SELECTIVE UNIVERSITIES IN COLLEGE CHOICE: STUDENT VOICES & LESSONS LEARNED

Presented by:
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Notable Student Presenter: Alexandria Zermeño
Introduction

- College selectivity has been shown to have a direct correlation to degree completion, particularly for students of color.

- Understanding how forms of capital influence students in their college choice decisions and their interactions with mentors such as teachers, counselors, and community members has the potential to shape college going behaviors.

- Historically, Latinas/os have experienced the lowest rates of college completion, and are the least formally educated among all major ethnic groups.
Latina/o Demographics

- Largest and **fastest growing** minority group
  - More than 12.6 million (23%) in K-12 in the U.S. (US Census Bureau, 2013)
  - Projected to account for 60% of the nation’s population growth between 2005-2050 (WHIEEH, 2012)

- **Disparities** in higher educational enrollment patterns
  - Concentration in community colleges or less selective institutions
  - Nearly one-forth of the nation’s community college students are located in California, with Latinas/os comprising approximately 38% (Campaign for College Opportunity, 2013)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Latina/o</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>California Population</td>
<td>14.72 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten-12 grade Age Population (ages 5-17)</td>
<td>3,429</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(23.3%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>College-Age Population (ages 18-24)</td>
<td>1,869</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(12.7%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attained Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>1,177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attained Graduate or Professional Degree</td>
<td>471</td>
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<td>(3.2%)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Presence of Latinas/os at CCC, CSUs, and UCs

- As *eligibility* requirements become *more selective*, Latina/o participation narrows
  - As 69% of first time Latina/o freshman enrolled at a community college
  - 14% enrolled at a CSU
  - 5% enrolled at a UC

- Educational Pipeline *Inequities*
  - Latinas/os have experienced differential outcomes
  - Latina/o student’ college choices have been influenced and constrained by educational expectations, and knowledge of options
Latina/o educational pipeline from elementary to graduate school, Solórzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera (2005).
College Access & Opportunity

- Issues of access & inequality have long overwhelmed the educational experiences of Latina/o students in the U.S.

- Efforts to increase college readiness, access, student success and diversity have not achieved a pace or scope of transformation to match needs

- Enhancing educational opportunities is vital towards achieving an increase in college graduates

- Potential for P-16 institutions to create equitable opportunities
The absolute numbers of Latinas/os going on to postsecondary institutions have increased significantly, yet they have not kept pace with the growing Latina/o college age population, and most of the enrollment increase has occurred at the less selective colleges and universities.
### Barron’s Admissions Competitiveness Index to Four-Year Institutions by Rank, GPA, Test Scores, and Admission Rates

(Barron’s Education Series College Division, 2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Selectivity</th>
<th>High School Rank</th>
<th>GPAs</th>
<th>SAT Scores</th>
<th>ACT Scores</th>
<th>Admission Rates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most Competitive- Tier I</td>
<td>Top 20%</td>
<td>B+ and above</td>
<td>655 to 800</td>
<td>29+</td>
<td>Less than 33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly Competitive- Tier II</td>
<td>Top 20% to 35%</td>
<td>B and above</td>
<td>620 to 654</td>
<td>27-28</td>
<td>33%-50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Competitive- Tier III</td>
<td>Top 35% to 50%</td>
<td>B- and above</td>
<td>573 to 619</td>
<td>24-26</td>
<td>50%-75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive- Tier IV</td>
<td>Top 50% to 65%</td>
<td>C and above</td>
<td>500 to 572</td>
<td>21-23</td>
<td>75%-85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less Competitive- Tier V</td>
<td>Top 65%</td>
<td>D+ and above</td>
<td>Below 500</td>
<td>Below 21</td>
<td>85% and above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noncompetitive- Tier VI</td>
<td>High school graduate</td>
<td>Not required</td>
<td>Not required</td>
<td>Not required</td>
<td>98% and above</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What We Researched

- To understand the experiences of high achieving Latina/o students’ schooling experiences, family interactions, and network interactions that facilitated students’ choices to attend either a community college or selective college/university.

- 22 high academic achieving Latinas/os who attended either community colleges or selective universities such as: Yale, Brown, MIT, UC Berkeley, UCLA, Duke, and Cornell.

- Programs and the leadership of mentors influenced the college choice decisions of Latina/o students.
What we Found

- Latina/o students’ narratives demonstrated that although their high schools and institutional agents could impart the *college knowledge* and support that their families could not, that often times participants’ experiences about *accessing such resources was limited* or available to only select groups of students who were in programs with a particular focus on college preparatory curriculum such as with AVID, or Advanced Placement courses. For participants not involved in such programs, this meant they were primarily on their own when it came time to access the needed resources to make their college choice decisions.

- Findings revealed that students’ college choices are influenced in multiple ways when taking into account *community cultural wealth*; both by family, protective agents, and institutional agents throughout their *schooling experiences* leading up until the time they enrolled at their respective campuses.
Role of Mentors

- Mentoring is not about finding a perfect match or even a single relationship (Murrell, 2007)
  - A collaborative relationship between two or more individuals that supports the career and/or personal development throughout one’s career
  - Mentoring is about a relationship – it is both dynamic and reciprocal.

- In effective mentoring relationships, there is an exchange, and both the mentor and the protégé benefit.

- Relationships are also dynamic which means that mentoring must and will change over time

- Students will have multiple mentors over their educational careers:
  - Provide exposure and visibility, helping students to effectively network
  - Link to opportunities to show talent or knowledge
  - Expand social networks
Student Voices

- This counselor from [a different high] school district who goes to my church....she was the main one who came in and [helped me].... She started reading my essays, sending them back, they're all red and comments everywhere....She was really the one who answered all the burning questions that I had. (Diego, 18, at Cornell)

- She's [counselor] the one that pushed me towards community college first, because she knew that it'd be easier to get GE requirements, which is, I guess, one of the main reasons why I went for the GE requirements, and then transfer on. (Nicolas, Age 20 at Community College)

- The Ivy League Project gave me information of these highly selective universities, admission process, what they look for in students, how to apply, things of that sort… Even just little logistical things of that nature… (Neftaly, 20, at Yale)

- I got to hear stories of successful Latino students who came from the Central Valley of California and who were attending or had graduated from prestigious [selective] universities…. it made me realize that attending those schools is possible… (Joaquin, 18, at MIT)
Lessons Learned

- Participants had to make a decision as to where they would ultimately attend, but weren’t those all dependent on what allowed them to make the best informed decisions?

- When building campus cultures that want to enhance college opportunities for students of all races, the various forms of community cultural wealth possessed by Latina/o students and their families should be taken into consideration.

- Interactions with school teachers, counselors, administrators that impart knowledges and share wealth of information has the great potential to make a difference in promoting college going behaviors for Latina/o students, this knowledge can be transferred for the benefit of ALL students.
Co-Founders of College for Me

- **Dr. Adriana Cervantes-González**
  - Counselor/Educator for past 19 years in K-12 & Higher Education
  - University Faculty, Kremen School of Education & Human Development @ Fresno State

- **Dr. Jesús González Jr.**
  - Teacher/Administrator Educator for past 19 years in K-12 & Higher Education
  - University Faculty, Kremen School of Education & Human Development @ Fresno State
Purpose of C4ME

- To provide student-centered college knowledge and leadership seminars to a diverse population of students in the Visalia area and surrounding communities.
- To expose academically high achieving students from underrepresented backgrounds to the idea that selective colleges and universities are within reach.
College Application Pyramid

- **REACH**
- **TARGET**
- **SAFETY**
Introducing Miss Alexandria Zermeño

- All about me…
  - As a student
  - As an athlete
  - My interests & hobbies
  - My educational goals

- My interest in being a part of this program…
  - Understanding more about selective universities and what it takes to apply
Seminar Topics

- **Understanding selective universities**
  - Why me? Why NOT me?

- **Admissions**
  - I have what it takes!

- **Networking**

- **Leadership**
Seminar Topics (Continued)

- College student panels
- Creating a competitive personal statement
- Graduate speakers and role models from Selective Universities
- Ice-breaker activities
- Learning about myself
Experience with Saturday Seminars

- **Parent Orientation**
- **Commitment and dedication**
- **Networking with fellow students, community educators, and guest speakers**
- **Interactive Group Discussions & Activities**
Group Activities
Culminating Tour of Selective Universities

- College for ME in partnership with the Ivy League Project Visited
  - Harvard
  - Yale
  - Brown
  - MIT
  - Wesleyan
  - Georgetown
  - Princeton
  - Penn
  - Columbia
  - Swarthmore
  - Stanford

UPenn

Georgetown

Wesleyan

MIT
Visiting the East Coast

Library of Congress

White House

Statue of Liberty

U.S. Capitol
Closing

- If college choice matters in shaping the probability of college graduation for Latina/o students, then the potential of influences on postsecondary outcomes on Latina/o students is shaped by first increasing the possibility of applying to and enrolling in selective colleges and universities, thus influencing the choice among high achieving Latina/o students is critical.

*Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.* - Nelson Mandela
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Thank you!


