s)?
19. Who were your mentor(s)? What kind of mentor(s) were they? Describe your relationship(s).
20. What does mentoring mean to you?
21. Have you had other mentees who were not Latina? How were those mentoring relationships similar and/or different?
22. How are your experiences in mentoring Latinas similar or different from the mentoring that you received?

APPENDIX D

Journal Prompts

Since the last interview session with the researcher, describe the mentoring interactions you have had with your mentee. Were the interactions any different than in the past? If so, what do you feel this was attributed to?

Looking back to your first experience with your mentee, what would you have changed in your approach? Why the change? If no change, describe what has been working so well?

Looking at your current relationship with your mentee, describe what has been the most rewarding experience and explain why you feel this way.

Looking back to when you were mentored, describe what was the most rewarding experience for you? What was the most challenging experience for you with your mentor? Describe how these experiences may or may not have affected the way you mentor your mentee(s).