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Socioculturally Mediated Academic Advising: A GYO Approach for Supporting Bilingual/Bicultural Paraprofessionals

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Abstract

This case study examined how the academic advising (hence, advising) component of a Grow Your Own (GYO) teacher program can be tailored to honor bilingual/bicultural paraprofessionals' (hence, BL/BC paras) assets and differential needs. Data collection strategies included participant observation, interviews, a focus group, field notes, and documentation. Thematic data analysis suggested that socioculturally mediated advising involves some aspects of mentoring and includes (a) taking the time to know and value paraprofessionals' biographies, (b) personalizing and attending to paraprofessionals' psychosocial needs, (c) building supportive relationships through the GYO seminar, and (d) advocating for institutional accommodations. Implications for future research consider how socioculturally mediated advising including aspects of mentoring needs to be better understood in BL/BC paras teacher pipeline programs and the field of teacher development.

Keywords

bilingual/bicultural paraprofessionals, academic advising, mentoring, Grow Your Own, asset-based perspective

Grow Your Own (GYO) programs are recognized as viable pathways for diversifying the teaching force (Gist, 2019; Gist et al., 2019; Valenzuela, 2017). GYO programs can be defined as an integrated model of teacher development centered on prospective teacher candidates and their potentially positive impact on the development and advancement of local students, schools, and communities (Gist, 2019; Gist et al., 2019). GYO programs capitalize on the human capital within communities, such as bilingual/bicultural paraprofessionals (hence, BL/BC paras; i.e., paraeducators, teaching assistants, or

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instructional aides). These programs leverage paraprofessionals' strengths in diversifying the teaching force and increasing learning opportunities for culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students (Connally et al., 2017; Garcia, 2017; Williams et al., 2016). Well-designed GYO programs aim to empower paraprofessionals by reducing barriers and providing opportunities to develop their potentials (Abbate-Vaughn & Paugh, 2009; Osterling & Buchanan, 2003).

Nonetheless, within the growing body of research on GYO programs, there is still a need to understand further program structures and policies, including advising and mentoring (Gist et al., 2019). Although academic advising (hence, advising) and mentoring have been identified as essential features of paraprofessionals-to-teacher programs, the nuances and complexities of implementing these components of preparation have yet to be explored in depth. In filling this gap, this case study examined in-depth ways in which the advising component of a GYO teacher program addressed BL/BC paras' assets and differential needs to support their persistence and degree completion. Data collection and analysis centered on the following question, *how can advising in a GYO teacher program be tailored to honor the assets and needs of BL/BC paras?*

Review of Literature

Normative advising and mentoring

In institutions of higher education (IHE), effective advising is essential to student retention and persistence (Young-Jones et al., 2013). Although there is no consensus on a single definition (National Academic Advising Association, 2006), scholars agree that advising involves deliberate interactions between students and academic advisors or institutional representatives supportive of their academic success (Larson et al., 2018). Traditionally, academic advisors have been responsible for helping students navigate academic rules and regulations applicable to their study program to ensure that degree requirements are met (Baker & Griffin, 2010). Recently, Larson et al. (2018) defined advising from a practitioner's perspective as applying "knowledge of the field to empower students and campus and community members to successfully navigate academic interactions related to higher education" (p. 86). From this perspective, it is necessary to attend to students' personal concerns influencing their ability to succeed academically.

Currently, multiple advising approaches exist (Drake et al., 2013) and can be understood in a continuum from transactional or prescriptive to more contemporary, relationship-oriented approaches (Wilcox, 2016). Advising approaches can align with a deficit or asset-based perspective, depending on the focus on students' needs and strengths (Schreiner & Anderson, 2005). The implementation of these approaches also differs based on institutional and advisor-related factors. Sometimes, academic advisors share roles and responsibilities with educators, counselors, and mentors (Cobb et al., 2018).

Like advising, student mentoring is an effective strategy to support students' academic achievement and retention (Hu & Ma, 2010). Although definitions fluctuate, mentoring typically refers to a mentor–mentee relationship supporting the mentee's career and personal development (Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Mertz, 2004). In higher education, it often involves faculty members mentoring students through the undergraduate and graduate research process. In teacher education programs, experienced teachers are considered mentors to teacher candidates as they model teaching skills, knowledge, and dispositions. However, contemporary views of mentoring suggest a more extensive range of relationships differing in degree of formality, composition, and function. Mentoring relationships can be formal or informal, extend to more than two individuals or teams and developmental networks, and offer psychosocial and instrumental support (Peno et al., 2016). Unlike advising, college mentoring involves (a) more proactive roles such as that of a developer focusing on expanding students' experiences and supports outside of the classroom; (b) higher levels of personal caring and emotional commitment to students' development and learning; and (c) more reciprocal, mutually beneficial relationships (Baker & Griffin,

Table 1. Understandings and Processes of Academic Advising and Mentoring in Higher Education.

Elements	Advising	Mentoring
Participants [Who]	Staff or faculty academic advisors Advisees	Faculty member (e.g., researcher), experienced peer, or practitioner (e.g., clinical teacher) mentors Student mentees
Purpose [Why]	Academic and psychosocial support for students' retention and degree completion	Career (professional growth) and psychosocial (personal-emotional) support
Curriculum [What]	Academic guidance on rules and regulations Students' personal concerns influencing their ability to succeed academically	Career guidance, skill development, knowledge, and dispositions Social interaction, networking, role modeling, friendship
Interactional and relational practice [How]	Dyadic relationships Commonly infrequent interactions—at least once a semester Commonly transactional in nature Personalization via standardized means (e.g., surveys)	Dyadic, triads, team or network relationships Commonly frequent or continuous interactions Commonly more relational in nature Personalization via mentees' needs, interests, and priorities
Setting [where]	Academic (e.g., advising center)	Academic (e.g., laboratories) and workplace; more contextual perspective

2010; Cobb et al., 2018; Schlosser et al., 2011). Given the differential quality of relationships, mentors have a deeper understanding of students and a better grasp of their support needs. Table 1 outlines features differentiating advising and mentoring in higher education.

Ambiguity in understanding and using advising and mentoring concepts is recognized in the literature (Cobb et al., 2018). Cobb et al. (2018) argued that whether advising evolves into mentoring depends on the advisor's level of commitment and involvement with the advisee, the advisee's willingness to engage in the process, and their fit.

Advising and mentoring within the context of paraprofessional-to-teacher programs

Advising and mentoring have been identified as critical features of paraprofessionals-to-teacher programs targeting CLD candidates (Becket, 1998; Bonner et al., 2011; Dandy, 1998; Genzuk & Baca, 1998; Littleton, 1998; Warshaw, 1992). Advising, counseling, and mentoring in paraprofessional-to-teacher programs are regarded as part of "wraparound" or networks of support (Garcia, 2017; Genzuk & Baca, 1998), providing a safety net (Clewell & Villegas, 1999). That is because of the potential academic, social, and institutional challenges that CLD, including bilingual/bicultural, paraprofessionals might experience in becoming teachers (Abbate-Vaughn & Paugh, 2009; Amos, 2013; Genzuk et al., 1994). The possible impact of inadequate K–12 educational experiences, being first-generation students, and adult learners frequently bear on their college access, performance, retention, and degree completion (Carnevale & Smith, 2018; Engle & Tinto, 2008; Irizarry, 2016; Whitley et al., 2018).

The research literature on paraprofessional-to-teacher programs suggests that given these challenges, extensive advising is commonly necessary for registering, scheduling classes, understanding rules and regulations, and accessing services and securing assistance from institutional offices (Abbate-Vaughn & Paugh, 2009; Villegas & Davis, 2007). Advisors' transfer guidance (i.e., 2-year to 4-year IHE), monitoring paraprofessionals' progress, and intervention when paraprofessionals experience academic or personal difficulties also seem crucial (Montiel, 2009; Valenciana et al., 2005). Because of extended responsibilities beyond conventional academic and psychosocial support, program directors or

administrators often served as advisors in collaboration with institutional advisors, counselors, or on-site staff (Bernal & Aragón, 2004; Clewell & Villegas, 1999; Littleton, 1998; Valenciana et al., 2005).

Aside from advising, mentoring was frequently reported as a nurturing component in paraprofessional-to-teacher programs (Becket, 1998; Dandy, 1998). Mentors included program directors or administrators, university faculty or staff members, and on-site teachers (Bernal & Aragón, 2004; Warshaw, 1992). Dandy (1998) reported that program graduates also served as mentors to entering participants "to share successes, disappointments, and lessons learned" (p. 102). The function of mentors often appeared to extend beyond conventional academic and psychosocial support to include assisting with state-mandated examinations, tutoring, developmental workshops, and personal concerns (Dandy, 1998; Warshaw, 1992). Because of their multifaceted roles, these mentors are portrayed in the literature as "program catalysts, cheerleaders, staff developers, and problem solvers" (Genzuk & Baca, 1998, p. 78) and as a "jack of all trades" (Garcia, 2017, p. 16). Mentors' high level of caring and personal support not only differentiate them from advisors but also seem to play a vital role in the success of paraprofessionals aspiring to become teachers (Becket, 1998; Bernal & Aragón, 2004).

In sum, the literature on advising and mentoring in general, and within the context of paraprofessional-to-teacher programs, agrees that advising and mentoring are essential to college students' retention and graduation. Likewise, how advising and mentoring are conceptualized and implemented, or interconnected needs further clarification in both fields. However, in paraprofessional-to-teacher programs, advisors and mentors play highly committed, often multidimensional roles supporting these teacher candidates' career aspirations and experiences in IHE.

Conceptual Framework

Larson et al.'s (2018) conceptualization of advising and its distinction from characteristics of mentoring is how these terms are defined in this study. However, these normative understandings appear incomplete when considering BL/BC paras' sociocultural persona or the intersections of cultural, linguistic, personal, and social influences as they engage in teacher education programs. Grounded in this rationale, two conceptual frameworks guided this study: (a) Thomas and Collier's (1997) Prism Model that addresses the four dimensions of CLD students' biographies—sociocultural, linguistic, academic, and cognitive—and how these enable a more holistic understanding of their assets and differential needs; and (b) Yosso's (2005) framework of community cultural wealth (CCW), as a type of overlooked cultural capital among people of color.

Building on the Prism Model, Herrera and Murry (2011) proposed that knowing CLD students more holistically can inform teaching practice that is culturally responsive and supportive of their educational success. They particularly emphasized that "At the heart of the CLD student biography is the sociocultural dimension" (p. 12) because it encompasses complex social, cultural, and psychological variables potentially mediating CLD students' transitional adjustments and academic success. Moreover, leveraging CLD students' biographies, their assets and needs, can also facilitate learning environments where the community of learners can grow. Herrera et al. (2011) suggested that addressing the CLD college student biography in teacher education programs can promote CLD teacher candidates' retention and program completion.

From the lens of critical race theory, Yosso's (2005) framework of CCW encompasses six forms of capital: aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistant capital. As manifested in knowledge, skills, and experiences, these assets are nurtured in communities of color and utilized to survive in oppressive environments. This asset-model of thinking challenges normalized deficit perspectives arguing that people of color lack the social and cultural capital required for social mobility, as defined by white middle-class values. Table 2 describes the biographical dimensions and types of cultural capital included in this conceptual framework.

Table 2. Biographical Dimensions and Types of Cultural Capital.

Framework	Description
CLD biographies	
Sociocultural	Funds of knowledge and the intersections between social institutions (e.g., home and school), social phenomena (e.g., discrimination), and affective or psychological influences (e.g., self-esteem, motivation, and anxiety)
Linguistic	Comprehension, communication, and expression in first and second language or multilingually
Academic	Prior academic experiences, current engagement in learning, and factors enabling or hindering access to equitable educational opportunities
Cognitive	Ways in which a student's culture might influence ways of knowing, thinking, or applying new learning
CCW—Capitals	
Aspirational	Ability to remain hopeful for the future and the resiliency that grows in the face of challenges
Linguistic	Ability to develop cognitive and communicative skills in more than one language
Familial	Resources drawn from family and community, including an understanding of kinship (i.e., extended family that is not defined by blood but shared social experiences)
Social	Ability to interact with peers, develop friendships, and engage in social networks
Navigational	Ability to maneuver around social institutions, including unsupportive environments
Resistant	Ability to use historical legacy to address challenging issues of social justice

Note. CLD = culturally and linguistically diverse; CCW = community cultural wealth.

Both frameworks emphasize the experiential knowledge, abilities, and skills or what Moll et al. (1992) called funds of knowledge as assets that diverse individuals bring from their homes and communities. However, while Yosso's CCW framework addresses assets from a communal perspective, Herrera's CLD students' biographies focus on strengths and needs from a more individual-to-community of learners' perspective. These frameworks stress the importance of practitioners better informing their practice by knowing students and their communities, as well as caring and building the community of learners. This conceptual orientation was utilized to explore the relevance of advising in GYO paraprofessional-to-teacher programs and how it could be enhanced by integrating paraprofessionals' biographies and CCW in ways that establish a caring environment where a community of learners can flourish. Therefore, the core research question guiding this study is: *How can advising in a GYO teacher program be tailored to honor the assets and needs of BL/BC paras?*

Method

According to Yin (2018), a research case study is particularly useful if the intention is to investigate in depth how a contemporary social phenomenon works. Using a single-case design, this case study focused on how the advising component of a GYO teacher program was tailored to honor BL/BC paras' assets and differential needs. The purpose was to develop an understanding of the nuanced processes involved.

Program

Project X is a federally funded GYO teacher program at the University of the South (hence, the university), College of Education targeting BL/BC paras. The College of Education partners with a local school district (SD) and community college (CC). GYO initiative aims to support qualified BL/BC paras from the partner SD to earn an Associate of Arts (AA) or Bachelor of Science degree (BS) in elementary education and become certified teachers with an English as a Second Language (ESL)

endorsement. For this purpose, the GYO facilitates a local CC transfer pathway to teacher education at the university.

This initiative grew out of the local emerging diversity context in which all partners are situated. The partner SD is home to the largest CLD student population in the state. However, significant disparities exist in CLD students' academic achievement and teacher preparation to better serve this student population. To assist with CLD students and their families' academic and communication needs, the district has hired BL/BC paras. The university is a predominantly white institution with a College of Education offering primarily a traditional teacher education program. At the time of this study, no articulation agreement existed with the local CC. The state educational system prioritized alternative routes to certification for individuals who already have a college degree. Therefore, the GYO is an innovative initiative bringing previously disconnected parties together as partners to collaborate in a nontraditional K–6 teacher certification pathway for BL/BC paras.

The GYO uses an equity lens to participants' success and is anchored on the assets that BL/BC paras bring to the profession (Lenski, 2007). For this purpose, research on potential challenges that BL/BC paras could face and promising practices informed program design and implementation (Abbate-Vaughn & Paugh, 2009; Amos, 2013; Bernal & Aragón, 2004; Genzuk & Baca, 1998). Therefore, the initiative incorporated financial assistance (e.g., tuition, books, materials, on-campus parking), academic support, and social support to ensure that participants were successful in college and attained their teaching career aspirations.

Advising with mentoring. Given the college transfer pathway of the GYO, a shared model of advising was adopted. In 2018, a GYO academic advisor was hired to develop, implement, and oversee support services to participating BL/BC paras from prospective status to graduation. The GYO academic advisor's primary functions included (a) conducting orientations and advising sessions regularly, (b) guiding paras in the development of individualized education plans, (c) assisting paras in navigating enrollment and financial aid, (d) facilitating paras' access to resources within the IHE involved and the immediate community, (e) building meaningful relationships with paras and providing socio-emotional support, and (f) mentoring paras during monthly advising seminars (e.g., college expectations, higher education jargon, troubleshooting, and other first-generation college student guidance). The noncredit monthly seminars were a complementary, proactive form of paras' engagement in cohort or group mentoring aimed at enhancing the quality of paras' college experiences via a community of learners that can comfortably share issues, problems, challenges, and victories while moving forward.

The model also included designated academic advisors at the CC and the College of Education. The advisors' collaboration aimed at reducing barriers and ensuring BL/BC paras' academic progress and successful degree completion. The CC academic advisor focused on guiding each student in taking courses leading to an AA degree, tracking Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) applications, and assisting in a smooth transfer to the university. The academic advisor in the College of Education assisted with technical transactions requiring departmental approvals such as overrides of participants' enrollment in specific required courses because of delays in getting paras' transfer credits for CC courses. It would look like some prerequisites were not being met, when in actuality, they were. Table 3 summarizes attributes of advising and mentoring in Project X.

Participants

The purposive sample of this study comprised a cohort of 31 BL/BC paras participating in Project X (i.e., 12 joining the program in 2018 and 19 in 2019, without any attrition), the program academic advisor, and the program director. The BL/BC paras were working in the partner SD among 13 elementary schools with early childhood education, two middle schools, and one high school. They were enrolled

Table 3. Understandings and Processes of Academic Advising and Mentoring in Project X.

Elements	Advising	Mentoring
Participants [Who]	Dedicated GYO academic advisor Designated CC academic advisor Designated University academic advisor Teacher candidates who are bilingual/bicultural, first-generation paraprofessionals	Dedicated GYO academic advisor Project X director Experienced peers Teacher candidates who are bilingual/bicultural, first-generation paraprofessionals
Purpose [Why]	Academic and psychosocial support for students' retention and degree completion	Academic and psychosocial (socio-emotional) support network for first- generation, nontraditional BL/BC students' retention and degree completion
Curriculum [What]	Academic guidance on rules and regulations Students' personal concerns influencing their ability to succeed academically	Tailored content and activities prioritizing students' feedback Community of learners—networking, friendship
Interactional and relational practice [How]	Dyadic, triadic, and group interactions Frequent interactions—at least once a month Relational in nature Personalization via participants' biographies and their CCW	Cohort mentorship in an advising context Cohort as community of learners Relational in nature Personalization via participants' biographies and their CCW
Setting [Where]	Monthly group seminars in a community-based setting Phone, email	Monthly group seminars in a community-based setting

part-time in the partner CC, taking an average of 7.7 credit hours per academic session during the first year. For the most part, participants were local high school graduates and members of the community. See Table 4 for relevant participants' demographic information. Participating BL/BC paras embodied intersectional identities often found in historically underserved students in IHE (Lawton, 2018).

Data Collection

Data collection and analysis were undertaken simultaneously and iteratively from September 2017 to April 2020. This case study used multiple sources of evidence, including participant observation (i.e., the program director and the academic advisor), field notes, and documentation (e.g., application documents, emails, text messages, notes from phone calls, advising logs, administrative documents, as well as agendas and audiovisuals from monthly GYO seminars). As participant observers, the GYO academic advisor and project director collected data during dyadic and triadic interactions, whether in-person, over the phone, or email, and during monthly group seminars. Seminars took place every semester for a total of 16 seminars lasting 1.5 hr each. The monthly advising seminars provided a unique opportunity to collect and examine data in depth within a "relevant situational and social context" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 1).

Other sources of evidence involved individual, 20-min semi-structured interviews and a semi-structured focus group. As part of rolling admissions, the semi-structured interviews took place in the fall of 2017, 2018, and 2019, as well as January 2019. The interviews aimed at gaining insights

Table 4. Participants' Demographic Information.

Gender	94% (i.e., 29/31) females
	6% (i.e., 2/31) males
Ethnicity	81% (i.e., 25/31) Latinos from Mexico, El Salvador, and Venezuela
	16% (i.e., 5/31) Marshallese from the Republic of the Marshall Islands who moved to the United States as children or young adults
	3% (i.e., 1/31) Cambodian, born in the United States, refugee family
Immigration status	55% (i.e., 16/29) foreign-born and two with DACA status
	45% (i.e., 13/29) first generation born in the United States
Native language(s)	81% (i.e., 25/31) Spanish
	16% (i.e., 5/31) Marshallese
	3% (i.e., 1/31) Khmer
Age range	20–49 years old
Status	81% (i.e., 25/31) married
	35% (i.e., 11/31) single with four female heads of household
	81% (i.e., 25/31) dependents
First-generation college	100% (i.e., 31/31)
Entry educational status	23% (i.e., 7/31) AA
	6% (i.e., 2/31) BS+
	55% (i.e., 17/31) some college
	16% (i.e., 5/31) high school diploma
Entry GPA range	1.19–3.94
Current GPA range	3.04–3.34
Employment status	90% (i.e., 28/31) full-time
	10% (i.e., 3/31) part-time
Annual salary range	US$4,642–US$24,083
Occupation	13 IA in pre-K
	10 IA in Elementary of which four were SPED
	Two family liaisons in Elementary
	Two SPED secretaries, one in elementary and the other in middle school
	One attendance secretary at HS
	One migrant tutor
	One IA at SD
Years of experience working for the SD	61% (i.e., 19/31) up to 5 years
	13% 6–9 years
	16% over 10 years
Other relevant experience	20% (i.e., 6/31) had AMERICORP experience

Note. AA = Associate of Arts; BS = Bachelor of Science degree; DACA = Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals; HS = High School; GPA = Grade Point Average; IA = Instructional Assistant; SD = school district; SPED = Special Education.

on paras' biographies and CCW, including teaching aspirations and views on the education of CLD students. In December 2019, the evaluator facilitated a focus group with 11 out of 15 paras who were attending classes at the university. The purpose of the focus group was to gauge paras' perception of their overall experience in Project X (challenges and successes), particularly advising and monthly GYO seminars. The semi-structured interviews and the focus group were audio recorded and transcribed.

Data Analysis

A thematic approach to data analysis involved inductive and deductive procedures (e.g., informed by theory or prior research). Data analysis involved recurrent readings, coding, and continuously comparing the data. All researchers were involved at different stages of data analysis. Initially, data coding

was unrestricted and included descriptive, in vivo, emotion, value, and process coding. Writing analytic memos and participating in debriefing sessions during data analysis assisted researchers in selecting and interpreting data relevant to the research question. As data collection progressed, data analysis encompassed comparing, rearranging, and condensing data. Data coding focused on grouping codes, searching for themes, and identifying underlying patterns. Next, the researchers refined themes, ensuring that each theme's story was well-supported with data extracts. Lastly, data analysis focused on the interrelationships among themes and the overall story line about the research question. The prolonged engagement in data collection, data triangulation using multiple sources, and investigator triangulation contributed to the study's credibility. Memoing, peer debriefings, and using a peer reviewer external to the study also provided credibility checks and trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Findings

This study examined the nuances and complexities of tailoring socioculturally mediated advising for BL/BC paras in a GYO teacher program. Four themes emerged to answer the guiding question: *How can advising in a GYO teacher program be tailored to honor the assets and needs of BL/BC paras?*

Taking the Time to Know and Value Paraprofessionals' Biographies

Consistent with the program's asset-based perspective, knowing the BL/BC paras went beyond traditional understandings of their academic standing, personal interests, and goals. For the project director and the academic advisor, knowing BL/BC paras meant deliberately seeking insights into their biographies and CCW starting during the application and interview stages of recruitment. Aside from relevant demographic and academic data, interview data included indicators of affective or psychological assets and needs. On one hand, data suggested that paras were eager to learn, willing to work hard, motivated to succeed, and hopeful of their future as college students as well as teachers. On the other hand, the data showed that paras were self-aware of potential challenges such as having the time management skills to keep work–family–school balance. Likewise, while a few paras disclosed personal traumas as possible challenges, these paras reported being determined to become teachers.

Upon entering the program, a sociocultural lens permeated all interactions with and among the BL/BC paras. Exploring, documenting, and developing a more holistic understanding of paras' biographies and lived experiences became an ongoing, interactive process during one-to-one and group interactions in GYO seminars. Through relationship building and collaborative participation, paras were encouraged to constantly learn about, connect, and support each other. Insights regularly obtained informed advising practice such as opportunities for meaningful connections, differentiation, accommodations, and scaffolds. Knowing the BL/BC paras' biographies shaped the design of and the way paras experienced advising and other program conditions aiming to support their academic success and well-being. In other words, biographical understandings grounded structures and supports to facilitate BL/BC paras' retention and degree completion.

Personalizing and Attending to Psychosocial Needs

BL/BC paras admitted to Project X, whether taking classes at the CC or the university, received personalized advising from Day 1. Biographical knowledge facilitated more personalized, academically and socioemotionally responsive advising interactions. Moreover, active listening and sensitive feedback were essential processes.

Being available and encouraging. During interviews, most BL/BC paras expressed difficulty finding time to meet with their assigned advisors when they were enrolled earlier at other IHE. Helen mentioned "Every time I needed an advisor, it had to be over the phone. It wasn't good because I like a face-

to-face advisor." Given BL/BC paras' work schedules and location in a neighboring city, advising meetings required flexibility. Therefore, the advisor and paras met at alternative times and settings such as paras' schools, homes, or other convenient location. To accommodate BL/BC paras' affective or psychological needs, the advisor was also available to listen and answer texts or emails beyond standard business hours. On one occasion, Sophie felt anxious about an upcoming exam and called her advisor, "I am taking my math final today, and I am freaking out. I have C. I am scared." The advisor offered words of encouragement to believe in herself, "Stay calm, my dear. Breathe. It is just an hour of your life, so keep it in perspective. You've got this; just don't panic and do your best." Sophie responded, "Gracias. I'm crying like a little girl." The advisor interpreted Sophie's reaching out as a sign of coping with her anxious state of mind. The advisor also proactively communicated with paras via email and text with reminders or to check in with them. Lucy responded, "Thanks for checking in . . . it makes me feel better knowing someone cares for me."

Feeling more than "just a student with an ID number". Personalized academic-oriented interactions revolved around discussions of programs of study, class scheduling, enrollment, and monitoring grades and GPAs. In collaboration with BL/BC paras, the advisor recommended course loads based on their previous college experiences, work–family demands, and course requirements. Rachel elaborated,

> It's more personal. Like when you go to a normal advisor, you're just a student with an ID number, but with Donna and Carol, they know you, they know your history, they know what you need. . . . They really try to work with you, which is nice. If you just go to a regular advisor, they don't know anything about you except for the classes you are taking and when. You are just one of 400.

Nonetheless, the advisor and paras' interactions extended to their personal lives. Jada stated, "If we have a question, a problem, and even if it is something personal, they are always there for us. We can talk to them. They can always help us." Sometimes, BL/BC paras had challenges related to illnesses, immigration, and other day-to-day stressors that influenced their academic life. The advisor provided psychosocial support for BL/BC paras, such as dealing with budgeting issues, filing taxes, and writing letters or serving as a reference. When appropriate, the advisor also facilitated access to resources such as counseling. Other caring encounters between the advisor and the paras involved sharing family moments like attending graduations or making hospital and home visits when a family member was ill, or a para had given birth. Likewise, paras visited the advisor's home for a holiday celebration.

Building Supportive Relationships Through the GYO Seminar

The GYO seminar is a student success strategy extending instrumental academic and psychosocial support anchored on paras' biographies, CCW, and ongoing feedback (i.e., student-centered). The project director and advisor utilized BL/BC paras' feedback to tailor content and activities with opportunities for guidance, learning (e.g., mini lessons on study habits or problem-solving skills), and relationship building within nonthreatening ecological conditions (e.g., scaffolded communication).

Scaffolding communication and using native language. The paras in this study were bilingual and biliterate, predominantly in Spanish or Marshallese and English (i.e., along a continuum of developmental levels). Like their other cultural assets, their linguistic capital (e.g., bilingualism, translating, and interpreting skills) were why they were hired and in high demand in their SD. However, since English was the primary medium of communication within the program, and English was often their second language, the process of communication was differentiated. For example, the advisor communicated frequently and intentionally with all the paras. To increase the clarity of communication and scaffold messages, the advisor employed bulleted items, numbered steps, and visuals. During seminars, BL/BC paras were encouraged to ask questions for clarification and use their native language to support each

other. The use of Spanish and Marshallese was commonplace during group discussions, partner talk, and small-group work. These ecological conditions aimed at minimizing anxiety (e.g., as English language learners) and maximizing communication and learning.

Creating opportunities for relationship and community building. Intentional relationship-building opportunities were provided to support the cohort of paras as a community of learners and enhance their social capital. BL/BC paras were also encouraged to sign up for classes in teams of two or more, and class rosters of the paras were displayed with courses taken to promote study partners and networks of peer support. In the focus group, Jana elaborated on peer support.

> We were scared. It is a whole lot different from CC. When the three of us walked into the first class, all the students just looked at us like "what are they doing here? We look way older than them, and we are all Hispanic. And I am a Hispanic pregnant person. But I think that is why this program helps so much. Because we grow our own relationships together. From the beginning you are not alone. You already have someone to sit with, talk to, and feel comfortable with. It just makes it a lot easier.

BL/BC paras were encouraged to voice their opinions, share successes and distresses, brainstorm solutions, and disclose their thoughts and feelings about coursework and faculty. Through the dialogue generated, the advisor was able to gain a more holistic understanding, including the paras' states of mind and how they were coping with personal challenges and academic demands. Within this context, informal peer mentoring, support, and encouragement transpired among BL/BC paras. For example, when Lina was recognized publicly for making the President's List (i.e., completing 12 credit hours with a 4.0 GPA), Diamonte asked for her advice. Lina proceeded to informally mentor others on her studying strategies.

Informal peer mentoring also transpired between BL/BC paras at the university and paras at the CC. Elena said, "[We were] encouraging the students at the CC because we are sharing our experiences. . . . We can tell them it is worth it. It is hard, but it is worth it." Similarly, BL/BC paras freely shared class experiences, including homework or writing demands and their perceptions of professors' cultural and linguistic responsiveness. This knowledge helped BL/BC paras in making their decisions about course selections and semester loads. Maya commented,

> It helps us to know. Not all of us are taking the same classes at once. So, during the seminar, we have the chance to say, "Okay, what you think? Did you have challenges in this class?" It will help us out if we haven't taken that class. We are a little better prepared, or at least you know what to expect for that class.

Paras gradually formed strong bonds and became family-like. Their social capital kept strengthening. Ruth explained that participating in the GYO seminars "helps you build relationships. We have been together since community college. We are still together at the university. So, it is like going to school with all your friends." In a focus group, Sophia elaborated.

> The other day in class, a student was like, "I think it is so cool that you guys get to be together." They see that relationship. She goes, "everybody brings like a little snack, and you share it. *You are like a little family [italics added for emphasis]*. I want to be a part of your family." They notice.

In building these supportive relationships, the GYO seminar also served to foster BL/BC paras' resilience and maintain hope. In a focus group, Yuri stated, "It is motivational. Sometimes, the whole process of school, work, and home life gets hard. But every time we meet, we are closer to our goals. It reminds you that you are almost there."

Advocating for Institutional Accommodations for BL/BC Paras

A sociocultural lens to advising enabled the identification of two opportunity challenges GYO paras faced in higher education. The program director and the advisor advocated for paras' access to academic and financial aid recovery procedures and evening classes.

Enhancing BL/BC paras' navigation of academic and financial aid recovery procedures. During the selection process, two promising BL/BC paras with prior experience in IHE had lost their Pell grant funding. Student-led resolution efforts before entering the GYO program had been unsuccessful. Upon further examination, trauma-related incidents beyond their control were revealed. While in physical and socio-emotional distress, these paras did not drop the classes in time and received failing grades. Consequently, both paras were disqualified for financial aid and were unable to continue with their studies. The paras, the project director, and the advisor collaborated and successfully appealed both cases. They sought that failing grades be removed from the paras' records so financial aid could be reinstated, and paras could resume their postsecondary education. Several other paras had not dropped classes before the deadline and received failing grades. These paras reported having inconsistent advising and as first-generation college students were unfamiliar with required procedures. To ensure a second chance at improving their academic standing, GPA, and chances at degree completion, the advisor worked with the paras to retake classes. Since grade forgiveness was a new concept for the BL/BC paras, the advisor assisted the paras in navigating "grade forgiveness" procedures once they successfully passed the classes. For the paras, receiving an "F" affects their GPA, which affects their financial aid and their ability to transfer to the university. This "domino effect" could potentially end their teacher journey.

Expanding BL/BC paras' access to classes. BL/BC paras' identities as nontraditional, full-time working students meant that they needed access to classes in the evening. However, finding evening classes became an issue beyond their ability to navigate the system as these offerings were limited. The director and the advisor met with university departmental staff to petition additional classes in the evenings. Staff was willing if Project X could guarantee at least 10 paras in each class. However, these classes were open to all students. On several occasions, classes were full before the paras could enroll due to delays in transcript transfers or other institutional barriers like later assigned registration days. In response, the director and the advisor requested directly professors' permission for paras to enroll. Sometimes, paras also had to enroll in classes out of the traditional program sequence. Consequently, they were required to get "departmental approval." In such cases, the advisor collaborated with the academic advisor in the College of Education to enroll them in the classes they needed. Paula commented, "By them making it flexible, talking to the university, creating classes at night, it helped me. I am now going to school."

Discussion

The purpose of this case study was to examine how advising in a GYO teacher program can be tailored to honor the assets and needs of bilingual/bicultural paras. Four themes emerged from this study: (a) taking the time to know and value paraprofessionals' biographies, (b) personalizing and attending to psychosocial needs, (c) building supportive relationships through the GYO seminar, and (d) advocating for institutional accommodations.

This case study revealed socioculturally mediated advising as a critical GYO program component for supporting BL/BC paras, which is often under-theorized, overlooked, or viewed from a deficit perspective. Socioculturally mediated advising for BL/BC paras provides a consistent, nurturing support structure that attends to their assets and needs or challenges, through their journey in becoming teachers. At the core of socioculturally mediated advising is authentically knowing and valuing BL/BC

paras. Then, an academic advisor willing and prepared to facilitate socioculturally mediated advising can truly personalize BL/BC paras' experiences, validate and enhance their strengths, meet their needs, and advocate on their behalf.

Advising paras through a sociocultural lens involves building caring, trusting advisor–para and para–para relationships that take time and commitment. Moreover, socioculturally mediated advising involves a shift from individualistic to more holistic advising that incorporates aspects of mentoring as BL/BC paras' needs and assets are unveiled. For this purpose, Project X incorporated a GYO seminar aimed at facilitating meaningful opportunities for learning (e.g., cohort mentoring that can enhance paras' knowledge and skills) and self-expression (e.g., paras' thoughts and feelings) while fostering resilience and community. Findings suggest that the GYO seminar provided ecological conditions supportive of paras' aspirational capital as a psychological asset and lifelong learning, particularly self-management (e.g., personal functioning, states of mind) and collaboration skills.

As GYO programs are considered a high leverage approach for recruiting, preparing, and retaining BL/BC paras, the role of socioculturally mediated advising is central. Based on this study's findings, embedding a socioculturally mediated advising component in GYO program design embraces:

- Advising from an asset-based, holistic perspective. Take the time to know the paras authentically using a sociocultural framework such as CLD college students' biographies (Herrera et al., 2011) and Yosso's (2005) framework of CCW in order to increase the quality of paras' academic and personal experiences. Ideally, BL/BC advisors would work with the paras. However, in emerging diversity contexts, finding BL/BC advisors could be challenging. Advisors with knowledge, skills, and experience in intercultural understanding (i.e., without necessarily sharing paras' ethnicity and native languages) could likely support BL/BC paras in GYO programs.
- Comprehensive and robust advising with mentoring. Since BL/BC paras are most likely first-generation, nontraditional students, socioculturally mediated advising needs to begin from Day 1. It must be seamless, ongoing, adaptable, supportive, preferably with the same advisor, and takes various forms (e.g., advisor–para, advisor–group, and para–para).
- Advising with mentoring from an ecological perspective using student-centered GYO seminars. Use BL/BC paras' feedback to organically tailor content and activities. Create ecological conditions that foster a community of learners through dialogue and collaboration, as well as cohort and informal peer mentorship. This finding extends the work of Dandy (1998) and Genzuk and Baca (1998), indicating that mentoring was provided by program graduates or faculty.

The literature suggests that program directors, faculty, and staff often played an extended role as academic advisors (Bernal & Aragón, 2004; Warshaw, 1992). However, based on the findings of this study, advising in a GYO program for BL/BC paras is time-intensive and requires flexibility. Academic advisors need to build strong relationships and have the social capital needed to be able to navigate the higher education system from within. For instance, an academic advisor needs to be an equity advocate for the paras, working with multiple departments and assisting in getting the outcomes necessary to promote GYO candidates' retention and degree completion (e.g., creating new structures). Therefore, a full-time dedicated academic advisor position is essential.

Delimitations, Limitations, and Implications for Future Research

This inquiry focused on tailoring advising incorporating mentoring within a GYO paraprofessional-to-teacher program. Although significant, examining the ongoing impact of such an approach on BL/BC paras' learning and retention was beyond its scope. However, the findings include insights on BL/BC paras' perceived impact. The findings of this study were interpreted and discussed in the context of

possible limitations. First, the purposive sample of the study might not represent other BL/BC paras in GYO teacher programs. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized beyond the context of the study. Although measures were taken to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the study, researchers' perspectives and biases might have influenced data collection and analysis. Throughout this inquiry, the researchers attempted to be thoughtful of their own potential biases or assumptions and deliberate about their interpretation of the data (e.g., peer debriefings and peer review).

The findings of this study lay the groundwork for future research on advising and mentoring programming in GYO paraprofessional-to-teacher programs, including the need to (a) unpack underlying theories and models (e.g., examining socioculturally mediated advising from a multidisciplinary perspective including career development and utilizing the construct of career adaptability), (b) distinguish the nature of processes and activities in light of the assets and needs of first-generation BL/BC paras in CC who transfer to 4-year colleges, (c) examine BL/BC paras' lived experiences, and (d) assess impact on BL/BC paras' multidimensional biographical variables along the lines of knowledge, skills, dispositions, and resilience.

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