

MENTORSHIP ACROSS CULTURES: LATINO GRADUATE EXPERIENCES IN AGRICULTURE AT A U.S. LAND GRANT UNIVERSITY



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INTRODUCTION

Latino graduate students often enter U.S. agricultural graduate programs with limited access to culturally responsive mentoring, despite mentoring being “integral to higher education” and essential for academic and psychosocial development. Intercultural mentoring adds complexity due to differences in communication styles, expectations, and cultural norms. Latino students frequently lack social knowledge to navigate U.S. academic systems and may experience exclusion from traditional mentoring structures. This study addresses the need to understand how intercultural mentorship shapes the development, opportunities, and challenges of Latino graduate students at a Land Grant University.

PURPOSE & OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study explore the lived experiences of Latino graduate students and their U.S. mentors within intercultural mentorship relationships in agricultural programs at the University of Florida.

1. Examine how intercultural mentoring relationships develop.
2. Understand the benefits of intercultural mentorship.
3. Identify challenges within intercultural mentorship.
4. Describe the impact of intercultural mentorship on students’ academic and professional development.

METHODOLOGY



10 Participants
Purposefully Selected



Semi-structure Interviews



Thematic Analysis

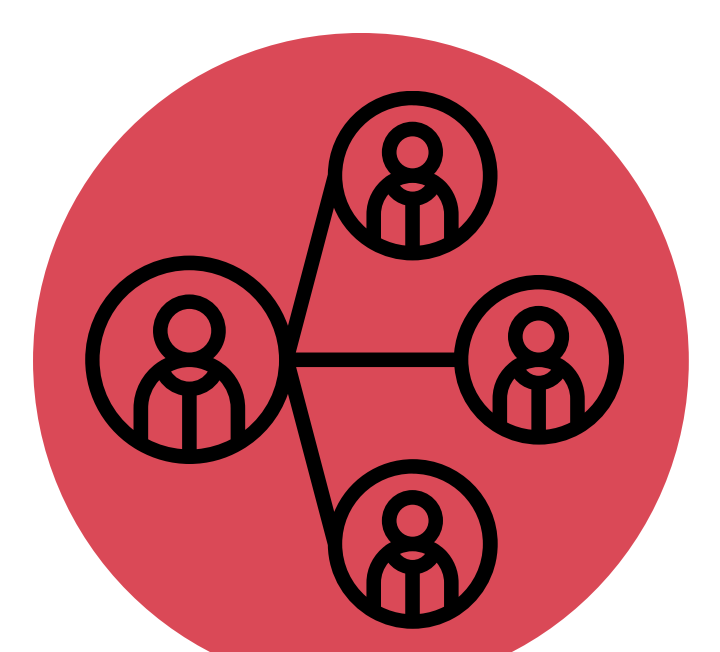
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



Hall's Cultural Dimensions



Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions



Social Capital Theory

RESULTS

Objective 1: Examine how intercultural mentoring relationships develop.

Theme 1: Mentorship Relationships Commonly Begin Through Structured Academic Pathways

“It started when I came to the internship. He used to always go to the office where we all were and ask, ‘How are you doing?’ That’s how we met and started working on extension projects.”

Theme 2: Relationships Evolve From Formality to Trust and Collaboration

Theme 3: Mentor Accessibility Facilitates Relationship Building

Theme 4: Cultural Norms Shape First Interactions



Objective 3: Identify challenges within intercultural mentorship.

Theme 1: Language Barriers Affect Confidence and Participation

Theme 2: Differences in Time Orientation

Theme 3: Hierarchy and power dynamics

Theme 4: Emotional Reserve and Low-Context Communication Create Misunderstandings



“Perhaps at first, with the text messages, I thought she was angry with me because she wasn’t saying hello. But then I realized that’s just how she is with everyone; it wasn’t anything personal against me”



Objective 2: Understand the benefits of intercultural mentorship.

Theme 1: Mentors Provide Cultural Validation and Identity Affirmation

Theme 2: Mentorship Expands Access to Professional Networks and Opportunities

“I have learned how to navigate the American academic system, which is very competitive but full of opportunities”.

Theme 3: Students Develop New Academic and Professional Competencies

Theme 4: Students Learn U.S. Professional Norms and Work Culture



Objective 4: Describe the impact of intercultural mentorship on students’ academic and professional development.

Theme 1: Mentorship Strengthens Academic Confidence and Goal Clarity

Theme 2: Mentorship Expands Career Opportunities and Professional Mobility

“He gives me the tools... he helps me apply for scholarships and conferences”

Theme 3: Students Develop a Desire to Mentor Others

Theme 4: Students Identify Areas for Improving Intercultural Mentorship



CONCLUSION

Intercultural mentorship significantly shapes Latino graduate students’ academic, professional, and personal development. When mentors demonstrate cultural competence, accessibility, and validation, students gain confidence, networks, and essential academic skills. Cultural differences can create challenges, but intentional, culturally informed mentorship strengthens belonging and success in agricultural graduate programs.

LIMITATIONS

- Findings reflect a small group of Latino graduate students from one college at a single institution.
- Data are based on self-reported experiences, which may not capture all relational dynamics.

IMPLICATIONS

- Mentors should practice cultural awareness, communicate expectations clearly, and validate students’ cultural and linguistic identities.
- Programs benefit from offering structured mentorship support and basic intercultural communication training.
- Strengthening intercultural mentorship can improve students’ sense of belonging, academic success, and readiness for professional roles.

REFERENCES AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

