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Maria de Jesus Cisneros-Elias  
*Virginia Commonwealth University*

Gabriela Chavira

Karen Alvarez

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# Empowering Latina/o Families to Navigate College Access

MARIA DE JESUS CISNEROS-ELIAS, M.A. GABRIELA CHAVIRA, PH.D. KAREN ALVAREZ, B.A.

Virginia Commonwealth University

California State University, Northridge

## Introduction Background

- It is well documented that attaining higher education is a major pathway to economic stability (Higher Education Outlook, 2016). Inequities within the U.S. educational system affect Latina/o students. These schools have problems informing and guiding their students in financial matters and educational opportunities (Bell et al., 2009; Boschma & Brownstein, 2016; Gándara & Contreras, 2009).
- Given the current education crisis of Latinas/os, it is increasingly important to understand ways to increase access to college for Latina/o youth. The report by the Campaign for College Opportunity (2015) recommends college information programs starting as early as middle school for Latina/o students and their families.
- Further, research has found Latina/o families teach and create a culture of education for their children through emotional support, *consejos* advice-giving narratives, to life lessons (Chavira et al., 2016; Kiyama, 2011). Therefore, the current study examined the effects of a college knowledge intervention program on Latina/o parents and their adolescents from adolescence perspective.

### Purpose

- The focus of current study is to examine the Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) that Latina/o families possess and the agency acquired of the students through the empowerment of an intervention program for families and their youth (Yosso, 2005).

### Research Questions

- Prior to beginning the intervention program and after the intervention program what forms of capital did families possess?
- How did participating in the program change adolescents' perception of their parents' capital?
- How did adolescents use agency to apply what they learned in college information intervention over time?

## Method

### Participants

- 11 Latina/o parent-adolescent dyads
- 67% girls, adolescent age 11-16yrs,  $M = 14.0, SD = 1.79$
- 5 of 11 families participated in post-effects of the intervention program.

### Procedure

- Adolescents were recruited from a community-based organization in Southern California. They completed self-report surveys and interviews before, after and six months after the intervention program.

### Analysis

- Research questions were tested using grounded theory inductive analysis approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

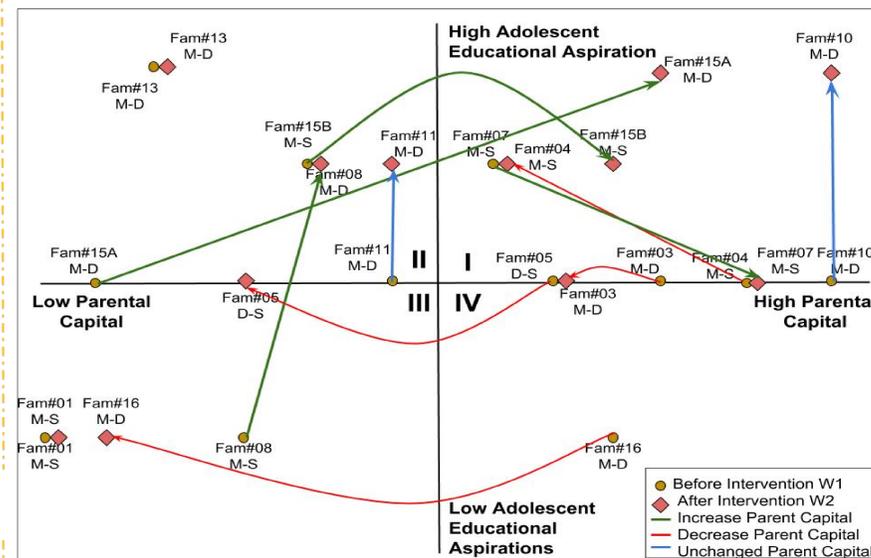
## Results

Q.1. Prior to beginning the intervention program and after the intervention program what forms of capital did families possess?

| ID | Name   | Wave 1           | Wave 2            | Change |
|----|--------|------------------|-------------------|--------|
| 1  | Ramon  | 2 yr. College    | 2 yr. College     | 0      |
| 3  | Dania  | University       | Master's Degree   | +2     |
| 4  | Henry  | 4 yr. University | 4-8yrs. College   | +4     |
| 5  | Saul   | University       | Bachelor's Degree | 0      |
| 7  | Daniel | Master's Degree  | University        | -2     |
| 8  | Leo    | University       | Master's Degree   | +2     |
| 10 | Angie  | University       | Doctorate Degree  | +4     |

- Before Intervention
    - 11 of 12 adolescents' parents talked to them about their future
  - After Intervention
    - 12 adolescents (100%) had conversations with their parents about what was learned
  - 30% of the adolescents, who did not mention parental involvement initially, said their parents became more involved
  - 41% parents were already involved before and unchanged after the intervention
- Navigational capital
- Adolescents in this study expressed many personal skills gained:
    - knowledge of the school systems in California (UC and CSU)
    - applying for FAFSA and the process of applying for those who have undocumented parents
    - Scholarships and grants
- Social capital
- Carlos expressed being a source of social capital for others, using the information he learned in the intervention, "because if others don't know like in my grade level I can help them to like know about this stuff." When asked how he can continue to use the information learned he replied, "If I have kids I'll show, I'll tell them how like everything works. Since I'm going to go through it, then I'll tell them."

Q.2. How did participating in the program change adolescents' perception of their parents' capital?



### Wave 2- Open Coding

- Perceived parental capital:** assets families possess in helping their children navigate their education, through the adolescents' perspectives.
- Low (1):** adolescent expresses parent does not ask about how he/she is doing in school or career options, parent does not visit his/her school or is not involved, adolescent does not mention encouragement toward being involved in programs, adolescent does not mention parent as having a plan for him/her to obtain an education
- High (12):** adolescent expresses parent asks about how he/she is doing in school, parent asks about their education often, parent takes and/or advises adolescent to tutoring or directs him/her to obtain help from family members/friends/school personnel, parent encourages adolescent to become involved in school, parent visits their school, knows child's teachers/counselor, or parent talks about plans to help adolescent obtain an education
- Adolescent's Educational Aspiration:** adolescent educational career objective assessed by how long it would take them generally to obtain the degree.
  - Low (1):** attaining a vocational/technical certificate
  - High (5):** attaining a doctoral/professional degree

Q.3. How did adolescents use agency to apply what they learned in college information intervention over time?

- | Overall   | Wave 2   | Wave 3  |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using three different time points of interviews (i.e. Wave 1, Wave 2, Wave 3) regarding college information intervention, three common themes emerged:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Educational aspiration</li> <li>Agency</li> <li>Conversations about education</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All adolescents expressed:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>more prepared for college</li> <li>more specific educational goal</li> <li>their grades were high or had improved since last time they were interviewed</li> <li>learned more about universities available</li> <li>understand the A-G requirements to enter a university</li> </ul> </li> <li>When Dania was asked why does she think she is doing better she answered, "Because my parents are focusing more on my work and like my study skills and like if I'm doing good on tests."</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Six months after the intervention</li> <li>Adolescents expressed continued conversations with their parents, family members, and friends regarding the college information sessions.</li> <li>Arianna mentioned six months later, "I feel like the conversations would come up for me daily [with mom] ... During senior year like you have to take steps like, first you have to apply for college, and then your personal statements and all of that, and she [mom] would say, oh remember you have to do personal statements and you have to apply to FAFSA and you have to do this and that. So I feel like she [her mom] learned a lot and I feel like we both bring up the conversation."</li> </ul> |

## Discussion

- Wave 1- These findings parallel previous studies that Latina/o students and their parents hold high educational aspirations, and overall CCW (Ceja, 2004; Chavira, et al., 2016; Yosso, 2005).
- Wave 2- Results give us an in depth look at how adolescents perceive their parent's support, help, and encouragement through parental capital and how it interacts with their own educational aspirations for their future.
- Additionally, adolescents enrolled in high school expressed the greatest change in an increase of perceptions of parental capital and increased educational aspirations. Older adolescents may be at a time point where the college information sessions are more significant in their lives and are more readily able to apply what they learned.
- Wave 3- Findings allow us to see how a college information intervention may help Latina/o immigrant families effectively increase their CCW and teach them a concrete path to obtain their educational aspirations (agency).
- Further, students mentioned their parents were more aware of their school work and the students were more likely to have conversations with family and friends about their newly acquired college knowledge.

### Limitations

- The sample of Latina/o families were from Southern California, which may not be representative of all families across the U.S.
- Data analyzed was from the adolescent perspective and future work should assess the parental perspective regarding their participation in the intervention.

### Implications

- Findings have implications of long-term benefits for adolescents' educational future success and for families' generational educational success.
- Policy makers, practitioners and educational institutions must be aware of the varying contexts of immigrant and low-income families.

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- Contact: Maria J. Cisneros-Elias cisnerosmd2@mymail.vcu.edu

