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Full Length Research Paper

What's My Type? Characteristics of Quality Mentoring Relationships for Nonprofit Latina CEOs as Mentees in California

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Mentoring research that explores the experiences of executive leaders as mentees is limited, and almost non-existent, for women of color nonprofit chief executive officers (CEOs). Not only is existing literature limited, it does not intentionally explore how intersectionality influences the development of quality mentoring relationships for women of color executive leaders. The term Latina Leadership Development (LDD) has been established as a dedicated concept related to the leadership development of Latinas in this study. The purpose of the study was to explore how Latina nonprofit executive leaders in California leveraged existing social capital and mentoring relationships as mentees that influenced their self-efficacy and leadership development. Research was conducted between 2017 and 2020 with 10 Latina nonprofit CEOs in California utilizing qualitative research methodology. A hermeneutic phenomenological research design was applied utilizing hermeneutic looping techniques during a nine-step data analysis process to ensure participants' perceptions of their lived experiences remained at the core of this study. This paper presents two themes produced by the study: (a) An evolution of mentorship relationship type and function exists with a preference for informal mentoring relationships that provide psychosocial supportive functioning, and (b) A constellation of mentors from diverse racial, ethnic, and gender backgrounds are preferred and integral to LLD. This study empirically extends existing scholarship by showing how intersectionality and specific characteristics of mentoring relationships may be most beneficial for Latina and women of color nonprofit CEOs.

Keywords: mentoring relationship, nonprofit organization, Latina chief executive leader, social capital, community cultural wealth typology, intersectionality, hermeneutic phenomenology

The glass ceiling narrative metaphorically describes invisible barriers faced by women during their career advancement. According to Glass and Cook (2016), the metaphor highlights subtle and covert "forms of bias and discrimination, [in which] women are less likely than men to have access to strong professional networks, social ties to elites, workplace support and insider information" (p. 51). There is a perception that high achieving women have broken the glass ceiling when they have successfully attained executive leadership positions. However, racially and ethnically underrepresented women contend the glass ceiling metaphor ignores specific intersectional social identity characteristics, experiences, and their impact on leadership advancement. Instead, subsequent metaphors have been adopted by marginalized women to highlight intersectional identities in leadership such as concrete (Holder et al, 2015), adobe (Alicea, 2003), stained glass (Giglia & Smith, 2024); Sullins, 2000), bamboo (Saksena, 2024), and rainbow ceilings (Federo, 2024) described by Black, Latina, Indigenous, religious, Asian, and the LGBTQ+ communities, respectively. The adobe ceiling metaphor illustrates the dense and muddy barriers Latinas must navigate to attain leadership roles (Alicea, 2003). As opposed to glass, the muddiness of adobe is opaque and difficult to see through, unable to know exactly what lies ahead, and nor how much further is needed to go to attain and maintain a leadership role. Holder et al. (2015) found Black women experienced micro aggressions and other discrimination in the corporate workplace. The authors described six coping strategies, two of which were associated with support networks, and seeking sponsorship. In this particular study, research explored how mentors and mentoring networks impacted the leadership advancement for Latina nonprofit executives.

In this study, I utilized the term *Latina* to describe women who identify as Chicana, Latina, and/or of Hispanic ancestry. Study criteria required participants to identify with at least one of these identities. During the screening process, participants were not required to specify which of these identities they preferred. Importance was placed on overall identification. All participants identified with at least one of these racial/ethnic/political categories. Bernal (2002) defined *Chicana* as a woman of Latinx ancestry with a cultural and political social identity that recognizes a resistant and political consciousness. It is important to note that not all Latinas embrace a Chicana social identity. The term *Hispanic* is not used by many Latinx people either who believe the term is an umbrella term issued by the government that does not recognize ethnic or political identity

(Hayes-Bautista, 2004). In addition to racial/ethnic/political identification, participants were required to have or have had a quality mentoring relationship in which they considered themselves a mentee at some point in their lifetime. All participants held a nonprofit CEO role in the state of California at the time of the study. There were no minimum or maximum limits for age, educational attainment, total leadership experience, nor number of years in their current role. All participants were born in the United States. Additional participant profile characteristics are found in Table 1 below.

Existing literature has shown that mentors and mentoring networks have been effective pathways for leadership development and executive transitions. However, literature is limited that specifically explores how women of color nonprofit leaders have experienced and engaged in mentoring as they advanced in their careers, nor how they maintain quality mentoring relationships. *"Breaking the glass ceiling"* does not metaphorically represent the intersectionality of women of color executives. The research question for my study: What are the salient characteristics of quality mentoring relationships for Latina nonprofit executive leaders in California?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework developed for this study leans on a newer version of social capital theory and community cultural wealth that grew from critical race studies. I utilized social capital theory (Coleman, 1988; Lin, 2001) and community cultural wealth typology (Yosso, 2005) to provide a more robust framework for this study.

Social Capital Theory

Foundational capital theory was used to frame the purpose of this study and thematic data analysis. While Bourdieu's (2011) cultural capital theory promotes a meritocratic paradigm that indicates educational attainment benefits all individuals with pathways into the middle class and accumulation of wealth, the paradigm negates the marginalization of people by systems and social structures that do not always benefit marginalized and underrepresented groups, especially for women of color. Bourdieu's (2011) choice of cultural and social capital was discounted as solely an individualistic and meritocratic concept. Coleman's (1988) version of social capital theory and social mobility constructs were adopted to describe the functional nature of social structures, whereby social capital and mentoring relationships mutually may influence each other. Lin's (2001) work on social relationships strengthened this framework emphasizing the criticality of quality mentoring relationships that may provide mentees with additional leadership credentials.

Community Cultural Wealth

Coleman's work aligns with Yosso's community cultural wealth typology (2005) by emphasizing how the presence of community wealth exists in several forms of capital, regardless of an individual's social status or marginalization. Yosso emphasizes community cultural wealth typology stemming from a critical race perspective, and intersectionality which recognizes gendered and racialized experiences. The typology was well suited for the study's purpose. Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989; Crenshaw, 1991) is further described within this typology in the literature review below. My perspective is that women of color leaders' intersectional experiences as gendered and racialized beings, and their possession of several forms of existing capital, are foundational to the leadership development of women of color leaders. Yet overt and covert forms of social injustices, inequality, and inequity impede social and career attainment for racial and ethnic minority women in leadership that mentoring relationships may help navigate. This study explored Latina leaders' perceptions of their mentoring relationships as mentees, and how these relationships may have influenced their LLD.

Literature Review

Lived experiences of Latina nonprofit executive leaders included recognizing social histories that have influenced their LLD. History, immigration patterns, and non-monolithic experiences require Latinx individuals to respond differently to non-Latinx perceptions and social inequity (Hayes-Bautista, 2004). California born Latinx may possess differing experiences than recent Latinx immigrants including immigration status, language proficiency, and types and degrees of social capital. Although an individual retains their unique experiences and perceptions, majoritarian rhetoric often describes Latinx as a monolithic group. Similar to Hayes-Bautista, Bernal (2002) described the impact of monolithic rhetoric within the educational system indicating it historically and continually oppresses marginalized communities. Bernal described critical race theory (CRT) and Latinx critical race theory (LatCrit) by emphasizing the importance of intersectional identity based on race, ethnicity, and gender. Furthermore, Chicana feminista praxis (Delgado et al., 2017) is anchored in critical race theory and LatCrit through the sharing of intersectional Latina counter narratives that expose the oppressive nature of the monolithic rhetoric. I highlighted social capital theory and community cultural wealth typology as its theoretical framework, while emphasizing intersectionality is ingrained in this study's framework.

Intersectionality's Influence in Racial/Ethnic/Gender Studies

Crenshaw (1991) pointed out the failure of legal studies and feminist theory by asserting they ignore the intersection of race and gender. Racial and ethnic minority women suffer from unequal, inequitable, and discriminate ideologies on multiple levels and fronts (Crenshaw, 1991). She asserted that, "The problem with identity politics is not that it fails to transcend difference, as some critics charge, but rather the opposite—that it frequently conflates or ignores intragroup differences" (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1242). To assume people of one culture are monolithic would generalize the diversity of that group. The sociocultural identities Latinx form may traverse characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender, class, orientation, disability, generational, immigration, and language experiences, to name a few. Intersectionality may be exploratory and analytical (Carbado et al., 2013). It has been accepted to account for race,

ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, religion and other social differences as connecting or standing alone on individual, cultural, and societal levels (Ruiz Castro & Holvino, 2016). Empirical studies that amalgamate intersectionality promote further multidimensional studies especially related to social inequity (Rodriguez et al., 2016).

Carbado et al. (2013) asserted that intersectionality is not solely a static theory rooted in Black feminism. The evolution of intersectional perspectives in numerous disciplines has been neglected. Researchers must recognize intersectionality during exploration, its influence, and how it mobilizes individuals (Carbado et al., 2013). Scholars advocate for the integration of intersectionality, especially for racial and ethnic minority women aspiring for executive leadership (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). I honored participant intersectionality by acknowledging the way in which participants identified themselves and perceived their experiences. Sanchez-Hucles and Davis (2010) asserted:

> Equally important are efforts to unpack intersectionality in order to reveal the variables and causal relationships among them that underlie it. Training in performance management and leadership development that emphasizes the intersectionality of multiple identities may produce acceptance of a wider range of acceptable leadership behavior. (p. 179)

Respecting multiple identity realities produces finer and more appreciation of leadership diversity (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Intersectional identities offer complex mosaics of narrative opportunities. However, Carbado et al. (2013) assert demand for group solidarity might become unidimensional restricting an individual within their own cultural groups to the point that individuals may begin to negotiate between their needs for their group's acceptance. However, Latinas share positive feelings regarding the formation of identity, college and professional aspirations, and life transitions within Latinx culture (Ayala & Contreras, 2019; Menchaca et al., 2016). Latinas leverage related forms of capital to empower themselves through leadership trajectories (Ayala & Contreras, 2019; Yosso, 2005).

Nonprofit Organizational Contexts

Women of color nonprofit executives are overlooked in empirical literature (Branson et al., 2013). When assessing only for gender, the nonprofit industry generally continues to employ non-Latina White women in organizational leadership intended to serve lower-income Black and Brown communities, "proving that it is more important to have gainfully employed White progressives with fulfilling careers, than it is to actually rectify systemic inequalities by putting the right people at the forefront" (Tomkin, 2020, p. 4). Tomkin's observations critically highlight the systemic barriers that women of color CEOs encounter as both gendered and ethnically marginalized leaders in the nonprofit sector. I intentionally explored Latina nonprofit leaders' perceptions about how mentoring influenced their leadership development into the nonprofit sector that is described as systemically oppressive within the leadership ranks.

The nonprofit sector may appeal to women seeking top executive positions; however, women may have a firm presence in the nonprofit sector but minimally within key executive roles (Pynes, 2000). Attainment of these positions and opportunity for further skill development often result in substantially lower salaries than in other sectors (Branson et al., 2013). Research has shown female leaders add significant economic and social value to an organization (Jones & Jones, 2017); but limited scholarship exists focusing on women executives in the nonprofit industry (Branson et al., 2013) and almost non-existent when intentionally centering intersectionality. Inspired by the lack of qualitative research within the nonprofit industry exploring the professional trajectories of women of color, this study highlighted the intersectionality of Latina nonprofit CEOs, sources of capital, and extends existing mentoring research for leadership development.

Latinas In Nonprofit Leadership

As mentioned, while opting to work in a nonprofit environment, women, racial and ethnic minorities may opt to accept lower compensation in exchange for greater skill development opportunities (Pynes, 2000). Female nonprofit CEOs tend to lead smaller nonprofit organizations while earning less pay than if in larger organizations (Cornelius et al., 2011). In a 2011 national study pertaining to nonprofit executive leadership, 82% of executive directors were White, and just 3% were Latinx (Cornelius et al., 2011). Adesaogun et al. (2015) explored gender, racial, and ethnic disparities among California nonprofit leaders:

> Understanding the overall ethnic composition of nonprofit organizations is integral to understanding the impact of racial and ethnic stratification at the leadership level within the industry. Researchers attempting to understand nonprofit organizations in California discovered that while minorities and women made up the majority of nonprofit employees in the state, only 25% of nonprofit organizations were minority-led. (p. 44)

Adesaogun et al. (2015) found perceptions that there is a lack of organizational interest to mentor ethnic minority employees. Although the study was conducted with Black women in the Midwest, California was referenced as being more of a progressive environment and more diverse in comparison to other regions of the U.S. The authors advise understanding regional ethnic distribution while exploring career success. In fact, racial disparities among nonprofit leadership have led to the establishment of ethnic specific professional networks whereby racial and ethnic minority women seek support from fellow employees of similar cultural backgrounds who assist in acclimating to an organization's culture (Adesaogun et al., 2015). These social networks are aligned with social capital theory and community cultural wealth typology whereby

marginalized communities leverage community capital for goal attainment. Existing research tends to stratify all women or racial and ethnic minorities, with limited focused research on female racial and ethnic minority leaders within a regional or state boundary (Adesaogun et al., 2015). I intentionally explored Latina nonprofit leadership in California to fill this gap in empirical scholarship.

Latina intersectionality and lived experience is critical when exploring how gender, race, and ethnicity impacts the Latina CEO's experience. LeRoux (2009) found that racial matching of an organization's leaders to its clients enhanced political and advocacy awareness of the community's needs. LeRoux suggested additional studies be conducted with Latinx leaders due to the population's growth and often under representation in decision making arenas; "it has important implications for the role nonprofits might play in restructuring the imbalance of influence in larger political and policy-making systems" (LeRoux, 2009, p. 758). For nonprofit leaders, cooperative relationships are often formed by leveraging their social networks. The leveraging of these networks may nurture mentoring relationships which have been shown to mutually benefit the mentor and mentee.

Mentoring Relationships

A mentor describes a person, or an activity, used interchangeably with terms such as advisor, sponsor, coach, counselor, friend, family, peer, protector, role model, teacher, and confidante (Crisp & Alvarado-Young, 2018; Kram, 1985; Priest et al., 2018). I utilized the term mentor to encompass all of these terms. One of its most paternalistic descriptions indicates how the mentor is committed to developing a less experienced mentee (Crisp et al., 2017; Kao et al., 2014; Kram, 1985). Campbell et al. (2012) described shifts in mentoring phenomenon during the 1970s, whereby workplace management held a paternalistic view of the term. The 1980s adopted mentoring as a learning process between mentor and mentee, with Kram's (1985) work bringing mentoring relationships studies within an organizational context. Kram's foundational study began to categorize mentoring into career and psychosocial functions. One of her implications advocated for the exploration of diversity within mentoring relationships. Match suitability has begun to include race, ethnicity, and gender as critical characteristics of these relationships (McArthur et al., 2017; Searby et al., 2015). Match suitability describes how the mentor is attuned to the needs of an engaged mentee (McArthur et al., 2017) and the match may be experienced differently in workplace, educational, or cultural spaces. Characteristics such as gender became a factor when comparing differences in career interest and aspirations between mentored men and women, emphasizing that, regardless of gender, an individual must be dedicated to the relationship to benefit from mentoring (Pârlea-Buzatu, 2010). Pârlea-Buzatu explored how participants defined mentoring and highlighted its salient characteristics and influences. Mentoring relationships supporting leadership development vary by type, function, and source (Kram, 1985) and contain reciprocity between the mentor and mentee (Hastings & Kane, 2018). Among high achieving individuals, a mentor may help create a safe space that reduces feelings of performance inadequacy or imposter syndrome (Clance & Imes, 1978; Neureiter & Traut-Matausch, 2016; Peteet et al., 2015; Vergauwe et al., 2015). While mentoring literature exists, it typically does not center women of color executives outside of the educational sector. Block and Tietjen-Smith (2016) found the benefits of psychosocial mentoring were associated with decreased role conflict and ambiguity, increased career and job satisfaction, and stronger commitment to the organization as a result of satisfaction with the mentoring relationship.

I extended mentoring research by demonstrating a more inclusive and detailed set of findings pertaining to how Latina nonprofit executive leaders have benefitted from mentoring relationships as mentees. It empirically fills scholarship gaps by showing how mentoring can positively impact an individual's retention and development in workplace settings while including intersectionality and social identity as influencers of mentoring relationships.

Methods

Qualitative research methodology was utilized to collect data that described mentoring experiences from a sample size of 10 Latina nonprofit CEOs in California. Based on review of the literature, semi-structured interviews, descriptive surveys, and researcher field notes an analysis produced themes. The methodological framework examined contextual conditions in which experiences occurred and recognized the unique stories of every participant.

I selected a hermeneutic phenomenological research design influenced by Heidegger's (1953/2010) hermeneutic phenomenological philosophy that evolved from Husserl's (1907/1999) idea of phenomenology as both a philosophical perspective and research methodology. It aligned with the intention to recognize the experiences of all participants as well as acknowledge researcher interpretation who shared similar participant demographic characteristics and nonprofit leadership experience. While Husserl's (1907/1999) phenomenology requires the bracketing of a researcher's own experiences in an effort to disconnect from all preconceived notions about the phenomenon, Heidegger (1953/2010) acknowledged that experiences and perceptions could not be objective, requiring inquirers to study individual parts, then go broader to assess all parts in combination. He pushed for the understanding and interpretation of the researcher. Through descriptive patterns (Polkinghorne, 1983) that cannot be necessarily obtained through basic phenomenology, the core of hermeneutic phenomenology is historicality of understanding (Heidegger, 1953/2010; Koch, 1995) and hermeneutic loops (Koch, 1995; Laverty, 20023) which were incorporated into the study. The looping process supported the historicality of understanding which Koch (1985) described as the researcher's background and culture, pre-understanding of the culture and its meaning, co-constitution between oneself and the world, and

interpretation. In addition to including the foundation of hermeneutic phenomenology, Allen et al (1995) argued that hermeneutic exploration is critical whereby it has a commitment to understanding and highlighting inequities of power and misconceptions. The hermeneutic phenomenological research design was included in all aspects of this study, most importantly in the selection of data collection methods and data analysis process.

Data collection and analysis included demographic questionnaires; semi-structured, in-person one-on-one interviews; and researcher field notes. Demographic questionnaires collected demographic, organizational, and leadership information. Participants completed the questionnaire attesting to their criteria such as identification as Chicana, Latina, and/or of Hispanic ancestry, were U.S born, and confirmation they experienced at least one memorable mentoring relationship as a mentee. They also provided basic organizational information such as budget, staff size, and services offered. I travelled throughout the state of California and conducted in person semi-structured interviews at the participants' place of work or a location of their choice. The duration of the interview did not surpass one and a half hours. Through interviews, qualitative data was collected related to perceptions of mentor relationships and influences on leadership development. Interviews served as the primary mode of data collection of experiences that were comprehensively described by participants. To the best of their ability, participants recalled these experiences and shared perceptions of their mentoring relationships. Participants communicated details they felt comfortable sharing that led to thick, rich, descriptive data collection. The collection of researcher field notes enabled me to notate observations pertaining to their excitement or uneasiness of recollecting their relationships, their workplace environments, and their comfortability sharing their stories during the interviews.

The data collection methods led to a multi-prong data analysis leading to thematic analysis. I manually coded all data to ensure the articulation and significance of the interview was accurate as some participants spoke both in English and Spanish, and/or used culturally significant jargon. Data analysis included a nine-step process to support the philosophy and methodological perspective of hermeneutic phenomenology which allows the researcher to interpret participant experiences through the integration of hermeneutic loops (Heidegger, 1953/2010; Koch, 1995; Laverty, 2003). The nine steps in the looping process include pre-coding; first cycle coding; second cycle coding; codification 1; codification 2; categorization; thematic analysis; circle of friends (peer validation); and participant validation. The looping process became additional opportunities for participant validation during the data analysis process to ensure the voice of the participant was authentic and validated and not misconstrued in coding software. The process supported the study's rigor with the utilization of triangulation, saturation, member checks, participant validation (member checks), circle of friends feedback, thick rich descriptions, and audit trails.

This article presents two themes responding to the purpose of this study. These themes emerged as a result of participants sharing similar experiences, indicating the importance of the experiences themselves related to the themes, and who spent a majority of their interview discussing these experiences. The dialectic between data collection and data analysis produced meanings that were essential to the core hermeneutic strategy of interpretation and mean-making (Allen, 1995). Participant validation, also known as member checks, and a circle of friends feedback group were conducted during the data analysis process. Miles et al. (2020) described how phenomenological studies that share transcripts with their participants become a foundation for shared reflection. In addition, the researcher desired its participants to understand how their voices matter and become empirical research. They also received an executive summary of the resulting themes after data analysis was completed. All participants indicated the themes were aligned with their experiences. All members of the circle of friends' feedback group represented their organization's leadership, worked in the nonprofit sector, identified as women, and/or represented diverse racial groups. The feedback group had opportunities to ask questions about the data analysis process that helped identify potential blind spots. Laverty (2003) stated that: "For a hermeneutic phenomenological project, the multiple stages of interpretation that allow patterns to emerge, the discussion of how interpretations arise from data, and the interpretive process itself are seen as critical" (p. 31).

Findings

Study findings produced themes based on the perceptions and experiences detailed by the 10 Latina nonprofit CEOs in California.

Participant Profiles

Participants' stories and backgrounds provide context to the voices that were heard and conveyed. Participant eligibility criteria included the following:

- Self-identification as an U.S.-born Chicana, Latina, or woman of Hispanic ancestry. This criterion addressed the gap in scholarship that has not focused specifically on mentoring relationships of Latina CEOs as mentees.
- At the time, held a CEO position at a California nonprofit organization. This criterion increased geographic sample distribution with broader recruitment opportunities and increased confidentiality.
- Self-identification as having had, or having, a mentee experience with at least one quality mentor in their lifetime. Other terms such as supervisor, role model, instructor, advisor, coach, sponsor, protector, family member, and friend were accepted.

Participant demographic profiles were diverse representing different age ranges, educational levels, and leadership experience. Participant profiles are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Age Range (in Years)	Highest Educational Level Completed	Total Years of Leadership Experience	Years in Current Leadership Role
Azalea	Under 40	Some college	10	2
Camelia	40–49	Some college	15	4
Dahlia	50–59	BA	20+	3
Daisy	Under 40	Master's	5	4
Iris	50–59	BA	9	3.5
Jasmine	40–49	Master's	9	5
Lila	40–49	BA	20+	1.5
Rosa	40–49	Master's	4.5	4.5
Violeta	50–59	Master's	13	11
Zinnia	60+	BA	20+	20

Note. Pseudonyms have been assigned to protect participant confidentiality.

The study recruited Latina nonprofit CEOs working within the state of California from 10 different organizations representing 5 regions of the state (Northern California; San Francisco Bay Area; Central Coast and Central Valley; Gold Country and High Sierra; Southern California). The statewide geographic boundary established for this project allowed for expansion, accessibility, and greater likelihood for participant recruitment. A diverse cross section of organizations is reflected among the participant group with the geographic area, organizational histories, budget size, staff size, and type of services offered (See Table 2).

Table 2

Participant Nonprofit Organizations

Participant	Geographical Area	Organization History (Years)	Budget	Staff Size (No. of Staff)	Services
Azalea	Urban	17	$356K	4	Community Services
Camelia	Rural	26	$12M	115	Healthcare
Dahlia	Rural	137	$10M	130	Social Services
Daisy	Urban	27	$3.2M	13	Advocacy
Iris	Urban	34	$850K	4	Education/Training
Jasmine	Urban	34	$4.2M	48	Healthcare
Lila	Urban	10	$2.5M	3	Education
Rosa	Coastal	16	$1M	10	Healthcare
Violeta	Urban	13	$757K	17	Social Services
Zinnia	Urban	20	$2M	60	Health and Social Services

I identified a set of themes that responded to the guiding research question: What are the salient characteristics of quality mentoring relationships for Latina nonprofit executive leaders in California? Participants were asked to describe the most meaningful mentor relationship(s) they have had. Azalea, Camelia, Daisy, Dahlia, Lila, and Zinnia described at least two different mentors because they felt they equally were meaningful to them. The mentors' race, ethnicity, gender, and the role within the participants' life were thoroughly discussed. Figure 1 displays mentors' characteristics. I explored the types of relationships, functions of those relationships, and how those relationships transitioned over time.

Formal Versus Informal Mentoring Relationships

Two types of mentoring relationships were examined. *Formal mentoring* took place in the workplace or academic setting where a supervisor or advisor was considered a mentor. It also referred to more structured mentoring approaches or programs internal or external to the workplace or academic setting. *Informal mentoring* took place internally or externally to the workplace or academic setting, including in the community or within the family. Informal mentoring was less structured, with more casual mentoring encounters such as unscheduled interactions as chats via text messaging, phone calls, email, or impromptu conversations. Over time, it was not uncommon to receive informal advising in the workplace or formal mentorship in the community.

All participants, except for Violeta, indicated having mentoring relationships that began formally in the workplace or educational environments many years prior to transitioning into a CEO role. However, Violeta's mentor was a community member who helped recruit Violeta into her CEO role. It was observed that participants initially thought of only describing the receipt of mentorship that only had occurred in formal environments such as at work or in school settings. Although many relationships began in formal contexts, Azalea, Camelia, and Lila did not recall having a formal conversation with their mentors that actually established the mentoring relationship. They were organic. Generally, formal mentors began as direct supervisors or academic advisors. It was assumed these persons would provide some level of guidance. Over time, formal mentoring relationships became more informal after participants established good rapport and mutual trust with their mentor. Attaining this level of comfort allowed participants to feel more comfortable discussing personal matters with their mentors. Long-term formal mentoring relationships eventually transitioned to an informal type.

Azalea, Camelia, Dahlia, Lila, Violeta, and Zinnia did not necessarily view informal relationships as mentoring in nature. They asked whether it was permitted to share informal mentoring experiences. Informal mentoring typically occurred with family and community members, and with supervisors or advisors with whom they had longer term mentoring relationships. Family members provided psychosocial support regarding child rearing, demonstrating hard work ethics, helped to establish informal goals, role modeling a strong will and

determination, and respect for others. Dahlia spoke about her father's role modeling:

> My dad was a farm labor contractor, so we saw, through his really strong, hard work ethic, we learned the value of just being respectful and kind to people…I say that I always think of him as a mentor because all throughout my childhood, and even when I went to college, and I was the first to go to college, my dad ... they always encouraged us to do things.

Family and community mentors usually shared stories about their own experiences in the form of *consejos* (advice) to the mentee. Camelia explained how her mother was discriminated against throughout her career producing feelings of being undervalued and underpaid which she perceived was associated with her mother's ethnicity and darker skin tone. Camelia asserted:

> My mom had worked at a bank and kind of started as a teller, got to be the head teller, ran up through the ranks and was kind of the second in charge, but not given the title, not given the respect and definitely not given the paycheck, because the president of the bank who really was just a figurehead and his son, who was the guy in charge of it on the day to day basis, you know, old white, Italian dudes that they weren't going to give this little Mexican lady what she deserved.

Over time, through these stories and with her mother's advice, Camelia grew in confidence and asked for pay equity which she obtained, even in her current CEO role.

Career Advice and Psychosocial Support Types

All participant mentoring experiences were categorized into career advice or psychosocial support types (Kram, 1985). Table 3 shows exact participant responses that became *in vivo* codes taken directly from all 10 transcripts and aligned with the two subcategories. In many instances, participants recounted similar stories which strengthened the codes that were developed.

Table 3

Types of Mentoring Support

Subcategory 1: Career Advice	Subcategory 2: Psychosocial Support
Code:Apply for the CEO job	Code:Confidence building
Code:Informal goal setting	Code:Helping to see the bigger picture
Code:Invited to meetings/networks	Code:CEO skill development
Code:Salary negotiation	Code:Professionalism
Code:Job transition	Code:Reinvention of leadership identity

Participants received career advice in such areas as applying to their CEO jobs, developing informal goals, receiving invitations to meetings, interacting with their mentor's social networks, coaching on the topic of salary negotiation, and guiding job transitions. Career advice was mapped to Kram's (1985) career functions; sponsorship, exposure and visibility socializing forces, coaching, protection, and challenging assignments. Challenging assignments were defined as mentors giving participants a project or task which the mentee may not have felt prepared or fully confident in leading. Jasmine recounted a story about facing a deadline that she felt was outside of her comfort zone early on in her CEO role. Her mentor guided her through the assignment until it was successfully completed. Although it was a challenging assignment, her mentor had the confidence in her that Jasmine did not have in herself. She shared how her mentor supported her to transition from a clinical nurse to a healthcare administrator which increased Jasmine's confidence level:

> She shed light on things that I could do, and she was very gentle with me whenever I make mistakes… because I made management mistakes. I made bad calls, but she helped me navigate through those. She got me the training that I would need to be successful in the next level. She would ask about my family. She helped me through my pregnancies.

Mentors protected participants in situations when mentees felt their authenticity was questioned or infringed upon. In multiple instances, participants discussed being told to modify their appearance to look more "professional." Lila spoke extensively about comments she received from other professionals suggesting that she should wax off her facial hair insinuating she had a moustache and sideburns:

> Your sideburns are a little long, and your moustache you might wanna like, from women. You might wanna wax that… So early on I got messages that I was poor. That I looked poor I guess, and I was hairy…I could tell when I lost a lot of weight, I raised more money…Anyways all that to say that sometimes you need a mentor…and that person can validate you and say estan locos [they are crazy]. You keep it moving because part of who you are is everything that you bring to the table.

These comments pointed out physical characteristics that made Lila feel self-conscious which she had not experienced prior to these interactions. Camelia was told her nose ring was unprofessional and was directed to remove it so others would take her seriously. Azalea was told to cut her long hair and stop wearing high heel shoes. Azalea stated she never wore very high heels. Mentors reassured participants to be authentic and comfortable with how they choose to physically present themselves and supported those choices regardless of whether it adhered to traditional and conservative ideologies of how professional women should dress or look. Mentors reassured participants in the midst of these environmental pressures and criticism to be themselves.

Data showed all participants received career advisement along their leadership trajectory. Career advisement predominantly occurred while mentors initiated opportunities for exposure and visibility at social events with them and through professional

coaching. Sponsorship and the giving of challenging assignments were secondary functions. In addition to career advice, psychosocial support was thoroughly described.

Psychosocial support included confidence building, assisting to see the bigger picture, CEO soft skill development, providing advice regarding professionalism, and support in reinventing or transitioning into their leadership identity. Lila recollected a time that she learned her staff desired that she show more assertiveness and a less egalitarian approach. Having spent years as a community organizer and ensuring all members have a voice, she was taken aback to learn they expected her to be more assertive. Her mentor helped her to establish a stronger leadership identity. Lila's staff told her they wanted her to sit at the head of the boardroom table. For most participants, they described their need to transition from a manager to more of a leadership mindset. They were not accustomed to this type of leadership style but developed one with the support of their mentors. Iris recollected many instances that her informal mentors psychosocially inspired her development as she transitioned into her CEO position:

> When I first knew I was going to take the executive director position here, I got promoted. I knew I was going to have to be the face of the organization and I was such a behind the scenes type person. I don't like public speaking; I don't like doing panels and things like that. But they would push me and they would help me prepare speeches and tell me what to look into to get ready to participate in these opportunities. And so it totally helped my confidence and I think I'm a better leader for it.

Latina executive leaders' psychosocial supportive experiences were mapped to Kram's (1985) psychosocial functions: role modeling, acceptance and confirmation, and counseling were primary functions, with friendships as a secondary function. Role modeling was shown through promotion of self-care and wellness. Mentors displayed positive role modeling behavior associated with encouragement of self-care, reminding mentees of their self-worth, and advising mentees to find balance among all of their priorities. Mentors discouraged participants from feeling obligated to take on everyone's issues. As a nonprofit leader, oftentimes in underserved communities, separating this obligation is difficult to do especially if participants were raised and/or live in the communities that their organizations serve. Rosa explained how her mentor assisted in balancing priorities:

> Because I think in our day and age there is a little bit of like an achievement aspiration. I think, and maybe this is true of people of color, or leaders of color too, is that like we figured out the school game, but yet we've got to figure out the capital investment game, we've got to figure out how do you create your own generational wealth game, and especially in nonprofits because we are not taking home pensions. So he was a really great mentor in that way…what was beneficial was he supported us or supported me mentally.

Participants reflected on managing Latinx cultural values and behaviors with expectations of multiple responsibilities that included their role in their families and their paid leadership roles. Participants described feeling an insurmountable amount of pressure to lead their organizations, be accountable to their communities, and be present in their families. Fear of the adobe ceiling set in for participants when they initially transitioned into the CEO role. For younger age participants who were in their first CEO role, they expressed the stress they felt of experiencing their first pregnancy while proving their leadership worth. Daisy was fearful of not living up to the standards established by the founding directors of her organization while simultaneously considering when she would have an opportunity to have her first child after recently being married:

> Because like, even Doc, I've talked to him about being a parent and like the balance. I'm not a parent right now, but I want to be one day and I have no idea if it's going to happen, if it's in the stars for me. So we'll see. Him as a man, it's a very different perspective...And then Dora, who is the black woman, when she had her baby, almost died in giving birth, but she, it was like the switch, like she was the most type A hardworking, worked with every single person and she became a mom. And she still is the most type A hardworking woman, but priorities shift. I'm like, if she can do it, I can do it. It gives you a sense of like, yeah I could do this too. You figure it out.

Mentors helped navigate these pressures by offering advice to take mental health and wellness breaks, self-care for themselves, and to understand they are doing the best they can for everyone. The psychosocial support given by mentors became more pronounced as mentoring relationships developed and became longer lasting. The level of comfort and mutual trust increased with longevity of the relationship. Overall, shared experiences revealed these women received career and psychosocial support in all functional areas categorized by Kram (1985) but one type and function were most preferred overall as current CEOs.

Mentor Characteristics

For purposes of this study, I asked participants to describe mentoring experiences with one or two of their most meaningful mentors. Table 4 categorizes the mentors' characteristics by race/ethnicity, gender, and title/role.

Table 4

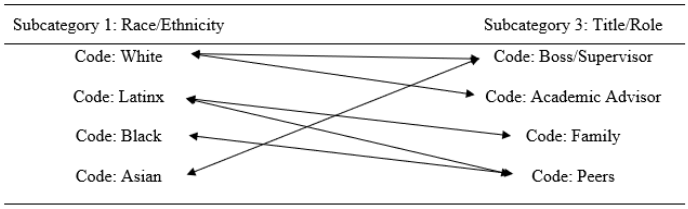
Mentor Characteristics

Subcategory 1: Race/Ethnicity	Subcategory 2: Gender	Subcategory 3: Title/Role
Code: White	Code: Female	Code: Boss/Supervisor
Code: Latinx	Code: Male	Code: Academic Advisor
Code: Black		Code: Family
Code: Asian		Code: Peers

Participants may have had one or more mentors from these subcategories. Figure 1 maps mentors' race/ethnicity and title/role in the aggregate as described by all participants.

Figure 1

Mentor Characteristics Mapped



Mentors categorized as White or Asian were identified as bosses/supervisors or academic advisors. These roles were found in formal settings with mentor relationships beginning as formal mentorship that initially provided career advice. Latinx and Black mentors were the participants' family members or peers. These mentoring relationships were found in informal settings with mentor relationships beginning as informal mentorship initially providing psychosocial support. Figure 1 further shows participants experienced their most meaningful mentoring relationships from a constellation of mentors of different racial and ethnic backgrounds, genders, and with various titles/roles.

The participant is at the core - or considered the reference point - of the mentor constellation. The most significant mentor(s) was considered the individual(s) the participant identified and described throughout the interview or explicitly indicated were meaningful to them. Mentor compositions revealed patterns of relationships. All participants, excluding Rosa and Violeta, described having more than one quality mentor demonstrating how one mentor could not completely satisfy their needs specifically as they evolved, or relationships dwindled.

The majority of participants reported having non-Latina White women and/or Latina mentors. The racial background of Latina mentors was not examined. When counted, the number of non-Latina White women and Latina mentors was equal. Non-Latina White women mentors were met within formal settings and provided career advice, while mentoring relationships with Latina mentors tended to be informal, familial, peer oriented, and/or developed with highly reputable and experienced community leaders. This data demonstrated alignment with community cultural wealth in which participants received support and guidance from Latinas found in their various informal communities and social networks. Community cultural wealth encouraged the growth of social capital for participants whereby some participants learned of their CEO position from community members. Latina mentors also included mothers and sisters who provided an informal level of mentorship associated with work ethics, both inside and outside of the home.

Men and non-Latina mentors were meaningful mentors for a few of the participants as either fathers or former bosses. Azalea spoke of her father's impact teaching her the softer skills of leadership such as leadership principles and helped form her value system. Her father is Chicanx and Native American. He was her compass. Her second male mentor was Latinx, an elected community official, and her work supervisor for several years. He provided navigational capital teaching her about the importance of maintaining one's ethics in local political climates. She reflected on these men and indicated they showed her how to navigate male-dominated spaces:

> Both my dad and Joe were also great role models for my relationship with men not just in romantic relationships. Like how I view men. But being a Latina in leadership, proximity to male leadership has huge impact and your interactions with men early on. I've been involved in the community and in positions of leadership since I was a teenager. I've had some terrible interactions with men, yucky terrible interactions with men since I was 17 years old. Big, important, powerful men. But because I had such strong male mentorship from my father and from this very powerful person at the time…being able to navigate that world was so much easier.

Zinnia spoke of her experiences receiving mentorship from a group of Black women in the workplace with whom she formed very close and lasting relationships with as a young leader in the California Department of Corrections. They all held positions in the state's correctional system that, according to Zinnia, continues to be dominated by White men. She naturally gravitated towards these women:

> I was a correctional officer and correctional lieutenant and parole agent. Who I was in my twenties was like a firecracker, just in there. And you know, very...I was a Chicana. It was during the 70s and I owned who that was. So it made it a little caustic to be in corrections when you were a former brown, UMAS, MEChA Brown Beret you know, and then you are working in an institution like that. It was my first job. I promoted very quickly in an era when we were the first women in corrections.

At the time, Zinnia was the first Latina in her peer group working in corrections. Her mentor relationships were organic. To this day, and decades after meeting her mentors, these women reunite on an annual basis rotating among their hometowns, and many times outside of California. These reunions demonstrate the potential for longevity that quality and significant mentor relationships have the opportunity to foster.

Rosa's mentor is a former supervisor and an Asian man over the age of 60. She was drawn to his career experiences in philanthropy and healthcare leadership − fields that Rosa worked within. After meeting several years ago their mentoring relationship continues today. She described his mentoring style which tends to take the form of asking her questions and the sharing of parables. His parables are similar to stories she could

relate to that served as food for thought. His style made the difference between solely having a workplace manager and actually engaging with him as a mentor. Though they now live in different counties, he continues to serve as her mentor even after she obtained her first CEO role. She indicated his dedication and history to social justice work makes him fully qualified to be her mentor and allowed discussion of pertinent issues affecting her as a leader of color.

All participants, except for Rosa and Violeta, spoke about their diverse mentor constellation pertaining to race and ethnicity. They had non-Latina White women and men, Latinx, and Black women mentors. As a result of their diverse mentor constellation, I noted their experiences were the most varied and expansive of the participant group, as well as were the most outgoing, energetic, and talkative during the data collection phase of this study.

Few non-Latino White men were described as mentors. Mentoring relationships that were described with non-Latino White men occurred formally as supervisors or academic advisors. This finding was unsurprising as many formal mentoring relationships began in the workplace or academic setting where those in leadership positions tend to be non-Latinx White individuals. However, it was through informal relationships with male mentors who were former supervisors or family members (father, brother, husband), that were most valued by participants

These data illustrate the majority of participants had diverse mentor constellations. Mentor constellations were integral to their LLD and exposed them to varying leadership perspectives to view the world. Iris explained the need for mentor diversity: "It's also a balancing. When you're applying for jobs, you don't want to have five Latinas as your references [giggles]. You want to have a man and have different backgrounds, different colors, and careers." Although most described having women mentors, analyzing the constellations in aggregate illustrated a diversity of race and ethnicities, genders, and mentor titles/roles. The cohort's non-monolithic and intersectional social identities have been influenced by a diversity of people and events. These experiences promote and reflect the diversity of their intersectional identities and experience, community cultural wealth and their connection to quality mentoring relationships.

Discussion

Themes produced by this study describe characteristics of quality mentoring relationships for Latina CEOs leading nonprofit organizations in California. Two themes emerged responding to the salient characteristics of mentoring relationships: (a) An evolution of mentorship relationship type and function exists with a preference for an informal type of mentoring relationship that provides psychosocial support, and (b) A preference for a constellation of mentors from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds were integral to LLD. Understanding these characteristics are vital when considering building foundational mentorships as well as exploring how they occur and transition. Transitions included relationships becoming more informal and psychosocial supportive. Latina executive mentoring preferences included the development of mentor constellations with more than one mentor from various backgrounds and skill sets. Quality relationships were vividly recollected, indicating lasting impressions that these relationships created. The vastness of the existence of community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005), both known and unknown, and the preference for informal relationships are in alignment with recognizing and leveraging existing relationships for meaningful mentoring opportunities. Although participants described non-monolithic and intersectional experiences, salient characteristics were identified among the group.

Theme 1: Evolution of Mentoring Relationship Type and Function

The transition of mentoring type and support to an informal, psychosocial supportive mentoring relationship was almost a criterion to be considered significant and beneficial. This type of relationship was preferred due to time constraints with work and family demands prohibiting participants to get involved in formal leadership programs or executive coaching services. Being that participants preferred informal, psychosocial supportive mentoring relationships those were typically found in the community, with peers, and among family members. This finding demonstrates how the existence of community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) and various types of capital, along with intersectional experiences (Crenshaw, 1989; Crenshaw, 1991), was the most critical factor in mentoring that influenced LLD.

As personal and career experiences transitioned, so did mentoring needs and preferences. The majority of participants began sharing their experiences by describing meeting their mentors in formal workplaces such as on the job, volunteering in the community, and in structured leadership programs or in academic settings while initially received career guidance. Mentoring relationships for LLD predominately began with supervisors or academic advisors. However, participants indicated they had limited time for formal mentoring programs and relationships that often expect attendance, and completion of training and other assignments. This is a burden with their time as they are expected to successfully lead their organizations, while balancing their personal and community's needs, This finding aligns with existing literature indicating that female leaders of color tend to have informal mentoring relationships (Campbell et al., 2012), unsurprising as the presence of female executive leaders of color in formal workplace settings is extremely limited. Additionally, the pressure and micro aggressive attitudes and behaviors that participants experienced were best supported by mentors providing psychosocial support, who also had a degree of match suitability (McArthur et al., 2017; Searby et al., 2015), in which the mentor is attuned to a mentee's needs that can help them navigate various pressures. As time progressed, quality mentors became long-term, significant individuals in their lives while relationships transitioned into

informal relationships with more psychosocial supportive functioning.

In their current CEO roles, participants preferred informal mentoring relationships that provided psychosocial functional support as they continue to cultivate their leadership identity. Informal, psychosocial mentoring felt organic and meaningful. For some, mentoring relationships that could not transition to an informal type were considered transactional, short-term, and not vividly recalled. In Dahlia's and Iris's experience, they recalled losing contact with formal, short-term mentors that eventually returned into their lives as informal mentoring relationships. Iris shared:

> I lost track of her like I moved on to another job after the television station, but then I came back to her a few years ago and she still remembered my eagerness back then. So we started to connect again and now she has been really instrumental with this job here. She helped me create an advisory council for non-Latinos that should believe in our mission, to help us do fundraising and things like that.

Informal and psychosocial functional mentoring relationships provide insight into work-life balance, opportunities to observe role modeling behaviors for self-care and wellness, and increases leader confidence and self-efficacy through mutual trust with mentors (Block & Tietjen-Smith, 2016). Informal and psychosocial supportive mentoring appeared to have more long-term influence on LLD than formal mentoring, while encouraging affirmation of one's own authenticity. Latina CEOs felt their authenticity has to be valued while experiencing multiple challenges as a CEO. Informal and psychosocial mentoring affirms the intersectional identities and experiences of women of color as they emotionally transition into their CEO roles or continue to grow in their leadership as demonstrated by participants' wide range of leadership and CEO tenure. As reported by study participants, while challenged as women of color executives in male-dominated positions, it was critical that mentors seek to explore their mentee's needs and thought processes for greater relational mentoring (McArthur et al., 2017).

As Latina CEOs, the preference for informal relationships that provide psychosocial mentoring support was more significant than formal relationships, however, the desire and need for a diverse mentor constellation created the potential of having larger networks that may include formal and informal mentoring relationships.

Theme 2: Preference for A Constellation of Mentors Is Integral to Leadership Growth

Among participants, having one mentor type, function, and/or individual is insufficient for LLD. Mentor constellations were preferred and needed (Searby et al., 2015). Constellations exposed them to diverse cultural backgrounds, intersectional experiences, career expertise, and an array of leader perspectives. Participants believed exposure to diversity developed them into a better leader by increasing their capacity to work with various personalities, work styles, and ability to advocate for people from many walks of life with different needs. Although participants welcomed Latina leader mentors for guidance on navigating racial, ethnic, and gender micro aggressions in the workplace (Holder et al, 2015), the notion that Latina leaders only need Latina mentors was debunked.

Cross-gender mentoring dyads predominantly occurred with career mentoring. Former non-familial male bosses provided career mentoring, while familial mentors such as fathers, husbands, and brothers offered psychosocial mentoring. Non-familial cross-gender dyads began in the workplace or school setting with very few of these relationships transitioning outside of these settings. Azalea and Rosa continued to receive mentorship from their non-familial male mentors after their formal work relationship ceased. The intensity of those relationships did decrease over time. The data also suggested if non-familial, cross-gender career mentoring relationships have the capability of shifting to a psychosocial supportive relationship the relationship is likely to remain intact. Non-familial men provided career mentoring in the early stages of participants' careers, but with deeply personal challenges not being shared with formal male mentors.

Data supported the assertion that same gender mentoring dyads thrive more when psychosocial supportive mentoring is present (Kao et al., 2014). Female mentors provided both career and psychosocial support regardless of race and ethnicity. Azalea, Dahlia, Lila, and Rosa had male mentors but Azalea, Dahlia, and Lila also equally spoke about having female mentors. Participants sought out female mentors to satisfy their need for additional psychosocial support that they did not necessarily receive from male mentors. However, female mentors were not necessarily Latina, or women of color. The scant number of mid-career mentors that participants lacked may have been a barrier to participants receiving mentor guidance earlier than mid-career from Latina executives. Lila articulated the challenges of not having early career mentors while dealing with workplace sexual harassment:

> When I think about like my early years of leadership and the sexual harassment that I experienced you know. I lacked, at the time, the experience to even articulate what was happening. You know where I was like, Oh, I experienced sexual harassment for three years consistently from a male funder. And I did not know what to do. I actually didn't, I didn't think about doing anything. I just thought I had to take his verbal sexual harassment all the time.

Latina CEOs have had to stitch together sources of mentorship (Searby et al., 2015). Access to mentors of similar intersectional identity, especially when enduring gender and/or race/ethnic-specific micro aggressions (Block & Tietjen-Smith, 2016) is attributed to the shortage of female CEOS of color in the nonprofit industry. Initially, study participants experienced formal, career-functional mentorship from immediate

supervisors due to the lack of female CEOs of color in their industry that were available for informal psychosocial supportive mentoring. Azalea, Iris, Dahlia, and Zinnia indicated that female executives of color are interested in mentoring others but they are under immense pressure to prove themselves as leaders, often resulting in working countless hours beyond the standard work week. This makes it almost impossible to engage as mentors although participants understood the value of mentorship. They indicated they may not have the time necessary to engage in quality mentorship relationships as mentors. Participants did not begin to develop their preferred mentoring relationships for LLD until their careers were well underway. As leadership is developed over time, Latina leaders may miss critical mentorship earlier in their careers that may potentially impact leadership self-efficacy for the future.

Existing literature promotes the importance for racially and ethnically underrepresented individuals having mentors with similar racial and ethnic backgrounds that may relate to issues of racial stereotyping, micro aggressive attitudes and behaviors, but also mentors with different experiences and identities (Block & Tietjen-Smith, 2016; Crisp et al., 2017). I found that participants did not only have mentors of similar backgrounds, races, and ethnicities as their own. Although participants felt it was beneficial to have an executive Latina mentor, all participants asserted it is unnecessary to only have Latina mentors. They valued the exposure to different perspectives that ultimately provides a wider leadership lens needed to lead their organizations. This finding resonated throughout the study, supporting Block and Tietjen-Smith's (2016) assertion that women need exposure to diverse perspectives from those who have experienced similar leadership challenges. Participants felt mentors of Black and Asian backgrounds were highly valued citing that their politically progressive viewpoints were similar to that of their own as a significant source of ally ship. Latina executive leaders welcomed having Latina mentors; however, the mentor would be part of a larger gender, racially, and ethnically diverse mentor constellation. It was not always necessary to pair Latinas with one another; demonstrating the potential for greater mentor possibilities that could begin earlier in their careers.

Participants overwhelmingly valued maintaining a diverse mentor constellation in which the mentee was at the central core of the constellation (Higgins & Kram, 2001; Higgins & Thomas, 2001; Kram, 1985). It was unnecessary for the mentors in a constellation to know one another. The constellation varied by race, ethnicity, gender, background, age, and career expertise. An executive woman of color's social capital significantly expanded with a more diverse constellation. They may choose to leverage their social capital influencers depending on their needs or situations at any given time or as situations warranted. Data showed an increase in relational mentoring (McArthur et al. (2017) occurred whereby relational mentors offered the most sustainable and longer-term mentoring experiences that are aligned with informal and psychosocial mentoring. Mentor constellations were of most interest that provided longer-term exposure to cultural diversity that may expand a leader's perspective.

Limitations of the Study

First, small, connected communities may be beneficial for individuals and their social networks, nonetheless they may pose a challenge to participants who desire complete anonymity since that can not be guaranteed. Based on the low number of Latina nonprofit CEOs in California, participants may know each other and the idea of revealing many details about themselves may have impacted the extent to what they shared during this study. In anticipation of this limitation, I intentionally built rapport with participants prior to conducting interviews to establish a safe space and comfort level. I became familiar with participants' organizations and geographic communities in which they worked prior to conducting an interview. The demographic questionnaire with contextual background assisted with engagement in small talk prior to beginning the interview.

Second, the study depended on the recollection and perception of lived experiences. Authenticity of experiences could not be validated. Participants may have provided responses they believed would be important to the study, or what they believed I wanted to hear, especially since I am Latina and noticeably shared similar physical characteristics. It is impossible to ascertain whether participants were disingenuous, dishonest, or inaccurately recalled their experiences. Miles et al. (2020) described this as a research bias in which participants describe what they think a researcher wants to hear. I integrated additional probing, clarifying, and follow up questions that reinforced responses and stories that they shared. Saturation of key themes was attained among the 10 participant experiences. I maintained a researcher self-reflexivity journal to check for assumptions and reflections to ensure interpretations were based solely on the data collected. Participant validation, or member checking, minimized these limitations.

Recommendations

Informal, psychosocial supportive mentoring was the preference for Latina nonprofit CEOs in this study. Informal mentoring relationships were more accessible and grew organically in the community via the existence of community cultural wealth. Industries and society-at-large should place a greater emphasis on informal mentoring and acknowledge that formal workplace training or mentoring programs is not necessarily the only form of executive mentoring, nor preferred, for executive leadership development. The following recommendations are focused on formal leadership programs to encourage strengthening the ways in which intersectional experiences are incorporated into structured mentoring approaches for greater impact and investment in structured programs.

Recommendation 1: Explore intersectionality in leadership programs.

Formal executive mentoring programs may be found within an organization, or externally away of the workplace or academic setting. Most often formal programs are exorbitantly costly and require participant commitment. Occasionally, programs offer opportunities to access a mentor or executive coach. However, access to these benefits does not equate to quality mentoring relationships. And while the mentor-mentee matching may not be the right fit, it potentially may be the only opportunity to receive executive exposure by mid-level or during executive leadership. These programs are structured with organized, predictable timelines and approaches that contradict informal types of relationships. I advocate for leadership programs to deliberately recognize and address intersectional realities and how they influence the selection or assignment of mentoring relationships. Mentee experiences and context of how mentor relationships are formed determine the type of mentor that will benefit mentees at a particular time in their career. The goal of match reciprocity should also be sought after.

Recommendation 2: Assessment of mentoring programs.

Deeper assessments of formal mentoring programs must examine whether the mentee and mentor are receiving the intended benefits of their mentoring relationship. Formal mentoring programs tend to match a dyad (mentee and mentor) based on position, years of experience, and many times by racial, ethnic, cultural, and/or gender match. However, this study demonstrates these factors are not necessarily what makes a mentoring relationship thrive. Formative evaluations should include identifying the needs and interests of the potential mentor and mentee to assess whether the relationship has an increased possibility of being mutually beneficial. Reflective checkpoints in the form of brief surveys, journaling, or informal interviews may provide opportunities to shift the relationship or seek another mentor/mentee. Evaluative measures may lead to a realization that the mentee-mentor dyad is not characteristically a good fit and a new match or wider constellation is needed. For example, rather than an assigned dyad mentor-mentee experience, constellation mentorship may be developed whereby a mentee is assigned more than one mentor of differing backgrounds.

Conclusion

Participants represented an array of organizations located in urban, rural, and coastal areas within California. At the time of this study, organizations held 10 to 127-year organizational histories; annual budgets between $356K and $12M; staff counts ranging from three to 130 employees; and services related to education, healthcare, social and community services, advocacy, and training. Organizational profiles illustrate the scope and diverse responsibilities participants had as CEOs. Participants' organizational leadership was directly related to intersectional experiences, leader perspectives, and how their mentoring relationships have influenced their Latina Leadership Development (LLD).

The diverse experiences provided contextual background into their intersectionality and perceptions of the world and themselves. Intersectionality was a source of these leaders' strength, and mentoring experiences have expanded the lens in which they perceived themselves and their leadership. Their stories demonstrated unique experiences and how engagement and interactions with their mentors were pursued and maintained

Characteristics of mentor constellations, or networks, and of the mentors themselves varied. Participants described formal and informal types of mentoring relationships, and mentoring associated with career advice and psychosocial supportive functioning. However, as current nonprofit CEOs, the majority of participants desired mentoring that is informal with psychosocial supportive functions. This is attributed to the limited time they had for participation in formal mentoring programs that would impact time spent with work, family, and friends. It also demonstrated the preference they had for informal relationships found within the context of community cultural wealth.

Mentors represented diverse constellations based on race, ethnicity, gender, and role. Mentors included Black, Latinx, Asian, and Non-Latinx White individuals. Black and Latinx mentors usually represented peers or family members that provided more informal and psychosocial supportive mentoring, while Asian and Non-Latinx White mentors usually represented former bosses or advisors that provided formal mentoring and career advice. Participants indicated that developing a diverse mentor constellation early on in their careers, consisting of formal and informal mentors, with career advice and psychosocial support is most beneficial for LLD. The diversity expanded their executive leadership perspective as they lead teams of diverse individuals and created an extended perspective to serve themselves and their communities.

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