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Creando la confianza: Narratives on Mentorship of Latina Professors at the University of New Mexico

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DEDICATION

I write this for all the powerful *mujeres* in my life and within my family. I dedicate this to my *abuelita Lupita*, for whom *la educación formal nunca fue opción*, but she spent her life giving all seven of her children the best *consejos* she could for them to thrive. *Gracias abuelita por su apoyo, sus oraciones y toda su fe en mí*. I dedicate this to my mother, Maria Mercado, who was discouraged from pursuing higher education, but *salió adelante* with her unmatched passion and work ethic. Her stories, her resilience, her fearlessness is what has shaped me to be the Latina scholar I am today. I dedicate this to my younger sister, Gaby, who recently graduated summa cum laude from her Bachelor of Arts after a long and difficult global pandemic and becoming another amazing Latina college graduate—I'm so proud of you *hermanita*. *Esta tesis es para mi abuelita Rosalia, mi tía Angie, mi prima Roselyn*. *Para todas las mujeres de mi familia, quienes siempre tengo en mi corazón y seguiran siendo mi motivación de todos mis esfuerzos. Las adoro.*

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ABSTRACT

Numerous scholars have investigated the significant role that representation and mentorship play in the success of Latinas and other women of color during their journey through higher education, from degree completion to faculty hiring and advancement (Vasquez 1982, Zambrana et. al. 1997, Valdez 2001, Cavazos & Cavazos 2010, Shayne 2020, Contreras et. al. 2022). However, little research exists surrounding the lived experiences that have shaped mentorship carried out by university faculty, specifically, mentorship carried out by bilingual Latina faculty in higher education. Through a Latina Feminist Epistemology implementing Oral History Methodologies, this thesis aims to understand the cycle of mentorship via the narratives of bilingual Latina professors at the University of New Mexico. This study documents and examines the lived experiences of bilingual Latina professors as students in higher education—specifically their experiences of mentorship—and the correlation of that experience with their manner of providing mentorship to their own students today. I focus on representational factors of gender, race, and language throughout their narrative, which I argue are essential in building trusting bonds of mentorship—or *confianza*—with college students who share similar qualities. This thesis seeks to highlight a) intersectionality and the intersectional role of gender, race, and

language in the experiences of mentorship received by UNM Latina professors as college students, and b) how their personal experiences of receiving mentorship influence how they now mentor their own students.

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INTRODUCTION

According to the 2020 Census data, the population of Hispanic/Latinos living in the United States is 62.1 million, and represents the nation's second largest racial or ethnic group after non-Hispanic whites at 18.9 percent of the total population (The Office of Minority Health, 2023). Though there has been an increase in the Latinx population that obtains college degrees in the U.S., statistics show that Latina women currently make up only an approximate 3% of all professors in postsecondary institutions in the US (National Center for Education Statistics 2022). However, according to the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, Hispanic[1] students in 2020 received 15% of all bachelor's degrees, compared to 9% in 2011 (HACU 2022). Additionally, they find that Hispanic enrollment in higher education is expected to exceed 4.1 million students by 2026 and therefore surpass the growth rate of any other racial-ethnic group by over 10% (HACU 2022). Since the year 2000, the college enrollment rate for 18–24-year-olds overall has been higher for Hispanic females than Hispanic males (National Center for Education Statistics 2018). This implies two things: 1) the current population of Latina professors does not sufficiently reflect today's national demographics of nor the increasing rate of college-attending Latinas, and 2) Latina professors very likely had minimal to no gender or ethnic representation reflected in their own professors when they themselves were college students.

As I illustrate in my literature review, studies on mentorship tell us that students of color benefit from mentors who share characteristics of race and gender. However, statistics demonstrate that while numbers of Latina faculty at postsecondary institutions have increased in

[1] The term "Hispanic" and "Latino/a" are used interchangeably by the US Census Bureau to refer to persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central and South American, Dominican, Spanish and other Hispanic descent.

the past decade, their numbers are nowhere near proportional to the increase in college-attending Latinas. As a result, scholars have conducted studies to understand the experiences of Latinas / Hispanas / Chicanas in secondary and post-secondary education, as well as the role that family, sociocultural practices and values, and mentors play in their academic outcomes. Furthermore, my personal experiences of mentorship inform my identity as student, researcher, educator, and mentor within my own spaces, especially as I begin to work with others within and outside of the classroom and advance my doctoral studies.

These studies have allowed me to further reflect on the values of education instilled in me by mentors throughout my own personal history as a Latina student growing up and my transitions within higher education. My foundation was built by listening to my mother's stories which served as *enseñanzas*, teachings, for how to defend myself against those who saw a four-foot eleven-inch, brown-skinned Chicana and expected academic failure. She shaped my confidence and assertiveness to best navigate higher education as a first-generation, out-of-state college student on my own, my voice being the most powerful tool. When I arrived at the University of New Mexico (UNM)—a place where I found it hard to fit in despite it being a Hispanic Serving Institution—it was the group of powerful *mujeres* who guided me on my academic journey, whether by sharpening my writing or sharing experiences, who became my support system and my community. The *enseñanzas* of my mother and academic mentors showed me how to thrive and feel capable as a serious scholar, but also to find belonging.

While I worked for three years as a Chicanx Studies writing tutor for UNM's Center for Academic Program Support, it was not until my teaching experience as a graduate student that I realized the direct effects my *mentoras* had on me in the support I began to give my own students as an instructor. During my first semester teaching Spanish as a Heritage Language (SHL) level

1, I found myself modeling the best practices of my teachers, such as sharing my own narrative with other out-of-state first-generation student, recommending undergraduate opportunities such as studying abroad and research fellowships from which I benefitted, or guiding students through time management tips and other resources. Most importantly, one of my Latina students helped me to reflect on the cycle of mentorship I was enacting as an instructor. A first-year, out-of-state undergraduate student who had requested a letter of recommendation, she told me: "Of all my professors this year, you have been the one that has truly been there for me academically and outside of academics. A lot happened during this semester but being able to come to your class made it worth it." Not only was she awarded the scholarship, but she also realized that she could confide in and trust me—someone who looked like and guided her—to support her on her academic journey. Active representation and mentorship foster *confianza*, trust, among students, especially women of color, who less commonly see themselves represented in post-secondary institutions.

Three years ago, I never considered that I would be enrolled in a master's program, let alone accepted to a Ph.D. program. The *enseñanzas* of my academic mentors and the *confianza* I had in them made me feel confident not only that I belong in higher education, but also that I can excel at it just as they have. However, I recognize that my experience has been dramatically different as a college student of the 2020s and even more so, privileged in having been surrounded by the number of Latina professors, in comparison to the experiences of those of my own mentors. As female faculty of color, the Latinas who make up about 3% of all professors in postsecondary institutions in the U.S. (National Center for Education Statistics 2022) most likely experienced higher levels of intersectional discrimination and obstacles due to the lack of faculty who resembled them while they were students in higher education themselves. As a member of a

marginalized group historically discouraged from pursuing higher education due to institutional and sociocultural messages stating that it's not their place (Vasquez 1982, Valdez 2001, Cavazos & Cavazos 2010), I want to know what mentoring-related factors allowed my mentors and others I interviewed to thrive within educational settings, leading to their current faculty positions among that 3%. To understand the mentorship and classroom practices of Latina professors today, I must understand the mentorship experiences that affected them personally in K-20. To best form profound conclusions of such, I must also understand how their foundational cultural values were shaped, via their family and community cultural knowledge, and how they also affected their academic experiences and motivation alongside the mentorship they received.

By orienting my project through a Latina Feminist Epistemology that implements Oral History methodologies, this thesis aims to understand the cycle of mentorship via the narratives of bilingual Latina professors at the University of New Mexico. This study documents the lived experiences of bilingual Latina professors as students in higher education, and the correlation of that experience with their manner of providing mentorship to their own students today. I focus on representational factors of gender, race, and language throughout their narrative, which are essential in building trusting bonds of mentorship—or *confianza*—with college students who share similar qualities. This thesis seeks to highlight a) intersectionality and the intersectional role of gender, race, and language in the experiences of mentorship received by UNM Latina professors as college students themselves, and b) how their personal experiences of receiving mentorship influence how they now mentor their own students.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

On mentorship

In 1991, Maryann Jacobi, social psychologist and current assistant provost at UCLA, conducted a review of existing literature on mentorship and pulled from various research-informed definitions in the field of higher education, management/organizational behavior, and psychology to create a holistic, foundational definition of mentorship. She proposed five components as the basis for a mentorship definition: 1) a focus on achievement, 2) mentors take on the role of (a) "emotional and psychological support," (b) offering "direct assistance with career and professional development," (c) and "role modeling" (Jacobi 513); 3) a reciprocal relationship, 4) a personal relationship, 5) mentors are defined by exhibiting "greater experience, influence, and achievement," (Jacobi 511). Mentorship relationships can be formally matched (Mullen 2005), and they can be informally created when a commitment is co-created by student and instructor (Johnson and Ridley 2004). Formal mentorship relationships may be assigned, whereas informal mentorship relationships may be organically developed through the assertiveness of either student or instructor. Mentorship is additionally defined as "a developmental relationship that encourages learning, socialization, leadership, and career development among students who are growing a knowledge base" (Johnson 2016). As this research indicates, mentorship relationships in higher education contribute to the college process (applying to schools, navigating coursework, transitioning between community college to 4-year to graduate school, etc.), especially for first-year as well as first-generation college students, for whom mentorship provides a sense of belonging by having someone support them in navigating the academic and social transitions in college (Fuentes et. al. 2014; Ramos 2019).

Studies reflect, however, that mentorship is not monolithic: there are differing effects in the manifestations of mentorship as it relates to race, ethnicity, and gender within a mentorship relationship (Jacobi 1991; Fuentes et. al. 2014; Tran 2014; Ramos 2016). One study tested the effect of race/ethnicity and found that Black students compared to White students had more faculty contact in their first year which led to greater levels of mentorship, but that multiracial students had lower levels of experience with faculty mentorship than their White peers (Fuentes et. al. 301). Additionally, educational scholar Bianca Ramos provides a framework for mentorship support of first-generation students of color in which she proposes "an optimal balance of challenge and support, modeling an ethic of care in mentorship, and engaging in counter storytelling of resistance" due to the individual, institutional, and systemic barriers faced by students of color (58). Additionally, she finds mentorship aids in college retention and graduation rates of students of color (Ramos 60).

Education professor Dr. Natalie Tran conducted a qualitative, phenomenological study in 2014 to investigate the role of mentoring in the success of women leaders of color (i.e., titles of chancellor, president, vice president and director). She found that participants' unique backgrounds, personal and professional experiences not only influence opportunities and access to mentorship, but also the perceptions of their mentoring experiences (311). As a result, she characterizes the mentoring experiences for women leaders of color in the following manners: (a) "mentoring is not always visible," (b) "mentoring is a constant," (c) "mentoring is self-initiated," and (d) "mentoring is multidimensional" (Tran 311). These findings support Jacobi's 1991 work in which she cites Erkut and Mokros (1984): people emulate models from those they perceive to be similar to themselves in terms of personality characteristics, background, race, and sex (Erkut and Mokros 1984; qtd in Jacobi 518). Jacobi concludes that "women and students of

color will seek mentors of the same gender and ethnicity, but due to the scarcity of these intersectional identities within faculty of higher education institutions, doing so becomes exceedingly difficult and can therefore affect forms of academic success" (Jacobi 518). In other words, women and students of color who intentionally seek out faculty with similar identities as theirs for mentorship may not find them due to the low levels of faculty who are women, people of color, or women of color. This lack of representation may contribute to students who feel isolated and misunderstood, and can therefore hinder their academic success.

In recent years, the term "femtorship" has entered mentorship research and literature, further detailing the contributions of female-oriented mentorship. Based on her dissertation research on how culturally relevant curriculum like Chicana/o Studies impacts the educational experiences of Chicana and Chicano students, thus impacting their educational experiences, Dr. Elizabeth Gónzalez Cárdenas articulated a spectrum of pedagogical practices and outcomes highlighting the differences between femtors, mentors, negative mentoring, and [tor]mentors. She defines a femtor in the following way: a) only a female professor can be a femtor due to their gender, knowledge, and social justice practice of Chicana feminist epistemology, and Chicana positionality; b) while some male professors share the values and pedagogical skills of a femtor and can be supportive of students, they are not femtors due to their male gender and not possessing the experiential knowledge and positionality of a Chicana; and c) not all female professors are femtors even though they have an understanding of Chicana feminist epistemology because they lack the practical aspect within their pedagogical skills and have demonstrated to move in and out of [tor]mentor practices, who can be of any gender with scholarship knowledge but are not fully in support of students and lack adequate treatment and positive pedagogical practices (Gónzalez Cárdenas 2015).

It is evident that students of color benefit from mentors who share characteristics of race and gender, but finding such mentors can be difficult and therefore may influence the academic outcomes of such students. In addition, within González Cárdenas's definition, femtors hold a feminist ideology and consciousness of the inequalities students face, as well as experiential knowledge based on gender and race (Gónzalez Cárdenas 65). However, based on the backgrounds and ages of the participants in this study, it is likely that throughout their educational trajectories, these Latina professors may have not been recipients of femtorship relationships. As such, I will be focusing on informal mentoring relationships of Latinas in throughout their educational trajectories.

Based upon the intersections of these various studies of mentorship as well as the specific group of female faculty I interviewed, I define mentorship as follows:

> Mentorship is a developmental, reciprocal, and personal relationship. This relationship encourages learning, socialization, leadership, and career development. To do so, one's mentor may provide emotional and psychological support, assistance in career and professional development, and role modeling based on their own greater experience, influence, and achievement.

Latinas in Higher Education

Socio-cultural barriers and systemic challenges have historically discouraged Latinas from pursuing postsecondary degrees. Often, sex-role restrictions, low socioeconomic status, alienation and isolation, traditional admissions criteria such as test scores, tracking and/or low expectations have impeded Latinx academic achievement and access to higher education (Vasquez 1982, Valdez 2001, Cavazos & Cavazos 2010). Non-academic sources of support

became the subject of study for understanding the retention and achievement of Latinas in higher education. In 1997, Ruth Zambrana, Claudia Dorrington, and Sally Alonzo Bell conducted a study of three hundred Mexican American women in higher education to examine familial and individual characteristics as they pertained to educational achievement. Their results showed that these respondents reflected a group whose parents were less likely to have a high school education but who provided emotional support and encouragement (Zambrana et. al. 136). In 2001, Dr. Elsa Valdez examined the effects of protective resources and compensatory factors such as parental support and encouragement, socialization practices, mentors, and personal characteristics on Chicana graduation rates from a four-year university. According to her findings, students who overcome risk factors have supportive parents who socialize them to value education, have mentors and sources of support who help them attain academic goals, and work to integrate their parent's teachings on perseverance, motivation, and self-determination within their education (Valdez 2001, 178).

In addition, representational diversity within university settings also plays a key role for the academic success of marginalized students (Sotto-Santiago 2020, Contreras et. al. 2022). However, Frances Contreras, Samantha Prado Robledo and Valerie Gómez in their 2022 article additionally address the production of Latinx doctoral students and hiring of Latinx faculty by reviewing policy and systemic trends across the University of California (UC) system. They find that the rate of Latinx faculty remains below five percent while enrollment of Latinx doctoral students has remained between nine to eleven percent since 1998 (Contreras et. al. 2022). Considering the increasing rate of Latinas in higher education, they find it especially alarming that due to the exceedingly lower levels of Latinas past the undergraduate level, data shows a limited successful transition for Latinas to the professoriate level (Contreras et. al. 2022).

The representation that does exist from faculty of color brings its own challenges. Compared to the rate of students of color, studies show that faculty of color must overextend themselves in the mentorship of students of color in addition to their faculty responsibilities, much more so that other faculty members and can lead to high demands, work-related stress and tension within their departments (Zambrana 2015, Contreras et. al. 2022). In addition, women of color in particular shoulder a disproportionate portion of this burden due to misogynist gender norms (Shayne 2020). Julie Shayne's article "The Struggle Continues: Women of Color Faculty and Institutional Barriers" (2020) highlights multiple examples of factors that hinder the success of women of color across university institutions. For example, WOC are often deemed inadequate or insufficient in the workplace, challenged to establish their legitimacy in an academic context, and are constantly navigating systemic racism with a lack of networks and mentors (Shayne 2020). Books such as *Presumed Incompetent: The Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia* (2010/2021), *Written/UnWritten: Diversity and the Hidden Truths of Tenure* (2016)*, and Counternarratives from Women of Color Academics: Bravery, Vulnerability, and Resistance* (2018/2020) draw from the narratives of WOC faculty at US universities to bring to the fore the racist and sexist systems WOC faculty encounter.

Following in the methodological footsteps of these pioneering studies, I expect to discover how the narrators I interview in this study were discouraged or encouraged from pursuing forms of higher education and the effects of sociocultural & institutional messages they experienced. Furthermore, I also expect to discover the examples of challenges that narrators experience within their positions as faculty women of color.

Bilingualism in Mentorship Relationships

Studies have shown that bilingual speakers codeswitch from one language to another as a form of functioning and expressing themselves in their bicultural world (Zentella 1982; Becker 1997). In this way, language relays emotions that can be communicated through terms and concepts which could be more common in one language and yet may be lexically differentiated or altogether absent in another (Wierzbicka 2009; Chen et al 2012). As such, the alteration between English and Spanish conveys one's thoughts "more precisely, more naturally, and more personally" (Becker 3). Hence, what a bilingual speaker may be able to say in one language may not translate exactly to the other due to the emotion tied to these terms and concepts, and similarly, use one language specifically for the purpose of conveying a certain meaning as opposed to the other.

However, few to no studies highlight language as a means of fostering relationships of mentorship. In her article, "Diving for Pearls: Mentoring as Cultural and Activist Practice among Academics of Color," (2002) Gail Okawa reflects on mentorship-based interviews to show that there are educators who "take care not to erase home cultures or language varieties in the course of their mentoring relationships and mentee 'training'" (524). One of her interviewees explains her use of speaking Spanish, Spanglish, and English with her mentees as a form of freedom (Okawa 524). The freedom the narrator cited can be understood as a form of maintaining and celebrating one's sense of identity and biculturality through bilingualism. For Latinas who are bilingual in English and Spanish, language use within educational settings may then reflect a way of maintaining home culture, connecting with others who share their biculturality through codeswitching, and expressing emotions, such as trust, through their use of terms and concepts in their spoken languages. Moreover, for students who are bilingual in English and Spanish, having

professors and faculty who are also bilingual in English and Spanish can fostering trusting mentorship relationships, augmenting and deepening the sense of *confianza* within them.

For the purposes of this study, I define a bilingual person as someone who can comprehend two languages proficiently, comfortably use both languages to produce a basic to complex conversation in either, or may codeswitch between languages.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This work employs a Chicana/Latina Feminist Epistemology, which challenges the notions of knowledge production by recognizing the unique viewpoints of Chicana/Latina scholars in the research process (Delgado Bernal 1988). By utilizing Latina professors as participants of this study, I work to demonstrate how their experiences "are legitimate, appropriate and effective in designing, conducting, and analyzing educational research" (Delgado Bernal 1988, 563). This study discusses how Latina professors may have experienced socio-cultural barriers and systemic challenges (i.e. alienation and isolation, tracking and/or low expectations) within their educational trajectories as students, but benefited from mentors and sources of support to persevere and achieve academic 'success' in their role as faculty, where they are now transmitters of their own guidance and wisdom within institutional contexts. I also use Delgado Bernal's 2001 Pedagogies of the Home as a critical framework. This text asserts that "the communication, practices and learning that occur in the home and community [...] and as a cultural knowledge base that helps Chicana college students negotiate that daily experiences of sexist, racist, and classist microaggressions" (264).

Based on this literature, I expect to find that supporting tools of perseverance for the Latina faculty participants in this study derive from cultural knowledge and family practices, in

particular, in the face of discriminatory and/or negative experiences. Delgado Bernal's framework goes hand in hand with education professor Dr. Tara J. Yosso's theory of Community Cultural Wealth (2005) which she defines as "an array of knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed and utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression" (77). CCW recognizes the knowledge and skills students of color bring from their homes and communities into the higher education classroom (Yosso 2005).

METHODOLOGY

This project implements Oral History methodology to draw on the personal lived experiences of Latina professors through their unique testimonies and use their oral narratives as the primary, historical sources of this study. According to Italian scholar Alessandro Portelli, the first scholar to introduce oral history as a field of research and methodology, oral history's unique strengths come from its "orality, narrative form, subjectivity, the 'different credibility' of memory, and the relationship between interviewer and interviewee" (Portelli 48). Portelli further details how oral sources provide information about illiterate people or social groups whose written history is either missing or distorted, as well as the daily lives and material culture of these people and groups (34). As such, narratives bring about the value of individual experiences, which, while they can be expressed through written work, it is the orality of the narratives that create a uniqueness to the story being told and by who. Moreover, oral history has been used to capture the experiences of individuals who have been historically marginalized and with various intersecting identities based on race, gender, class, culture, sexual orientation, just to name a few. For these reasons, elevating the voices of Latina women regarding their experiences within institutions of higher education is especially necessary. While the narrators of

this study all received their doctorate degrees between 2000-2015 and are faculty within the Humanities field, they are not all the same age, nor did they have the same paths that led them to receiving a PhD. Therefore, they will each bring unique perspectives concerning the place and time in which they grew up, the obstacles they faced within K-12 and post-secondary education, and ultimately who and what motivated to be where they are today.

Due to my intention to use and expand on the results of this study for future research, approval was solicited from and awarded by the University of New Mexico's Institutional Review Board before the commencement of the study. Oral History methodology requires the use of Human Subjects, and so appropriate steps must be taken to ensure ethical practices. This process required about two months of preparation, including several meetings to understand the project-specific requirements of this work. Several pieces of documentation were also necessary, including a protocols sheet listing background information, recruitment and screening procedures, data collection procedures, potential risks of harm and benefits, data management procedures and confidentiality, statistical considerations, and steps for participant withdrawal; an informed consent form for participants detailing the requirements of their participation, steps for confidentiality, and contacts in the case of any concerns; recruitment materials consisting of the original email used to contact potential participants; as well as the interview questions that would be used for this study.

Once IRB approval was awarded at the end of October 2022, potential participants were identified and contacted in using UNM's faculty pages within the Humanities fields. Narrators were contacted through email with potential meeting dates and times for pre-screening interviews to assure they met participant criteria. When potential participants met criteria, they were emailed consent forms which indicated that to ensure anonymity and avoid required

signatures, their sole participation would indicate informed consent to the research. In addition, I also asked for verbal consent before and after the recording the interview and reviewed the purpose of the study along with my intentions for the research. In addition, I provided a brief five-minute explanation of my own personal and academic history using both English and Spanish to best build trust. All oral histories were recorded either in person or Zoom and were guided using a set of questions and lasted between two to three hours each.

All identifiable information (e.g., name, date of birth) was removed from the information collected. Upon project completion, all identifying information (electronic, paper, recordings) were destroyed. Only generalized findings will be used in future research. In addition, acknowledging the fact that academic communities are often very small and well known to one another, to avoid negative impacts on professional trajectories of any narrator, identifying information was redacted, including professor and faculty names, institutional affiliations, and specific research profile information. While maintaining participant anonymity may be an uncommon practice in oral history methodology, best practices of human subject research in this study calls for anonymity to ensure my participants' information is anonymized and protected.

The primary sources for this study are six female-identifying, U.S.-born persons of Latin American ancestry who are currently employed at the University of New Mexico as full professor, associate professor, assistant professor, or lecturer. I have chosen the term 'Latina' to refer to participants for general use in this study for the purposes of clarity. While I may use this term for a holistic description of this identity, it does not mean that it is all-defining of an individual's experience. For example, one participant stated that they do not identify as Latina, but rather as Chicana, highlighting her own experience as it pertains to her biculturality with Mexico as her parents' country of origin, and the United States as the place in which she grew

up. Additionally, participants are bilingual in English and Spanish, have been selected from the fields of Humanities and the Social Sciences, and earned their doctorate degrees between 2000-2015. A thematic analysis was conducted following all interviews to understand the general themes. Pseudonyms are used throughout the project to best protect the identities of my participants.

Lastly, it is important to recognize the geographic location of participants to best understand the socioeconomic and societal formation of participant experiences within and outside of the classroom. To maintain anonymity, I will only use the state of New Mexico as a point of reference and will not name participants' locations within or outside of NM, but only describe them. As such, Teresa, Paloma, and Veronica were born and raised in New Mexico; Selena and Cristina were born outside of New Mexico and later moved to New Mexico as students; and Dolores was born, raised, and lived outside of New Mexico before accepting a faculty position in NM.

ANALYSIS

The length of each interview consisted of about three hours, except for one that was an hour and a half. After all interviews were completed, I listened to each one to summarize parts of conversations and search for threads between each, or overarching themes, to best present a thematic analysis in response to my research questions. I organize the following sections to tell a chronological story of how each narrator experienced levels of education with a focus on how different individuals, in their lives affected their trajectories, ultimately becoming their mentors and influencing the narrators' approaches to mentorship as faculty. As this research was

collected and analyzed independently, any mistakes in the recounting of the histories are my own.

In the first section, "Fostering a Bilingual Identity," I describe my narrators' bilingual English and Spanish language development to demonstrate how language began to tie to their identity, especially in academia. "Developing an Educational Foundation" dives into how the educational histories of narrators' parents helped them to conceptualize their personal attitudes of education. "Climbing the Ladders of Academia" tells the condensed individual stories of each narrator as they transitioned between K-12 to post-secondary school while also referencing individuals who served as mentors. I conclude this section with an overall review of how the intersections of race, gender, and language played a role in the mentorship received by narrators, further detailing the effects of representation in academia played in the trajectories of narrators to pursue faculty positions. As such, "From Mentee to Mentor" illustrates the narrators' transition into the role of mentor as beginning faculty. This section connects narrator mentorship practices to their student experiences, tying together their student histories to their present practices as faculty.

Fostering a Bilingual Identity

I begin first with a description of the languages utilized and learned within the communities of my participants. Specifically, I illustrate how English- and Spanish-speaking abilities were fostered throughout their lives, therefore demonstrating how their languages are tied to their self-perception of identity as well as their community. Teresa and Dolores, two of the six participants, grew up speaking Spanish within the home as second nature due to their parents' inability to speak proficient English. Selena, Paloma, Veronica, and Cristina grew up

with bilingual parents who could proficiently speak both English and Spanish but did not teach their daughters Spanish. According to language and linguistics professor, Dr. Patricia MacGregor-Mendoza:

> […] heritage language communities are often comprised of members who have traditionally occupied positions of little political power or prestige […] members of these communities are either immigrants or ethnic minorities who have suffered a history of political discrimination and abuse, or other groups whose numbers are perceived by the mainstream to be insufficient to warrant any threat to the majority's established language, values, and social structural […] heritage languages are often considered by majority communities to be obstacles to the effective assimilation of heriatge speakers to the mainstream society (MacGregor-Mendoza 2000).

This description of the sociocultural effects upon heritage languages provides insight into the attitudes surrounding the Spanish language, which may have affected these women's parents in their approach to not teach their daughters the langage. For these reasons, Selena, Paloma, Veronica and Cristina are considered traditional Spanish as a Heritage Language learners as they grew up listening to the language but learned to speak and write the language later in their adolescence and adult years.

Selena described how her mom's generation was punished in school for speaking Spanish, resulting in the "tremendous social pressure to speak English primarily if not solely, including speaking English without an accent." However, Spanish had not been eradicated from private spaces. She recalled her grandparents speaking Spanish to each other, but speaking in English to their children, and so "sometimes my mom would speak to [her dad] very slowly in Spanish if she was trying to convey something that we weren't supposed to understand." Spanish then was considered to be something mysterious, "I always felt like it was like a prestigious thing and a curious thing, like I wanted to know more and I felt like it was an important thing to

know." Piquing her curiosity and desire to be in the know, she began to listen to and read in Spanish at an early age.

Paloma's grandparents were native Spanish speakers, but her dad had experienced punishment at school for speaking it. While Spanish was not disparaged while she attended school herself, and primarily heard a lot of it in her grandparents' home rather than in her own, Paloma perceived the use of Spanish from the adults as a form of linguistic terrorism. She said, "Spanish was used violently in the sense that if my mom and dad didn't want us to understand things, they would speak in Spanish until we were old enough to understand both languages then they couldn't do that anymore." She shared an early memory of wanting to fight with a girl who had been teasing her cousin for his *trenza*. Consequently, while she never got the chance to confront the girl, she remembers practicing all the Spanish curse words she was going to say, "somehow, that felt like it'd carry more meaning."

Cristina described that her parents had their "secret language of Spanish" which was only spoken to her and her siblings in the command forms. Later in life she came to understand that the elders didn't want to teach them Spanish because of how they were treated themselves, but as a little girl made multiple efforts to learn. Once she had asked her grandma if she could teach her Spanish, to which she said "oh *jita*, you'll never speak Spanish." Adamant, she describes once telling girls at the playground who were speaking a made-up language, "I'll teach you Spanish!" Once at home, she again asked her parents to teach her, and when her dad said she didn't know anything, she began to list items such as "*mesa, tenedor, baso, cuchara,*" but they laughed at her.

At twelve years old, Cristina's family moved to a Spanish-speaking country due to her father's job and she soon started to feel mixed messages about her language. In this country, she was now expected to speak Spanish. She remembers memorizing grammar every night, but when

she'd raise her hand in class, classmates would call her "la güera" and would only ever speak to her in English. "I learned very quick; you can't learn a language if you keep your mouth shut or don't have a sense of humor." While Cristina eventually recognized her parents reasoning for not fostering a Spanish-speaking environment at home, especially as a method of protecting them because of sociocultural discriminatory rhetoric and practices, she still deeply desired to have learned from an early age, "I envy people whose parents would speak to them in Spanish inside of the home."

Teresa and Dolores both had immigrant, Spanish-speaking parents with limited English-speaking abilities, which may have contributed to their stronger connection to the language as it pertained to their identity and home culture. However, while other participants had a different experience with the language growing up, Spanish language was a major component of their home experiences and motivated their desire to enhance cultural understanding through the acquisition of language.

Throughout interviews, some of the participants felt comfortable moving between languages as a result of my own fluency in English and Spanish. In addition, I found through the interviews that this same dynamic helped to create trusting mentorship connections with their students, as I will describe further along.

Developing an Educational Foundation

Reflecting critical literature describing how socio-cultural barriers and systemic challenges have historically discouraged Latinas from post-secondary degrees (Vasquez 1982, Valdez 2001, Warren 2002, Cavazos & Cavazos 2010), participants often explained how education was either an avenue for obtaining or maintaining upwards social mobility. Four

participants disclosed having one or two parent(s) who were professionals with advanced degrees, while two had sets of parents who had not completed school past elementary school level. Narrators whose parents had completed high school diplomas and university degrees reflected in their interviews that their parents expected their children to obtain a college-level education to maintain upwards social mobility; parents who did not attain advanced degrees wished for their children to do so in order to mobilize upward, *para salir adelante*.

Both of Veronica's parents had professional careers and she explained that it was never a question if she would attend or finish college. Additionally, as an only child, she says, "My parents had a lot of time to focus just on me and to give me time and attention; I was able to flourish with both of my parents being home by 5 or so, helping me with my homework." In terms of her own goals, she never felt pressured to be the best, but rather felt the significance of education and what it would mean for her future. In Selena's case, her father had a Ph.D. while her mother had two master's degrees. While both her parents had advanced degrees, so did her maternal grandfather, who held a bachelor's degree during a time that was unheard of for a Hispanic male: "my grandpa had [many] kids and all of them went to college and he wanted [his grandchildren] to go to college." She went on to describe how she believed it made him very happy when she eventually did graduate with her first degree:

> I think part of it was he wanted his daughters to make sure they weren't dependent on anyone that didn't treat them well and he thought the best way to secure that was to get a college education. Because [they] would always be employable and it wasn't going to be some job that didn't have meaning or would be hard on them, but it'd be a job with benefits and retirement.

While she was born outside of New Mexico, her family later moved here for their jobs and she was raised in a community that placed tremendous pressure to attend a prestigious secondary institution, on top of her family's expectations for her to pursue a college education.

Similarly, both of Paloma's parents were teachers and worked in the community public schools. Her grandfather had been a business owner and was able to send his sons to college, and so both her father and mother received post-secondary degrees. She grew up with both her parents and multiple siblings in the house, and extended family who lived nearby with whom they gathered constantly. Throughout her childhood and early adolescence, her parents both had professional roles in public schools. She, like the narrators discussed above, stated, "It was never a question of whether or not you're going to college, it was you're going to college."

Paloma describes that she and her sisters were always at the top of their classes, but she often felt a pressure that it was never enough: "One time I brought her a 90 in elementary school and my mom was like, well why isn't it a 95?" She confessed feeling like receiving that commentary later created a form of inner trauma in her constant need to be the best. "I was in a group of friends that was always very competitive with our education." Regardless, she was not allowed to skip grades nor be placed in the school's gifted program. Even when she felt frustrated with coursework and there were many tears shed over math, Paloma felt uncomfortable asking her teachers for help, especially as oftentimes they were her parents' peers, and she knew them in a social setting. She believes this could have affected her later in life in the way she didn't want to ask for help because of not knowing how.

Cristina, who was born outside of NM but was primarily raised in the Southwest, also had parents who were both recipients of post-secondary teaching degrees but were employed as educators during a much earlier period than other participants' parents. They taught close to the mid 1950s, and so it was not usual for individuals of Latino descent to be in educator positions and much less within university institutions. Often, they were the only family who looked like them. Due to her parents' levels of education, Cristina stated that there was no question that she

and her siblings would all go to college. She discussed a confession that her mother revealed to her on her deathbed later in life, "She and dad had made a pact before they got married that they would educate as many *mexicanos* as possible." Cristina's parents grew up on dirt streets, with dirt floors in their homes, outhouses, and no running water. When they met at their teaching program, they connected through the belief that education was the way out of poverty, especially for people of color. Her parents played a crucial role in the way Cristina viewed the value of education not just in the way it affected her personally, but also the positive effects it could have on others. However, while their views on education were positive, she described feeling like she was expected to choose a "real" and "legitimate" education by pursuing very specific subjects, especially as a Mexican American. In other words, Cristina's parents gave her the impression that certain professions, such the professoriate, are socially perceived to be more respectable than others, but even more so for people of color who are stereotypes to only hold blue collar jobs.

Teresa's parents had only an elementary school education, but she described the immense value they put on her own, especially in the way they would support her as a child. "My dad, when I was little and struggling with division, he told me, '*mi'jita, estudia la matemática. Tienes que estudiar para que nunca tengas que depender de un hombre*.'" Not only was education seen as a means of social mobility, but it was also seen as a method of fostering a strong sense of socioeconomic independence and female empowerment. Additionally, Teresa attended a private Evangelical Christian school all three years of middle school and the beginning of high school but described having a negative experience overall. She said, "Your teacher was your workbook and the adults that worked at the school were basically like your supervisors." Her parents only had an elementary education but felt that the private school was the best option for her considering that her elementary school funneled students to schools with notorious gang

problems. She stated, “I never wanted to be there. I hated that school. I wanted to go to public school [...] *pero a mi mamá no le tengo resentimiento*.” Regardless, she did the best with what she had and always completed her work. She described never needing the teacher’s help, and when she was done with that day’s portion of the workbook, she’d be sent to kindergarten to help with the five-year-olds or to the office to help the secretary. She told me, “I was a very obedient kid, *nunca renegaba* [..] I was like a little teacher’s aide.” As a result, she never felt the need to ask help from her institutional instructors and learned to be self-sufficient.

Dolores described that her parents were Mexican immigrants who had migrated with the belief that, “*venimos aquí para salir adelante*.” With only an elementary education and Spanish as their primary language, their children’s education symbolized success within the trope of the American Dream. However, she described not feeling culturally connected to her studies at a young age due to her elementary school’s lack of culturally relevant history. Rather, she found solace within her bilingual education program which had been implemented because of the Chicano Civil Rights Movement. Her second-grade teacher, Mr. C, a Chicano who would emphasize culturally relevant themes in art, songs, and dance. She said, “We learned about la Chinita Poblana and had Cinco de Mayo too [...] it felt culturally relevant when it came to the arts and dance, but not so much the history.” In addition, while her homework was in Spanish, Dolores described how it got to a point when her parents couldn't help her with her anymore. Her mom would say, “*ve y pregúntale a Nely,*” to go and ask Nely, their next-door neighbor at the time. “If they didn’t know something, they would find others to help me figure it out.” After elementary school, her transition from Spanish to English classes was hard because cultural relevance was now nonexistent in her studies: “It came with all these new American sayings and values that I couldn't understand, that I couldn't connect to.”

Rather than a required rite of social passage, education for these narrators meant *salir adelante,* or to move forward socially and economically, reflecting on both student and their family. As first-generation students, Teresa and Dolores learned to navigate their school systems with parents who provided primarily emotional and moral support. As I illustrate in the next section, they had to navigate institutional expectations and decide for themselves through the guidance of mentors how higher education could contribute to their futures. Multiple participants, including Veronica, Selena and Paloma all stated, virtually verbatim, that attending college was never a question for them. Rather, the expectation of achieving high academic marks and continuing to specific universities created a pressure on some participants to do their absolute best, shaping the way they thought about asking for support or using available resources. For Cristina, though there was also the pressure of attending college, there also existed the expectation of choosing a correct area of study because she was surrounded by the sentiment that only certain subjects would grant her legitimacy and respect as a Mexican American. While all participants attended four-year universities after high school, their experiences climbing the K-12 ladder also contributed to and informed their journey in higher education.

Climbing the Ladders of Academia

Due to differing support and advocacy provided to them throughout their K-12 school education, within the home communities and in their schools, all participants had different conceptualizations surrounding the process of applying and attending college. Some participants had reliable "second degree" forms of support. I define "second degree" support as people who had gone through the process already, such as parents, significant others, or instructors who offered guidance and encouragement to the narrators. While some participants felt that college

was expected of them, others described that it was never considered an obvious next step. In this section, I describe various participant transitions from high school to undergraduate and graduate studies. For example, narratives reflect that most narrators pursued college as "traditional" students, those who pursue college directly after high school, while one describes a "non-traditional" path being in that she did not attend college after high school. As a result, traditional students who pursue post-secondary degrees without gap years will be considered to have taken a "linear" path. The following sections describe each narrator's path, while illustrating the positive and negative mentorship experiences that impacted their trajectories.

Cristina

As a result of her parents' occupations at the university, Cristina and her siblings were able to attend the private, parochial schools without having to worry about tuition. While she recognized this as a privilege, she also recognized that as the only Mexican American family in her neighborhood and her school, she always felt like an outsider. At school, most of the nuns and students were white, and so Cristina describes there being a tremendous burden on her family to represent the race, "to always conduct ourselves quietly" because "we knew people would be looking at us and forming opinions."

To minimize the possibilities of discrimination, Cristina describes the ways that her parents attempted to use language and education as forms of protection. For example, she explains that her parents wanted all their children to speak English as accentless as possible so that they would be "legitimate." In this context, we can understand that to be "legitimate" meant assimilate to the dominant, English-speaking Anglo culture. In addition, while they held positive views on their children's education, they interpreted certain areas of study to be more "legitimate" than others. As Mexican Americans, they wanted their children to pursue these

areas to be taken seriously and respected in life. She stated, “We were all really smart in different ways, but I believe that because my parents came from poverty, they had limitations in the type of futures we could have [...] they just wanted to keep us safe.” As a result, Cristina described how her dad would grill them on their spelling and times tables most nights after dinner, and that while receiving Bs were ok, A’s were preferred. Regardless of Cristina’s parents’ attempts for their family to avoid discrimination, Cristina described multiple times during which they were still targeted for their skin color:

> One time my brother was out for a run and was stopped by a cop [...] said he had a description of someone who looked like him. The cop accompanied my brother home to check his story and to make sure he lived where he said he did. We were all dark skinned, and the cops knew we weren’t black, but they knew we were what they considered foreign, even though we spoke English really well.

In addition to being profiled, she also remembered a personal experience as a second grader when she had been automatically placed into lower reading groups without ever being tested for her level. She recalled, “I attended three different schools for second grade, and in each one I had been put in the lowest reading group. It wasn’t until later that one of my teachers helped me realize how discriminatory it was that they had never even thought to test me!” Cristina described that later in elementary, she had felt shut down for her responses, and began receiving Cs. She said, “They’d say, thank you, Cristina, please sit down.” Cristina was stereotyped, expected to not do well, and shamed when she spoke up, making it difficult to truly feel herself at school. However, she was still strongly expected to attend college as a means of protection from such discrimination and so she continued a linear path from high school to college, and thus considered a traditional student in her undergraduate program.

Once she finished her bachelor’s degree, more than five years passed before she pursued a master’s degree. As a graduate student, Cristina took her own father’s seminars where she

finally felt a type of comfort in class that she had only ever felt in her own home. She remembered, "I was surrounded by other Chicanos, and they spoke English and Spanish, some lots of *pocho* English and Spanish too; I found *mi gente*." The representation of race and language, which formed her home culture, was something that she had finally found in the classroom, completely altering her educational experience.

Though Cristina never intended on pursuing a doctoral degree, she felt the need to "legitimize" herself after her father's death to talk about his contributions to Latinos in education. By the time she enrolled, she was a non-traditional, older student with grown children. During her doctoral experience, she additionally found comfort and immense support from the women who surrounded her. She stated, "Many professors I had were women who had their PhDs, I was their age and so I had a lot of women to talk to for my thesis and thoughts on my dissertation." While these women did not all share the same race and culture with Cristina, the female-oriented support and representation she had at the doctoral level proved crucial in the obstacles she would face throughout and upon completion of her program. These obstacles are elaborated on in the next section.

Veronia

Veronica attended a New Mexico high school mixed with Mexican nationals who had immigrated, Chicanas, Chicanos, and Chicanxs students, but of her entire class, only about sixteen percent had graduated. She described that the lack of tutoring or mentoring services and college prep courses resulted in the filtering of many students into trade schools.

In her own experience, Veronica struggled a lot in STEM courses throughout high school, and so the absence of STEM-related mentoring was replaced with the multigenerational guidance she received at home. She said, "I would go to my dad or to my grandma, they were

really serious about helping me through school so I would ask them." She described that her maternal grandmother had gone up to sixth grade, and though she hadn't completed a formal education, Veronica remembers her as a very intelligent woman. "She helped me a lot in math, she was a really great math teacher," she emphasized. In addition, she lived near many family members and often got together with her cousins to do homework.

As her parents both had professional degrees and expected their only daughter to obtain a college degree, Veronica applied and attended a four-year university following her high school graduation. Navigating her first year was difficult, and it wasn't until her second year that she finally started to feel comfortable and confident due to an instructor who would eventually have profound impacts on her trajectory: "Dr. T was very essential in my growth as a scholar, when people ask me who made a difference, it was never a k-12 teacher, it was always him, so he was essential in me thinking larger than undergrad and going to get my master's, then going to get a Ph.D." Veronica described Dr. T as a bilingual Chicano professor whose classes changed her with the bilingual and bicultural content relevant to her own community, such as works by renowned Chicana scholar, Gloria Anzaldúa. His guidance helped her decide her area of study, further motivating her to seek out extracurricular opportunities like study abroad programs.

It was her year-long study abroad trip in the Caribbean that also aided in her ability to strengthen her Spanish speaking and writing skills. While she at first felt frustrated and a bit angry for not having been taught Spanish as a child, she yearned to learn it and the experience abroad provided the perfect opportunity to immerse herself in language studies. All her classes had been in Spanish, and though the Caribbean dialect was different from Nuevomexicano Spanish, she felt much more acquainted with the language. She described going to a diner owned by a Costa Rican couple: "The man was really sweet and helped me a lot and I would go over

there and eat and study and he would help me with my Spanish so it was really transnational, a Mexicana and Costa Rican all in [Caribbean island] trying to figure life out."

It took more than four years for Veronica to receive her undergraduate degree, but she filled it with many studies abroad and internship opportunities that helped her grow personally and professionally. It was the encouragement from Dr. T that made her consider a graduate level degree. "I never knew that I could get a master's until Dr. T [was preparing] me for whatever was next." Veronica enrolled in a graduate studies program soon after receiving her bachelor's degree, and with the continued encouragement from Dr. T, she led a direct path from her bachelor's to master's to doctoral studies without any gap years, or a linear path.

For her doctoral program, Veronica studied outside of New Mexico and on a campus that she described felt like a much more "prestigious" and "intimidating" environment. She remarked, "I was in classes with students from Ivy Leagues. It was a really huge shift." Regardless, she stated feeling excited about learning new material in her field and engaging with serious scholars about their work, publishing, and becoming tenure-track professors. One of the highlights about the program was a mentorship program that placed more advanced doctoral students (ABDs) with new ones, but that she had felt even much more supported by her advisor, Dr. W, who was a trailblazing Chicana in her field. "She was always really responsive whereas others were not. She'd respond in a timely manner, created reading groups for students she was advising to write and read at the same pace, turned in letters of rec on time [...] there was a lot of mentoring for students that I didn't really receive from other professors." Compared to the non-responsiveness of other faculty, Dr. W's support, along with that of other women of color who surrounded her in her program, Veronica felt especially supported in her environment: "It enabled me to flourish and grow, it opened me up to other cultures." From her multigenerational

support at home to the institutional guidance from mentors with whom she shared cultural elements, Veronica's academic trajectory was filled with positive mentorship and opportunities that led her to find her position at the University of New Mexico following the completion of her doctoral studies.

Selena

Eldest of several children and eldest female of her generation in her family, Selena often understood the message: "You need to make sure you do good on this because your cousins are watching, and your siblings are watching too." She was expected to set an example and to always do her best in every space she occupied. However, in elementary school, she had been blocked from programming designed to support bright students moving forward because her mother had been told that her scores were not high enough compared to others in her community. It was not until she had been placed in the weakest spelling class that a family friend teaching in her school spoke up and demanded she be placed in accelerated courses. She remembered, "She tracked me for faster math, more challenging English classes, and so I was tracked into more accelerated classes in middle and high school; without her I don't know what would've happened." Selena described that as a result, her confidence had been established, that the accelerated courses had given her a firm foundation, stating that math never scared her.

By the time she was in high school, expectations surrounding Selena's academics shaped her into a higher achiever: "There was never a question that I was not going to college. [At her high school there were] college prep classes. I took the PSAT, was a National Merit Scholar, National Hispanic Scholar [...] took a ton of AP classes, and I was also a student athlete." Her family always acknowledged her accomplishments and sometimes rewarded straight A's with money, or they would celebrate with dinner out. Taking on informal forms of leadership became

second nature, and this was further developed when at multiple points during her high school years, both her parents were diagnosed with cancer. “[Leadership] was expected when my parents got sick. I ended up getting my license and driving carpool with everyone. I’d be the one to go outside and scrape the ice off the car.” When asked if she ever needed help managing her personal life, academics, and expectations as the eldest during this time, Selena seemed surprised. In addition to describing the value of her extended family support in the face of meeting her needs and feeling safe, she also stated, “I don’t know how I did it, but I had really good college advisors and I would ask them questions about applications.” Expectations to set an example and take on leadership roles at a young age may have influenced an assertiveness in Selena to take initiative in other parts of her life, including seeking advice during college applications, something her parents very seriously valued and expected of her.

Regardless, Selena illustrated a bumpy transition into higher education as she described how difficult it was to know she had a sick parent at home while living far away.

> I proposed to my parents that maybe I should just go to the community college in [NM location] instead of going to a four-year and my dad was like ‘No, I know you really don’t want to leave but you need to go to college, if you don’t go, I’m afraid you won’t go at all and then you’re going to waste this opportunity, and I’m not that sick (not true, he was very sick) so you should go to [NM University] and you’ll be close by and we’ll come visit you on the weekends’ so that was that.

Evidently, her parents valued her academic success more than anything and wanted her to have a good experience. She lived in the dorms, which was tough for several reasons: she was used to being around her immediate family, there were no cell phones at that time, and emailing was rare. She only had her dad’s work email, a phone card for long distance phone calls, and some family who lived a walking distance from [NM university] who would sometimes help her with dinner or laundry. She laughed while remembering a message from her dad: “I remember

receiving an email from dad, something like ‘I hear from your aunts that you're harassing them too much on the weekend because you're bored and lonely. Why don’t you go out and have a beer at some party.’” While she described herself as not much of a partier, Selena decided to throw herself into her studies while continuing to participate in the sport she had done competitively in high school.

To provide herself with a sense of structure as she was used to having at home, Selena sought out support from multiple areas of university advisement. She said, “My mentor taught me how to structure out my courses and set up my degree plan. She [would say] ‘aha watch this’ and so I would speak to one advisor then go back to another one who would listen more and understand what I wanted.” Selena was enrolled in intense science classes, and though she did well, she described how passions were cultivated more within areas that cultivated her biculturality and bilingualism. In these areas, she had Spanish-speaking faculty mentors who were all very supportive of her intersectional identities as a bilingual Mexican American woman. She stated, “One mentor told me, as a Latina, and as a female, you should get as many letters behind your name as you possibly can, and that was really great advice I never would have expected.”

Finding and having mentors that she felt supported her holistically helped Selena to flourish as an undergraduate, including after the death of a parent just before her second year of college. The connections she made with female advisors and Humanities professors provided her with emotional and moral support she did not have in other areas of study. When she took a semester off for her own mental health, it was one of her femtors who helped her maintain her scholarship and another femtor informed her of the ways she could pursue multiple opportunities for study abroad. She said, “I think having a handful of people who can really listen and want to

not only listen but help you on your journey of figuring it out, I think those people aren't that common and one person won't be the right one for everybody, and maybe not everybody wants or needs that, but I needed it, and I appreciated it."

There was a clear difference in the comfort and support she found within Humanities compared to STEM, where she felt unseen:

> I guess I never really felt like it mattered the score I got on the exams; it never felt like I was the person they were looking for [...] there were a couple [of faculty] who were very supportive but when it came down to mentorship or to people asking for you to work at their lab—which is what makes or breaks [STEM education]—those offers were never forthcoming for me from any of those people, including my assigned mentor.

Consequently, while Selena did well in the area and was confident in her abilities, she did not feel a sense of belonging nor any attempt of inclusion. She describes having an assigned mentor who, when compared to the femtors she had found of her own volition, did not make her feel welcome in the community and therefore helped her to decide to leave STEM.

After graduating, Selena decided she would spend her summer working in politics until her mom told her she needed to figure out what she was doing next because "she didn't think a bachelor's was going to cut it." Though she wasn't sure what exactly what her future plans were, she decided to apply to a Humanities graduate program. She said, "I had no advisement for how to apply to any of it, but I liked the sense of connection and sense of purpose that I saw from the research those professors were doing." She found herself making a list from those who had supported, guided, and listened to her in undergrad and met with them periodically for advice before, and long after, she joined the graduate program. She added, "I would come back to town and meet with my list of professors, 3-4 *mujeres,* all Latinas and non-white, and I'd ask them questions to help me make sense of all the things I was told and to help me fit them into a frame

[...] it was Z who told me, 'it's going to be a waste of your talent if you don't do a Ph.D. program' [...] that mentorship, which was ongoing, was really really important during that time."

Selena accepted a graduate program outside of NM "with no specific idea of what I wanted to do or study!" she exclaimed. Nonetheless, her graduate program allowed for a bicultural and bilingual focus and offered her a social life she never felt she had as an undergraduate. She said, "I learned as much from my friends and the social life of the department as I ever did from the classes that I took; possibly more." Having always been on-the-go since early high school, and while moving away from her family was difficult, Selena flourished in a new environment that allowed her to reinvent herself and her approach to her studies. For example, Selena realized that a huge part of refreshing her battery involved doing something fun. She expressed, "This was the first time where I [thought], maybe I'll get something done if I go and do something fun first." Her department encouraged events for music and dancing, all the while helping her to foster friendships and mentorship relationships with fellow classmates and faculty.

While her undergraduate experience provided her great mentorship relationships, Selena described that it was in graduate school where she learned to truly negotiate bureaucratic spaces and to seek out support: "I learned you had to go and knock on people's doors and just sit there and be persistent, and that showing up was half of the battle [...] people are going to tell you no, and when you face a wall and there's no other thing to do, then to go find another door." In addition to having friends who would help her figure things out as she went along, Selena described feeling extremely fortunate with her advisor and longtime mentor:

> I couldn't have asked for a more generous or a more knowledgeable advisor than J was, is still, [...] he's always had the right perspective [...] The way he framed it for me, the way that he listened […] he came onto campus once on a Saturday morning when I was

> totally freaking out about something and we calmly sat in his office […] and we talked it through. To me […] there is a no more generous gift than somebody's time and attention.

From the family friend who assured her place in accelerated courses, to her parents' unwavering encouragement for her to put her education first, as well as all the femtors and mentors throughout higher education who valued her experiences and guided her towards her passions—Selena's trajectory was highly influenced by those in her life who saw her potential and were there to guide her way.

Dolores

After elementary school, Dolores hated school. She felt very lonely at the secondary level, and didn't feel comfortable asking questions, which was a huge shift from elementary school where she described, "*ahí no me callaba la boca.*" The multiple classes she had in high school felt overwhelming, and she began to skip and fail her classes. The biggest concerns for her parents, she highlighted, was "don't go around boys and don't get pregnant." Amongst her friends, she explained being very critical of the system they found themselves in. She recalled, "We felt a huge understanding that we weren't the type of people they wanted to track, like we weren't worthy of being taught or being spent time on." It wasn't until her junior year when she realized the alarmingly low number of credits she had and told herself, "You have to graduate high school, you can't be a dropout." Consequently, Dolores was given an ultimatum and chose to attend a continuation school, where "people were teaching through workbooks and since it was their last resort to get them their diplomas, the vibe was very '*si quieres estar aquí, ven, y si no pues vete*'." It became clear that finishing depended on her alone, so she worked hard to finish the coursework given to her and as fast as she could. She took weekend classes, night classes,

and participated in their after-school programs just to catch up. “I finished before the kids in regular school did.”

While Dolores did not consider college as the next step in her path immediately after high school, she eventually began to take classes at a community college with a friend who was studying for a trade certification. Feeling motivated with the idea to do this herself, Dolores described that it was the first time she saw herself going somewhere and having a goal in mind. These feelings strengthened when she met her instructor, Mr. N, a Vietnam marine veteran who Dolores described as her first mentor, “He was tough, disciplined, always started class at 7:30am [...] he’s the one who put me in line, gave me a structure that I needed. And he would always go the extra mile, like he showed us how to make a budget; it became a huge realization that this was life.” She felt a sense of trust with Mr. N, so much so that when she began working jobs related to the trade, she’d often share with him any negative experiences she had:

> I’d tell him, ‘the manager was a pig and wanted to get into my pants,’ and he said ‘you need to transfer, you need to go to a four-year college and get a BA at least’ and I said, “what’s a BA? What's a 4 year college?’ He explained all of it to me, *y no sabía nada*, and this was a white man and he walked me to the transfer center, and he told the person at the counter, ‘she needs to transfer.’ *Me dijo*, ‘you know, you're a good [trade position], I've seen you develop and grow a lot, you’re talented, but you’re more than that, you have to do more with your life, you’re too smart for this.’ For the first time, I thought I could go to college, something no one else had ever told me I could do or that it was something possible.

Mr. N didn’t criticize her for not knowing about transferring or what a four-year university was, but rather he gave Dolores the tools to feel confident in herself and realize what she wanted for her life, especially given the neighborhood she was living in:

> The hood was always dirty, and people were being killed [...] I used to take a bus to go to class because class started early and used to have to pass through a crack house, an addict house [...] it was very dangerous *y a veces* they would go as far as touch me if I was waiting for the bus, they’d ask ‘why are you so white?’ so I started carrying a knife with me, *pero yo bien mensa*, it was a butter knife.

Higher education was not only Dolores's way of increasing her level of education, but it was also a means of upwards social mobility. The combination of the mentoring she received from her instructor, in addition to the reality of socioeconomic situation in an unsafe neighborhood made her think to herself "*yo no voy a vivir así*. I'm getting out."

While it took Dolores more than five years to transfer from the community college to a four-year university, she described how much she grew both personally and professionally during that time. She acquired a position as a teaching assistant in a public school and worked alongside a teacher who was the daughter of English immigrant laborers. She recalled, "She was white, but she was very working class *también*, and she'd tell me, 'If you need to take classes and it's at 11am, you take it, I won't tell anyone' and that's how I was able to progress in my degree."

As she progressed, her area of study changed because of the first Chicano/a Studies course she took. As she puts it, "It was the first time I had been in a class where I saw a Chicana as a professor, someone I could relate to, and I thought, 'I could be like that!'" She realized how important it was for her to embrace her culture and her language within her area of study, and described her sense of pride in realizing that there were people who looked like her who had written literature and were historians while speaking a language that she could understand. "It was comfortable, it felt like home, like when you're that little kid at home surrounded by everyone speaking Spanish and you're part of it—it felt like a family."

Dolores began to seek out Black and brown women who would become strong femtors and advocates, as she knew that she needed mentors, femtors, and friends to succeed in and navigate her studies. Dolores also became involved in student organizations that she felt aligned

with her identity. She remembered, “Things became really serious.” So much so, that she applied to a prestigious fellowship, for which Mr. N wrote her a letter of recommendation, and got in. Regardless, not everyone was happy with her growth. Her boyfriend at the time became upset and called her selfish, especially with her newfound motivation to pursue a doctoral program. Dolores explained:

> For the first time, I felt so much more empowered as a feminist. I was growing as a feminist, as a woman, because of what I was learning [...] I thought, he feels threatened because I want a Ph.D. and I’m going to eventually make more money than he is. He said ‘no man is going to be comfortable with a woman wearing the pants in the household’ and I said, ‘I wish you would’ve told me this the first date we went on so I never would’ve dated you again and had all these years of *perdiendo el tiempo*, a man that is not threatened and is equal to me is not going to care.’

Her courses, mentors, and femtors helped Dolores to draw strength from her own personhood as a Chicana, to find pride in who she was as a *mujer* especially, and to be able to use that strength against someone who wanted to suppress her for her gender.

Dolores found place within the university because she was able to surround herself with others who shared her culture, as well as with other *mujeres* with whom she was finding her feminism: “We were *cabronas*, with a lot of kindness and passion, we learned from our femtors that we didn’t have to be ashamed or even of speaking our language [...] so we were very outspoken and hustled to put events together on campus that would last generations, like we were always fighting to get things done and didn’t take no as an answer.” After Mr. N, femtors in Dolores’s educational trajectory were especially significant in her experience of finding empowerment as a Latina in academia, making gender and racial representation in higher education central to her overall personal and professional growth.

Teresa

Teresa's motivation to attend college was tied to her parents' desire for her to *salir adelante* and take advantage of opportunities they didn't have. However, after transferring to public school in the tenth grade, she confessed feeling wildly underprepared to be in a classroom setting due to the self-pace, workbook setting of her middle school and began to fail. She reminisced, "I was a very obedient girl. I did as I was told and did my best. I didn't know how to talk to teachers." Fortunately, the teacher she received support from was the only one who's course she was doing well in:

> My Spanish teacher, Ms. R, was very meaningful because she helped me find a home academically. Her class was so culturally relevant. I remember she would come in and say *¿Cómo están? ¿Cómo han estado?* and would sing *las mañanitas* for birthdays. [...] She would always make cultural connections with us as Latinos, or migrants, or children of migrants [...] her class was a very warm and welcoming environment, and I could even eat lunch in her room because her classroom was a safe place to be [...] She pushed me academically. It's because of Ms. R that I learned to find my voice in high school.

The support Teresa received from Ms. R provided a clear shift in her path. After that first year, Teresa felt confident enough to speak up about wanting to be in regular classes, for she began to realize her needs to succeed, and it meant learning to study again at a regular level.

When it came to the time for college admissions, Teresa was additionally encouraged by her boyfriend, who was a couple years older and a freshman in college. She told me, "*Él era bien estudioso*, and he taught me how to do everything." Due to his own older sisters who had applied to college, he taught Teresa how to apply to federal funding such as the FAFSA, as well as how to find scholarship applications, creating a huge sense of support considering her high school did not provide college outreach or preparation courses.

Teresa attended an in-state New Mexico university, where she found connection and belonging at ethnic centers on campus. There, she would study with her boyfriend and make new

friends and for the first time learned about other Latino experiences aside from the Chicano/Mexicano/Mexican American experience. She said, “That was the first time I met a Cuban and learned that they talked so differently!” Alongside the constant communication she continued to have with Ms. B, she also met staff who worked at the centers with whom she would seek advice from or talk to her in her native language. In addition, even though she lived at home, her parents never pressured home responsibilities onto her. She explained her mom’s reasoning to be: “*con que tú estudias, no te voy a pedir nada*.” Teresa felt very fortunate overall to have multiple people looking out for her, “when you know how to do it, and you have people guiding you, you thrive.”

Teresa quickly realized her passion for working with students and especially within a bicultural frame. As a result, one of her courses required her to be a student teacher and she was able to do so under Ms. R at her old high school. There, she shadowed and eventually had full reign of one of her courses. Teresa describes, “Ms. R was crucial in my development professionally as an educator and also in my confidence as a scholar.”

After graduating with her bachelor’s, Teresa got married and wanted to immediately begin working as a K-12 teacher. While she was able to find a position and described it as a great experience, she also mentioned feeling unfulfilled and soon after enrolled as a non-degree student for a master’s program. She said, “I felt dumb in the class, like I didn’t fit in, but I told myself, if I get an A on the midterm, I’m applying for the program.” Teresa was accepted with a graduate student teaching position. “I loved the experience, writing papers, teaching undergrads, interacting with doctoral students, it all opened my eyes to the world.” She received encouragement from many of her professors and felt motivated to apply to doctoral programs.

However, at her out-of-state doctoral program, Teresa described a shift in leadership priorities and values. She stated, “In my master’s it felt like you were a student first, but my supervisor at the Ph.D. level was the opposite. The teaching was prioritized over our student class schedules and so I had a crisis. I had moved to a different state, and now I couldn’t take the classes I wanted, I wanted to quit.” In the face of this conflict, she described the encouragement and support of her Chicano professor Dr. P, whom she would eventually call her “academic dad.” “He convinced me to wait it out, and I ended up taking another class that taught me so much.” Though she faced unforeseen challenges, which I will describe in the next section, the redirection she experienced such as with classes or instructors provided Teresa with some of her greatest learning experiences meanwhile fostering significant mentorship relationships.

Paloma

Paloma never felt like college was a choice, but rather it was something that was inevitable. As her grandma would say, “Nobody can ever take away your education.” However, her options were limited as she described her mother’s very strong feelings for her to stay in New Mexico. She recalled, “She told me, if you want to leave for college, then you can leave for graduate school, and that was the first-time grad school had ever even been mentioned.” As a result, Paloma attended a New Mexico university, and her primary focus was largely based on her athletics. During her freshman year, she described a long-lasting mentorship relationship with one of her instructors: “The thing that really in so many ways saved me and guided me my freshman year at [university 1] was my Spanish instructor, J, who at the time was a master’s student, and is one of my best friends now.” Within J’s Spanish courses, especially considering the bigger size and predominantly Anglo community of the university, Paloma felt more comfortable among students who looked like her and with whom she could culturally relate to.

However, Paloma suffered an injury that resulted in the removal of her athletics scholarship, causing her to transfer to a different university. Though transferring to a different university at the beginning of her second year was considered the "biggest mistake of her life" by her family, Paloma did not agree:

> I love my [university 2] experience because the way that I felt in my [university 1] Spanish class is the way I felt overall at [university 2], there were brown faces, and it was predominantly a Hispanic student body. I had two Latino professors that I loved and were great mentors to me [...] I believe the cultural difference made it easier for me to be at [university 2], whereas at [university 1] I was trying to be something else.

The identity makeup of the university Paloma transferred to made her feel more connected because of her own *Latinidad*, which also allowed for cultural belonging. In a pleasant coincidence, Margarita's previous Spanish instructor, J, had accepted a position at the university she transferred to and became her professor beginning her junior year where she continued to guide and mentor Paloma.

With J's continuous support, Paloma applied to master's programs and was accepted back to [university 1]. Once within the program, she described taking a Spanish course where she at times felt embarrassed to speak in front of others with a more advanced level. After taking an exam she was sure she had failed, she went to see her professor, a Latina woman, to confess that she didn't feel she belonged. Her professor showed her that she'd gotten the highest score on the exam: "She told me my strengths, kept me there, and supported me even when I started thinking about doctoral programs [...] she was inspirational to me." As she progressed in her master's program, two Latina professors helped her in the same way, encouraging her to believe in herself, as well as in her ability to pursue doctoral studies.

Paloma's linear educational path continued, but her transition to a doctoral program was complicated due to a negative recommendation letter, a situation that has remained with her

since. During the application process, she learned that someone she had trusted to support her applications to doctoral programs had written that they had not believed she was ready. Regardless, she persevered and was accepted to an out-of-state program where she stated: “from the very beginning, I felt supported, I was able to work with a majority Latinx faculty, with my people!” Furthermore, she described being especially inspired by a Chicano professor who helped her strengthen her writing skills:

> He ran an extracurricular group for us to workshop our statements [...] he and the others, it was a combination, he dropped everything and anything he was doing to meet with students, I don’t know how he got any of his own work done: he taught, he had graduate students whom he was advising and [were] working under him, he ran an extra group for students applying to [fellowship] and working on a [trade] license [...] I learned a lot about sacrifice and putting students first from him [...] it was through him that I really learned how to push students, and find their limits, and to understand that each student has different limits.

In addition, she spoke very highly of all the Latina professors that she had, “academic *parteras*” she calls them, as they helped deliver her into her academic career. She explained various *consejos* they shared with her, advice for succeeding in academia: “Don't ever let them see you cry [...] you’re going to be in a place where you’re going to maybe be the only woman of color, and maybe the only person of color, you are not going to have it easy.” They always helped to make her feel grounded. Regardless, she stated that one of the most influential people throughout her journey in higher education was J: “I wouldn’t be where I am today without her.” Thus, Paloma’s journey was strengthened by her network of Latina, Latino, Chicano and Chicana professors, individuals who she could relate to and feel at home with.

Conclusions

To conclude my conversations with participants regarding their overall experience in higher education, I asked them to define the success they had felt in concluding their student

statuses. Veronica stated that her own professors, especially given that the majority were people of color, were very important in her overall success in higher education: "They were all POC, and I think that says a lot about the extra labor that goes into mentoring POC students from POC faculty. They were really important and integral to my success that I'm experiencing now, for sure." Furthermore, Veronica defined what success means to her:

> Having integrity intact after all is said and done. Not giving into all the ills of academia, whether that be throwing your colleagues under the bus or other things, there are so many gross things in academia, so definitely it would be keeping your integrity intact [...] if you have students that you mentor and they trust you, I think that's success in academia.

Dolores promptly responded, "Success is thinking, I made it! I didn't think I was quality material for a research institution, *pero mira, aquí estoy*." Selena described her own success, "I came out of my graduate experience [thinking] this is as much of my education as anything I learned in the classroom, seeing how people interact and are with each other and still being friends." As Paloma went through her program, she also came to reflect, "It's ok not to be the best. The goal is not to be the best, and that's ok. I figured out, I'm not in competition with these people. It's how I approach my mentorship, my research, and my teaching."

While shared experiences of gender, race, and language often helped strengthen relationships that participants had with their academic communities and especially with their mentors, it is important to recognize that trust was not always fostered with everyone with whom they could relate to in these ways. Microaggressions, exploitation, and departmental politics were the main examples described to have resulted in negative experiences. In this context, we can consider ther term and effects of [tor]mentors, which González-Cárdenas defines as those "who can be of any gender with scholarship knowledge but are not fully in support of students and lack adequate treatment and positive pedagogical practices" (Gónzalez Cárdenas 2015).

Future research is necessary to better understand what shapes tormentor practices and how they can create life-long effects on students.

Paloma experienced multiple microaggressions in her time at [university 1], comments and attitudes that she never felt exposed to in high school linked to cultural differences that didn't make her feel safe. She stated, "There were white students in the dorms who would come to my room to speak Spanish on the phone, as if to show off that she was better than me [...] another time I was going to hang out with some people and some guy over the phone told other people 'she's a Spanish girl, but it's fine, she's cool.'" Veronica described that while she never felt too stressed during her master's program, she at times felt tokenized by the department such as when asked to become a program coordinator. She stated, "I wasn't sure if it was because I was brown, or if [the coordinator] thought I was the best fit for the job, especially considering I was a first year."

Another negative commonality among participants related to student exploitation. For example, Cristina described having been hired when she was in a graduate program by a white female faculty member to clean her house. She described being raised to be obedient. She didn't know how to say no, but illustrated that, "Her husband would come in when I was cleaning and I thought that wasn't right, he would say 'oh you didn't clean the chandeliers' or 'sorry to talk to you under these circumstances,' [...] now I wonder if he was a predator." In addition, while Teresa found support from most of her classmates and faculty during her master's, she described feeling discouraged at times and receiving odd treatment by a Latina professor. She said, "I went to her for advice on conferences, and because she was a woman in academia, I felt like she could help me, I thought maybe I should submit so my CV looks more impressive, but she said, 'no, no, you're a master's student, no don't do that.' It made me wonder if she didn't think I could get

into a doctoral program." On a separate occasion, Teresa recounted that she had asked her for a letter of recommendation and when it was ready, she asked her to go to her house to pick it up. "Once I got there, she said, 'Oh, I have some boxes here, can you take them to the post office for me?' It felt like a *quid pro quo*. I'm not saying she was mean, but as a professor I would never ask a student to do those things. The help in this situation felt conditional."

Dolores stated that in her experience, graduate students went through a lot of abuse from older faculty who took advantage of them, and due to their lack of funding, often students found it difficult to speak out. She said, "There was no respect for boundaries, like [faculty] would send emails late and expect responses before a 9am class [...] sometimes I had over forty students in a class too when others had half of that [...] and people who fought back were fired or weren't invited back, and sometimes leadership would come up with new rules to get rid of those who wouldn't snitch." Dolores asserted that it was a terrible situation because one action or decision from someone could have an incredibly negative impact on the trajectory of someone's life, especially when it came to doctoral students whose funding was cut off due to institutional politics. However, Dolores felt she could trust other students, staff, and faculty who treated each other as human beings. She asserted, "*Le tenía confianza a las mujeres* that were running the department, we pushed each other."

In addition, both Teresa and Cristina also described instances they were caught in the crossfire of departmental politics. Though Teresa started to see a hierarchical culture within her master's program, she stated that it was all the clearer within her doctoral experience. During her doctoral studies outside of New Mexico, she described department politics being filled with "professor beef" which had a direct effect on students caught in the crossfire. During her dissertation year, one of her committee members made her life "hell" because he had entered into

a conflict with the department chair a month before her defense and left her committee, saying that he wouldn't be on her committee unless she sent him a letter explaining why. By this time, Teresa had secured her position at UNM with the caveat of finishing her dissertation. She told me, "My job was on the line, my graduation was on the line, *y a este viejo se le puso que* 'I don't want to,' I had to beg for another committee member."

Cristina additionally experienced challenging behaviors within the department during her doctoral program regarding her dissertation committee. At first, she refused to place the chair of her department, a male Chicano professor, on her dissertation committee as she already had four female members. As a result, the chair refused to sign the document that stated she had passed her comprehensive exams with distinction. She stated, "Not only did this person make me get a second master's, [but also] he set me back two semesters by not signing my candidacy." Eventually, after getting her attorney involved, the documents were signed, but he managed to become her fifth committee member. When the time came for her defense, the chair was out of state and claimed he'd participate virtually. Consequently, he was not present during her defense because he erred in calculating the time. She stated, "He had the effrontery to tell the committee that he could prevent me from passing that day because he wasn't in on it [...] I later learned that the four women went and told him to shut the f*** up, that he had screwed up, and that he owed me an apology, I still have never received an apology [...] he was my own *gente*."

In both instances, Teresa and Cristina faced hardships from individuals they related to culturally. Cristina disappointedly stated, "He was my own *gente,*" reflecting a feeling of betrayal from someone she expected to have been an ally. This echoes Teresa's experience when her Latino professor allowed his personal beliefs to get in the way of his responsibility to her, ultimately forcing her to beg someone else to serve on her committee at the last minute. These

are clear examples of how shared gender, race, or language are not definitive factors of allyship and trust. While shared factors often build trust and community, foster personal growth, and guide academic success in most of the cases described by these six participants, it is possible that in some cases, there are individual questions that must be posed to understand effects of personality, politics, and/or power grabs. For example, though Dolores's first mentor was a monolingual, white male veteran who did not share her lived experiences as a woman, a Chicana, or a Spanish-speaker, Mr. N still saw her for who she was, believed she was capable of excelling, and chose to give her the tools for her to believe in herself.

While the shared experiences of gender, race, and language were not always present in every participant's mentorship experience, it is evident that it helped to strengthen their mentorship relationships. Shared experiences of race are reflected in the mentors who shared ethnic identities as Latinos or Latinas who fostered bicultural spaces in which participants felt "at home." In addition, participants described bilingual dynamics of Spanish and English within their home culture, making bilingual spaces and mentors affectively familiar. For example, Cristina felt ostracized on the basis of her Mexican American identity throughout most of her studies until she found community in her own father's seminars where she had Hispanic cultural and bilingual discussions among her *gente*. Rather than within a predominantly white STEM field, Selena found more support among her *gente* in humanities fields, as well as with Spanish-speaking faculty. The continuous mentorship Veronica received from her Chicano professor, Dr. T, whose classes changed her with the bilingual and bicultural content relevant to her own community, was crucial in her trajectory all through graduate school and even now as a faculty member.

As Chicana and Latina women, participants also described the intersectionality of race and gender identity of Latina female representation to be additionally inspiring and encouraging to their overall mentorship experiences. Selena connected with a group of Latina professors she trusted and would continuously seek out for advice throughout her doctoral program and after. Paloma's main mentor was her undergraduate Spanish instructor, J, whom she could relate to as a friend. She also illustrated being birthed as a Chicana scholar by her Latina professors within her doctoral program whom she called her "academic *parteras*," centering their Latina positionalities and Chicana feminist knowledge as especially significant in the guidance they provided to her. While the foundation for Dolores's confidence as an academic can be attributed to Mr. N's guidance, she explained being incredibly motivated by seeing and working with Chicana professors, helping her feel not only represented, but also empowered as a Chicana woman. Ms. R was especially meaningful for Teresa's development in finding her voice and feeling academically confident. During Cristina's doctoral studies, the female representation of her committee made her feel like an equal, especially when they defended her against someone of her own ethnicity whom she had thought was supposed to be her ally. Furthermore, the mentorship experiences of this project's participants did not always include any or all the intersections of race, gender, and language. However, when present, shared experiences often strengthened the support, comfort, and trust that they had with their mentors, ultimately defining the mentorship they would provide as mentors themselves.

From Mentee to Mentor

For these participants, the feeling of providing mentorship began when they started to work closely with students in the position of instructor. Each one began teaching at different

points in their lives, from their senior year of college, like Paloma, or not until their graduate programs, like Veronica and Selena, or in between their studies like Dolores, Teresa, and Cristina.

As a doctoral student, Veronica taught courses as sole instructor. When asked when she began to feel like a mentor, she explained it occurred when she started receiving emails from students regarding serious issues: navigating higher education, self-harm, and everything in between. She added, "With COVID-19, it was exacerbated due to sick students, others with mental health issues, some were being stalked, etc." For Dolores, though she had worked as a K-12 teacher's assistant, she indicated that working with university-level students was very different from that experience. When she began as a graduate student teacher, she had to learn to not be as hard on her undergraduate students as her graduate classes were on her. She learned to understand and teach different populations, addressing the fact that "people who take six APs in high school aren't the same as others who maybe come from lower socio-economic neighborhoods who maybe just took one [...] I realized that people have inequalities like I had, and I had to take that into account." Seeing and taking differences into account, Dolores made it a point to continue to open doors the way that others opened them for her. In addition to teaching, she worked as a tutor and provided unofficial teaching and mentoring to students, including writing many letters of recommendation.

While she had taught undergraduates throughout her master's and the majority of her doctoral studies, Selena described that she particularly enjoyed teaching students at UNM. "As a professor, I liked the teaching aspect of it, I loved the students, they were invested." Now, though she has been teaching a while, Selena claims that she just recently began to truly feel like a mentor:

> I feel like it takes a little while to grow into that, or to realize that you're the mentor now and not just the mentee because I'm still learning stuff [...] I've always had light leadership roles. It's really different when you start hearing words come out of your mouth that your professors told you, things that people that mentored you told you [...] part of the reason why I think I'm an ok mentor now is because I feel like I've tried and made mistakes and self-corrected enough times to believe in myself as a mentor, so *es tener confianza en mi misma*.

Regardless of her years teaching K-12, undergraduate and graduate students, Teresa stated, "I'm still learning how to be a teacher and to teach effectively, I don't see myself as an expert, the pandemic really changed me." As a graduate student teacher, she felt that perhaps she was perceived as a safe person to talk to, especially when one student disclosed a Title IX issue. "I didn't really experience being a mentor and helping students advance until I came to UNM [...] I didn't really know what mentorship was, I'm a first gen student, I didn't know what I was doing half of the time."

There was a clear correlation with how these Latina professors began to develop their own style of mentorship and guidance with what their own experiences as students had been. For example, some participants demonstrated a mentorship style that directly correlated to their own mentors, educators, and/or parents. Cristina described how many teachers in grade school and in college devalued her culture, and while graduate school was where she finally felt more clear mentoring from the women who surrounded her, it was her parents who had been her first mentors. Similarly, Selena pulls from her father's methods:

> He would say, it was more important to me when choosing a graduate student to work with to see that they had improved rather than that they were amazing right outside of the gate, so I always take that into consideration when I'm looking at whom I'm going to work with [..] though I love working with students who are excellent as well, there are students that will do their best with an opportunity that is given to them, and if you could see that in them.

As a result, she asks students to bring their own experiences to the discussion to best create a reflective, yet challenging opportunity for growth. Challenges for her are connected to the advice she received as an undergraduate student: “Z and T would tell me, you can figure it out, we’re here if you really need us, but why don’t you give it a try, see how it feels [...] hearing the affirmation that it’s tough, that we believe in you, that you can do it, and you need to try, that was the vibe and that’s what I try to recreate.”

In addition, much of what Selena does as a mentor is connected to her the mentorship she has tested. Selena explained, “I would like to give the type of advice that I would like to receive that’s been tested, techniques that have worked well for me, learning how to listen to students and know ‘oh that approach might not work’ [...] mostly, I give pretty open-ended and yet concrete advice, I put structures in place to guide a block of time in a particular way.”

For Teresa, she states her methodology is based on her primary mentors, Ms. R and Dr. P. “Ms. R always pushed us in a way that was never scary [...] and Dr. P made me feel like a scholar, he’d guide us, so now I do guiding questions with students because at the end of the day, these students are going to graduate and be my *colegas* someday.”

Paloma described that it is especially important for her to be a mentor because she didn’t have it in a way that felt concrete. She said, “I think I kinda have that in some people, I got lucky with J.” As a result, she commits to her own mentorship and mentoring her students, saying, “I’m constantly trying to make myself available to my students and especially my students of color [...] I want you to show up with all the tools you have because there were points in my life where I felt like I didn’t have those tools.” In addition, she advocates for having multiple mentors to create a network.

Similarly, personal experiences affected the responses when participants were asked about the drive in their own teaching philosophy, especially in the actions they refuse to perpetuate in their own classrooms:

> Selena: I don't like to talk *at* my students, I like to talk with my students if at all possible [...] you have to really be present and in the moment with your students when you do that.
>
> Veronica: I refuse to perpetuate racism, homophobia, sexism [...] also avoiding stigmas, because academia is hard for POC students if this isn't the place for them, I encourage them to leave and not feel guilty about it, but if it's something they really want to do, I encourage that type of motivation to continue with my students as well.
>
> Teresa: I refuse to see students in a hierarchical light that dehumanizes them because I've been there, I've been in a position where I've had to grovel and I've had to beg. Other professors say they need to 'pay their dues' but why does it have to be that way?
>
> Dolores: I never want to silence people. Sometimes you come across students who are more on the conservative side that have bought into a single story of stereotypes, I would never flat out say 'you're wrong' or attack them, 'how could you say that?' [...] I practice nonjudgment and saying instead 'ok, I see your points, but what are the authors telling us about this subject? Is that rooted more in stereotypes or reality?'
>
> Paloma: Culturally speaking, I think that Latinx students have been dismissed in academic spaces, especially when it comes to their writing and/or their writing has been labeled poor or their writing has been labeled 'too good' or 'you probably didn't do this' (which was my experience at least a few times) and so I really want students to feel like they've improved their writing in my class [...] whether it's the way that they think or analyze their ideas or their grammar, or maybe they learned how to cite a quotation, I want them to walk out and say 'I learned.'

Others also reflected on how their mentorship styles are a response to the racial stereotypes surrounding students of color. For example, Cristina focuses on empowering all her students through their culture:

> I want to teach my students their history, so that they know they stand on the shoulders of giants, they probably haven't been taught this before [...] I want them to know that their parents or grandparents are valiant people [...] for so many centuries we've been told we're worthless, stupid, we stink, are from s***h*** countries, but some of us were born right here [...] I want my students in the classroom to know that what they have to say is valuable, and that what they're learning is valuable, so that they turn around and tell other people about it.

Paloma described how the factor of gender influences her mentorship by actively singling out young Latinas in her classes to offer support or to work with them, "not just because I want them to have somebody like them to work with them, but because I want to work with them [...] the criticism may be implicit bias or offering these students more help, which in some ways is true, but in other ways, I'm not discounting other students the same help." Thus, Paloma's personal mission of enacting intersectional, female-centered mentorship is her way of paying forward the guidance she received. However, she highlights that she sees a necessity for more WOC and Latinas in faculty positions, especially as it contributes to the retention and guidance of Latinas in academia. She states, "[We must] rematriate academia in the way we want to see spaces in a way we didn't see them for us." Similarly, Teresa stated the significance of representation in mentorship as a WOC: "There is something to be said about having a mentor that looks like you, your background. There is a safe feeling there because maybe they know, or they understand."

As a result, many participants use their mentorship as a means of transmitting values and wisdom:

> Cristina: I'm very aware that I come from this very rich culture. I feel I am a conduit to pass that culture forward, to bring with me the teachings of the ancestors. Some of those are our parents, and grandparents, and great grandparents [...] so as a mentor, or as a teacher, or as an elder, I want to project that richness. I want to have it available at my fingertips so that when I'm called upon, I'll have it right there to give, but I also want to be the kind of teacher who will display the value I find in the students [...] I just want to be kind, available, open, and speak my truth. I think that's enough to draw certain students to me who can use somebody like that in their lives.

> Paloma: That they belong there, they belong in the university, in a graduate program, that they're good enough [...] for me, what shifted my perspective was when I stopped trying to be the best, so it's trying to not get students to be the best, they don't need to be the best, they just need to be true to themselves [...] it's teaching them to take up space, and to speak up because they're voice matters.

> Teresa: I want you to remember that you have an identity outside of graduate school; those parts of your identity need fostering too, and they're especially important when one is struggling with the academic part of their identity [...] you have lives outside of this too, don't let that go.

Many of these *profesoras*, regardless of their faculty positions that enable their mentorship of students, continue to be mentees. Dolores stated that though a primary focus of her position at UNM is research, she makes sure to mentor her students in the ways people continue to mentor her. She described how recently, she worked with a current mentor for a project. "Though she was white, she was well aware of the issues surrounding WOC faculty [...] *no se acaban los* mentors, *pero tiene uno que buscarlos también*."

Additionally, Teresa described, "mentors are like shields, people who really help you avoid mishaps, mistakes, and they can help you manage it and go through it [...] during an incident a while ago, my chair was my shield."

While continuous mentorship is an essential practice for these women of color, it isn't a one-size-fits-all:

> Cristina: You can't be all things to everybody, and people find the mentors they need wherever they are and so I mentor some students and barely know others. But I don't need to know everybody on the same contextual beam. I would burn out for one thing. And some I seek out, sometimes they meet you halfway and other times you can't get them to answer you back, but that's ok because maybe somebody else can.

Selena stated, "I think you have to learn to continuously seek mentorship." She has realized through the advancement of her career that mentors from her student years student have begun to retire or can no longer explicitly guide her on her next steps. She stated, "Sometimes I still need help moving forward and it helps to hear it from other Latinas who are at my stage [...] I think having colleagues at other institutions who are good at what they're doing who are successful and I collaborate with them, that has helped to keep me moving forward."

In Spanish, trust is *confianza*. To understand the role of trust as well as language within these relationships, I posed the question: How do you foster *confianza* with your students and with those whom you mentor? For Veronica, the COVID-19 pandemic influenced her approach.

> Veronica: I'm pretty easy going, it's just such a hard time for everybody right now. I give a lot of grace to my students, and I try to model what I would want if I were a graduate student to my students, and I try to give them tools that they can use in the real world, and not just theoretical concepts like grant writing and such.

For others, *confianza* is humanized communication:

> Dolores: Talking about anything with students *abre la oportunidad de tener confianza* [...] [*confianza*] is if they can make jokes and I can make jokes, if we can have coffee and talk about work or about life without a weird feeling, though it's not like this with every student.
>
> Paloma: I'm as transparent as much as I can be with my students. I try to be a good confidant and that I'm good on my word, I think that goes a long way when you have students who depend on you [...] I think I do become friends with my students, my colleagues even now.
>
> Teresa: I like to invite them to office hours to discuss papers, projects, life! I try to be as approachable as possible because I felt like I was a burden as a student. Now on this side of things, I don't want to make students feel like they are bothering me.

For Selena, *confianza* is tied to her language use:

> I go back and forth with students in Spanish. I feel more comfortable now because I would get nervous sometimes [...] it's different when it's a classmate or a colleague, but when it's someone you're supposed to be leading, that could cause them to lose confidence in you as a mentor: 'oh they make mistakes when they speak, are they also making mistakes with the advice they're giving?' That same language that can be *como fuente de confianza* could be coated with so many other things because it's not just a language, it's encoded with other types of meanings and *significados*.

In addition, Selena builds *confianza* by being transparent with her own experiences having to do with her nonlinear educational timeline, and helping students feel better about plans not always working out: "I try to do that more often now with students. It's ok not to have a plan, to change a plan, and it's ok to fail [...] then get back up. It's the getting back up that's the important part."

Language use in the classroom, especially for some participants who feel comfortable utilizing their own bilingualism, is a means of relaying elements of identity, trust, as well as student comfort. Cristina explained that her classroom is always open to the use of both English and Spanish since she can now read and speak both. Cristina always does her best to make her own students feel heard, and in any language. "When I was a TA, a student came to me and asked if she could write a paper in Spanish, and I said yes without a second thought [...] so if a student is writing in English and they're native Spanish speakers, I'll grade it closely, but it's the ideas that matter, but no matter what language, instructions are not optional!"

For Dolores, while she uses English predominantly in her class, she described using Spanish frequently: "Sometimes there's no way of delivering a feeling in one language compared to the other." Rather than what languages are spoken in class, Teresa described how she uses language to establish and maintaining respect for her from her students.

> I'm a woman, I present young, but being a younger presenting woman has its challenges [...] I have to establish authority from the get go. It sucks because I don't want to be *cabrona* with them, but sometimes as a Latina woman who is young presenting, *como que* you have to defend yourself, *tienes que darte a respetar*, not in the way they say *darte a respetar* with *novios* and stuff, but in a sense of, *tú eres la figura de autoridad*, I'm the one in authority here, because I'm the one who has a doctorate, who studied, and who has more knowledge than you do and there has to be a level of respect.

It is evident that in the case of these six Latina professors' mentorship styles, their personal experiences as students on the receiving end of mentorship, and even now as faculty, shape the mentorship they provide to their own students.

DISCUSSION

The narratives of bilingual Latina professors at the University of New Mexico provide insight into how the intersection of gender, race, and language defined the mentorship they

experienced as students in higher education, and the correlation of that experience with their manner of providing mentorship to their own students today. While the shared experiences of gender, race, and language were not always present in every participant's mentorship experience, it is evident that it helped to strengthen their mentorship relationships by building trust and community, fostering personal growth, and guiding academic success. Shared experiences of race are reflected in the mentors who shared ethnic identities as Latinos or Latinas, who fostered bicultural spaces in which participants felt "at home." In addition, participants also attributed the use of Spanish and English to their home culture in some way, making bilingual spaces and mentors feel even more familiar. As Chicana- and Latina-identifying women, participants also reflected on the representational significance of race and gender identity, finding Latina female representation in mentors and professors to be inspiring, encouraging, and empowering. Evidently, one's past experiences of mentorship can clearly shape and inform one's own practices when faced with the responsibility of mentoring others.

However, shared experiences are not definitive factors for positive mentorship experiences. Participants such as Teresa and Cristina gave clear examples of how individuals who shared their same race and ethnicity created some of their most difficult obstacles during their doctoral programs, denying them any feelings of respect, allyship, or trust. In these cases, it is reasonable to assume that some mentorship relationships can be based things outside of just race, gender, or language. The mentorship one provides can be informed by personal experiences of mistreatment, institutional dynamics, the effects of power and authority. This was also reflected with Dolores's first mentor, a monolingual, white male veteran who did not share her lived experiences as a woman, a Chicana, or a Spanish-speaker, but still understood her for who

she was, believed she was capable of excelling, and chose to give her the tools for her to believe in herself.

Overall, all participants described instances that demonstrated how representational factors of gender, race, and language shared with their mentors served to strengthen the trust they had. Cristina finally felt happy and supported in a classroom with her *gente*, her people and was all the more supported in the face of adversity by her female committee members; Veronica attributes her successes to her bilingual Chicano professor, Dr. T, and with her Chicana advisor Dr. W; Selena found community with a number of bilingual Latina professors as an undergrad, as well as with her bilingual Chicano advisor, J, who gave her his undivided attention and support; Dolores was all the more empowered as a Chicana when she began to work with her bilingual Chicana faculty in higher education; Teresa was continuously motivated by her Spanish high school teacher, Ms. R all through undergrad and also met her "academic dad," Dr. P, who encouraged her throughout her doctoral studies; and Paloma found connection with J as an undergrad, and then met *mujeres* she would eventually call her "academic *parteras*" for their hand in delivering her into her academic career. It is evident that these Latina participants connected the trust for their mentors and femtors to comforting elements they experienced at home, where many had Spanish-speaking family, supportive female and male role models, and supportive tools of perseverance tied to their educational foundations. Though some of the participants' mentors have passed away, all participants described having a continuous relationship with their mentors long after they themselves began their faculty positions and journeys mentoring their own students.

There was a clear correlation with how these Latina professors began to develop their own style of mentorship and guidance with what their own positive and negative experiences as

students had been. As each experience was unique to the participants, each participant had their own style which at times showed similarities among them. For example, some demonstrate how their mentorship styles directly correlate to their own mentors, educators, and/or parents. Narrators also illustrated how personal experiences inform their own teaching philosophy, especially in the actions they refuse to perpetuate in their own classrooms. Others reflected on how their mentorship styles are a response to the racial stereotypes surrounding students and women of color, and so they may use their mentorship as a means of transmitting values and wisdom they have learned and developed. Based on their personal experiences, participants also recognize that it is essential to remember that mentorship is not a one-size-fits-all arrangement. As such, these *profesoras* all conceptualized the meaning and development of *confianza* in unique ways as well. In sum, *confianza* may be built through humanized communication, transparency of lived experiences, and a bilingual use of language.

It is important to remember that these Latina participants provide a snapshot into how they define mentorship and hope to share it with students the mentor informally or formally. A future study in which their mentees are also interviewed might better reflect the effects of their mentorship on today's generation of students in higher education, particularly on Latina students.

While providing mentorship is a priority for all participants, we must recognize that informal mentorship is not a requirement of their faculty positions. For participants such as Cristina, Dolores, and Teresa, their department placements prove to be especially cognizant of their time and human needs. During her time as faculty at UNM, Cristina described feeling supported, validated, and heard, which she largely attributes to the racial representation within her department: "There are times when you walk into a room and recognize yourself!" Similarly, Dolores feels "blessed" in her own department and especially because she feels *confianza* with

her chair and colleagues. “It’s rare to have colleagues the way I have them, we respect each other, and we respect our students.” Teresa also feels an immense amount of respect in her department, and feels welcome to bring her whole identity: “I even took my first born to meetings, I’ve always felt comfortable [...] I can be all that I am, as a mother, as a Chicana, as a woman [...] I’ve heard stories from other women, I feel for them, I know not all feel this experience.” Their identity as women, Latinas, mothers (for some) is celebrated and supported.

However, due to the small levels of Latina faculty who can provide intersectional mentoring to students (cited in the introduction), the demand to mentor can cause them to overextend themselves, as mentorship is usually a role they undertake in addition to their faculty responsibilities. This can lead to challenges of finding balance and even result burnout. Many participants described various coping mechanisms and practices for self-care. Cristina reflected on the significance of self-care as a WOC, in the light of not practicing it enough throughout her life:

> A lot is expected of the women, and we keep doing it, and at some point we run out of juice [...] I haven’t taken very good care of myself, and so I will respond and answer students’ questions and say ‘I hope you have a nice weekend, what are you doing to destress? What are you doing for self-care’ because if you don’t take care of yourself, no one else will. It’s a very fine line to navigate, since some don’t want to be perceived as lazy, but if you don’t take care of yourself, you will not have anything to give.

Similarly, Selena had the same sentiment: “It happens more to Latinas, they get tenure and then they get sucked into service roles of being chair or doing this and doing that before they get full professor, and they get tired.” There is clearly a correlation between expectations put on WOC faculty and their mental and physical health, making burnout all too common. To combat this, Paloma reflects on the times throughout her time in higher education as student and faculty

when she needed extra support and had thoughts of leaving. She stated, “It’s always these Latinas who’ve saved my a**!”

Dolores has learned that finding balance is tied to accountability, such as writing groups or putting pressure on herself to meet deadlines. To parallel the pressure, she also practices setting boundaries, such as setting aside weekends for herself just as Teresa. Balance has also come more easily to Teresa by identifying that organization is one of her weaknesses and finding tools that work for her to stay on top of things, such as digital calendars. Veronica does her best to balance her responsibilities by making lists and keeping an agenda to avoid overcommitting: “It really helps to be realistic with what I can and can’t do.” In addition, she practices self-care by going to therapy, watching trash tv for rejuvenation, and keeping her personal life out of work. She additionally finds support from her department: “It’s been really important for me to have this [POC] community and I’m so thankful to have [2 POC faculty members] because they’ve helped me [learn] how to navigate the department and I do think it’s really important to have those connections. I don’t really know if I [would have] stayed in academia if it had not been for those types of connections.”

Their intersectionality as bilingual Latina women has also made them feel like targets of race or gender-based discrimination and harsher scrutiny, especially in the classroom. Teresa described that once after a quiz, a student came up to her and began to immediately cuss her out. “I was scared for my safety, he unleashed all the bad words he knew, another male student stayed until that student left and even offered to walk me to my office.” Veronica noted multiple discriminatory instances during her time as faculty that she never felt as a student. For example, she remembers multiple student evaluations addressing her physical appearance: “She’s really loud or she talks with a loud voice or her hair is really big, like they’ll always comment on my

appearance or attitude and I think that's all racialized to a certain type of way, but it's never about my teaching, always my appearance or hair or chest or voice; I think it's all embedded discourses that students have." In addition to course evaluations, she described two specific complaints that had been made about her as a professor. The first was when she was teaching a graduate course, "one student went to complain to the director that she didn't feel comfortable talking to me because I'm from [NM city]." On the second occasion, she described an elderly white student who had a problem with a critical theory she was teaching, saying, "They told the chair that I was unfit to teach the class and that they should get someone else to teach it." Veronica confessed, "I don't really know if I've figured out how to deal with it, I think I've retreated a lot, I don't think that I teach with as much ease as I used to."

In addition, course evaluations have also been avenues for harsher scrutiny as Selena explains:

> I've read way too much about what happens when you're a female, when you're a Latina on these evaluations. I'm well aware that there are expectations incumbent on women that you're going to be a nurturing type of mother figure and if you're not, there's this double bind where you're not seen as a good mentor, or not seen investing as much as students would like for you to invest in them because you're not mentoring them in the way they expect you to mentor.

Parallel to the literature, the narratives of these women reflect the reality in which WOC faculty are affected by race and gender-based discrimination within their academic positions (Shayne 2020, Contreras et. al. 2022). While a unique bond of trust can be fostered between mentorship by and for WOC, the obstacles of discrimination, burnout, and/or scrutiny that these Latina professors describe can hinder the ability to provide outside support to their students, such as informal mentorship, especially alongside the increasing rate of Latina students.

To alleviate the weight of informal mentorship Latinas and women of color already bear, formal femtorship programs have been created on postsecondary campuses to center feminist pedagogies through femtor/femtee relationships. For example, Alejandra Gonzalez, Irene Lara, Carolina Prado, Sophia Lujan Rivera, and Carmen Rodriguez created CuranderaScholarActivist (CSA), a femtoring program to engage in a holistic femtorship model intended to promote community learning, herstories, and the body-mind-spirit-hearts for the journey through academia as students and professors (Lara et. al. 2015). In addition, MANA, a National Latina Organization founded in 1974 has developed multiple chapters throughout the United States, including MANA de Albuquerque. Established in 1985, MANA de Albuquerque assists Latinas attending secondary and post-secondary educational institutions in achieving their full potential personally and professionally while serving their community through leadership development, community service, and advocacy. One of their main programs is the MANA de Albuquerque Hermanitas Program, which offers one-on-one mentoring, personal, career, and leadrship training for girls eleven to eighteen years old. While the word "femtorship" is not explicitly stated on their program description, those who serve as mentors to the Hermanitas are women called Madrinas who "understand the responsibility to both the parents and to the youth they work with […] commit to communicating weekly with Hermanitas to build a relationship, and attend MANA de Albuquerque Madrina trainings and workshops" (MANA de Albuquerque). In this way, representational, femtor/femtee programs like this create national-level networks by and for Latinas to promote personal and professional development and academic success within educational institutions and their communities.

This study documents and examines the experiences of six Latina professors from the University of New Mexico who were successful on their journey due to their own femtor and

mentors. *Six* narrators, which I stress because it poses the question of how many bilingual Latinas did not pursue higher education due to negative experiences with educators, a lack of representation, linguistic discrimination, or having been tracked into other professions due to stereotyping. While these oral history interviews provided a space for these Latinas to speak openly in their languages, they did so under certainty of anonymity. Even then, some narrators chose to not fully describe certain issues or events, highlighting the fact that there remain issues of safety and comfortability for Latinas and WOC within institutional spaces.

We must recognize that sharing stories and experiences, especially those of underrepresented voices, unites those with similar stories. Though it is a small sample size, this study introduces the cruciality of understanding what experiences of Latina faculty have been because it defines the outcome of the incoming generations of students. While I am limited in time and resources as graduate student researcher in this point in time, this topic warrants further investigation and opens the possibility for future research into the educational histories and trajectories of Latina faculty at other universities, such as the experiences of Latina faculty at other Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) or bilingual Latina faculty within Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). Their stories can be utilized to inspire and encourage the increasing enrollment of Latina students as they proceed to think about their own career prospects even before they enroll in post-secondary programs.

In addition, while much research shows the important effects of good intersectional mentorship, making sense of how we individually develop our mentorship styles is important. The same way that we define our teacher identity, professional identity, or personal identity, we must also do the work to dissect our mentor identity because whether we see it or not, there are always other people who will look to us for representation, support, and guidance.

Our lived experiences clearly inform the way that we carry ourselves in the world and can have direct effects on those we encounter. If students who are first-generation, non-traditional, students of color, LGBTQ+, multilingual, women, etc. are to be successful within institutional contexts not originally created for them, they need to be represented and they need to have access to individuals with whom they can build *confianza* through shared experiences of identity like race, gender, and language.

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APPENDIX

A. Consent Form

Creando la confianza: Narratives on Mentorship of Latina Professors at the University of New Mexico

Informed Consent for Interviews

Fall 2022

Maria Vielma, from the Department of Spanish and Portuguese is conducting a research project. The purpose of the research is to understand the cycle of mentorship via the narratives of Latina professors at the University of New Mexico through oral histories describing the experiences they have had with professors who served as their own mentors, and the correlation of such with their current style of providing mentorship as professors to their own students. You are being asked to participate because you 1) are a woman who identifies as female; 2) identify as Hispanic/Latina; 3) are bilingual in English and Spanish 4) received your doctorate degree between 2000-2015; 5) and are current faculty in the field of Humanities or Social Sciences at the University of New Mexico, which include the positions of full professor, associate, assistant, and lecturer.

Your participation will involve a pre-screening informal interview, and one formal interview for research purposes. The interview should take about 60 minutes to complete. The interview includes questions such as the role of gender, race, and language in the experiences of mentorship you received in higher education, as well as how those personal experiences of mentorship influenced the mentorship you now provide to your own students. Your involvement in the research is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate. You can refuse to answer any of the questions at any time. All identifiable information (e.g., your name, date of birth) will be removed from the information collected in this project. After we remove all identifiers, the information may be used for future research.

Data will be stored on my home computer and portable devices of my laptop and cell phone, where it will all be handled and maintained securely and kept under password protection. Upon project completion, all identifying information (electronic, paper, recordings) will be destroyed.

The findings from this project will provide information on the long term effects that mentorship and representation play in the pre-faculty lives of Latina professors in higher education to better understand the informal mentoring they produce as faculty to their own students. If published, results will be presented in summary form only.

If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about the research, please feel free to email the Primary Investigator Anna Nogar at anogar@unm.edu. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, or about what you should do in case of any harm to you, or if you want to obtain information or offer input, please contact the UNM Office of the IRB (OIRB) at (505) 277-2644 or irb.unm.edu.

By participating in the interview, you will be agreeing to participate in the above described research.

B. Interview Questions

I have included in my protocol the specification that identifying information will be removed. Acknowledging the fact that academic communities are often very small and well known to one another, in order to avoid negative impacts on professional trajectories of any of my narrators, identifying information will be redacted, including professor & faculty names, institutional affiliations, and specific research profile information.

Childhood and Adolescent Experiences in Education

- Describe the area in which you grew up.
- Are you part of a small or big home? What did your immediate circle look like? How many siblings did you have? How many adults were around? family?
- What language(s) were spoken in the home?
- What language was spoken outside your home? In school?
- When in elementary school, how comfortable were you speaking both languages? Why or why not?
    - How about in middle and high school?
- Would you please describe how education was approached within your family or immediate circle?
- How would you describe your own attitude toward your education during this time?
- When you didn't understand something or had questions in school, how comfortable were you approaching your teachers? Why? How so?
- As an adolescent, did you have any career goals for yourself? What were they?
    - How much freedom did you have to pursue those goals and who did you feel supported by in doing so?
        - If any, why do you feel you may have had these forms of freedom?
        - If not, why do you feel you may have not had these forms of freedom?
    - Did you ever feel limited in pursuing your goals? If so, how?
- Who comes to mind when you think of people who supported you and your goals in K-12?
    - How did they make you feel supported? What are some examples?
- What experiences motivated you to go to college?
    - Was there a specific person or model you looked to within college? Or several?
- Did you ever feel discouraged by something or someone in pursuing college? If so, how?

Higher Education: Experiences in Undergraduate and Graduate School

- Tell me about your transition into higher education.
    - Were there any gaps between K-12 and higher ed? Or during your higher ed process?
- Were you the first in your family to attend college?
    - If so, what was your experience in navigating your first year?
    - If not, how did others' knowledge who had attended college already support your journey?
        - Were there other contextual considerations that moved you towards higher education? (contextual considerations, i.e. xyz)

- As an undergraduate, what courses did you enjoy?
    - Were these in your primary field(s) of study? How did they relate to your degree profession?
    - What did the students in your classes look like? What about your professors?
        - How did their identity makeup provide a form of comfort or belonging for you in your classes, if at all?
    - Were any of your classmates bilingual in English and Spanish? What about your professors?
        - Was it important for you for your classmates/professors to be bilingual?
    - How were you treated as a student by your classmates?
        - What were some negative experiences /, if any?
            - How did you overcome those experiences?
        - What were some positive experiences, if any?
            - What did you learn/how did you grow from them?
    - How were you treated as a student by your professors?
        - What were some negative experiences /, if any?
            - How did you overcome those experiences?
        - What were some positive experiences, if any?
            - What did you learn/how did you grow from them?
    - Of your professors, specifically, did you feel comfortable going to anyone for support? If so, who and why?
- Did you follow a linear path to graduate school after undergraduate school?
    - If not, what did your path look like? When and what made you decide to apply to graduate school?
    - If so, when and what made you decide to apply to graduate school?
- As a graduate student, what did you study?
    - What did the students in your classes look like? What about your professors?
        - How did their identity makeup provide a form of comfort or belonging for you in your classes, if at all?
        - How did the identity makeup of your peers and professors differ from your experience in undergraduate school?
    - Were any of your classmates bilingual in English and Spanish? What about your professors?
        - What is it important for you for your classmates/professors to be bilingual?
    - How were you treated as a student by your classmates and your professors?
        - What were some negative experiences /, if any?
            - How did you overcome those experiences?
        - What were some positive experiences, if any?
- Of your professors in graduate school, who did you feel the most supported by?
    - What experiences made you feel this way?
- Of your professors in graduate school, who did you not feel supported by, if any?
    - If so, what experiences made you feel this way?
    - How did you deal with these obstacles?

- As a graduate student, did you have any teaching assistantships? If so, tell me about them.
    - Did you ever find yourself in the role of mentor as TAs? How so?
- How important were your professors in your overall success in higher education?
    - How do your professors, or mentors, continue to impact you today? For example, how do you continue to work with your mentors, if at all?
- How do you define your success from higher education?

Faculty Experience

- Before teaching at the University of New Mexico, did you have other professional positions? If so, were they faculty or non-faculty positions? Describe them.
- How did you decide that you wanted to teach at the university level?
- What brought you to teach at the University of New Mexico?
- What kind of teaching modalities have you used? (online, in-person, remote)
- What is your favorite thing about teaching your courses at UNM?
- What has your experience been with the students who take your courses?
    - What is your teaching philosophy?
    - What is your use of language within your classes?
    - Are there practices that your mentors had that you found yourself repeating with your own students?
    - Are there practices you refuse to perpetuate in your classroom? How so?
    - How do you respond to requests for letters of recommendation?
    - What difference do you see in the amount of women of color in your classroom compared to the amount of women of color who were in your own college classes?
        - Have you witnessed an increase of students who look like you in your classes?
    - What kind of obstacles do you find yourself supporting your students with?
    - Given your personal experience in education growing up as a bilingual woman of color, how do you now as faculty support your own students of color?
    - What are the values and wisdom you impart onto your students? (i.e. cultural, academic)
    - What impacts do you believe you have made on your students' lives?
    - What mentorship do you provide to your students in and outside of the classroom?
    - How have your previous students kept in touch with you over the years, if any? How so?
- How do you build confianza among yourself and your students?
- Why is it important for you to be a mentor to your students?
- How do you balance the mentorship you provide to your students with your faculty responsibilities (committees, conferences, teaching, etc.) and your personal life?
- How are you treated by your faculty and fellow colleagues in and outside your department?
    - Are they bilingual in English and Spanish? How does that make you feel?
    - What is it important for you for your colleagues to be bilingual?

- What obstacles have you faced as faculty in the department, if any?
- Do you feel supported by your colleagues? How so? How can your department further support you in managing your responsibilities while also continuing to provide mentorship and support to your students?