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Victor and Erika Webnovela: An Innovative Generation @ Audience Engagement Strategy for Prevention

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INTRODUCTION

Entertainment-education (E-E) approaches for young audiences continue to evolve in order to keep stride with younger generations' affinity for and access to technology. Traditionally, E-E formats for health promotion and disease prevention interventions have included different applications of the “*novela*,” or soap opera, including theater and performing arts (Glik, Nowak, Valente, Sapsis, & Martin, 2002), telenovelas (S. Vaughn, 2012; Wilkin et al., 2007), fotonovelas (Hernandez & Organista, 2013), and radionovelas (Lalonde, Rabinowitz, Shefsky, & Washienko, 1997). E-E and *novelas* have been used in a number of settings globally, including in settings with varying levels of development, access to technology, and with diverse audiences (Conquergood, 1988; Greenberg, Salmon, Patel, Beck, & Cole, 2004; Kincaid, Yun, Piotrow, & Yasar, 1993; Murphy & Cody, 2003; Nariman, 1993; Rogers & Antola, 1985; Singhal & Rogers, 1999; Singhal & Rogers, 2004). E-E interventions addressing a variety of health issues have demonstrated considerable effectiveness in engaging audiences in health-related topics, improving health knowledge, reducing risk behaviors, and influencing attitudes and peer, social and cultural norms (McGill & Joseph, 1997; Skinner, Metcalf, Seager, De Swardt, & Laubscher, 1991; Valente, Kim, Letternmaier, Glass, & Dibba, 1994; Valente, Poppe, Alva, Vera de Briceno, & Cases, 1995; Valente & Bharath, 1999; Villaseñor, Galindo, & Sabido, 1982).

E-E and *novelas* have also been used with diverse audiences in the US (Cueva et al., 2013), particularly hard-to-reach, Latino populations (S. Vaughn, 2012; Wilkin et al., 2007), and have demonstrated effectiveness in disseminating culturally relevant prevention information for many health-related risk factors and behaviors (RW.ERROR - Unable to find reference: 218; Cabrera, Morisky, & Chin, 2002; Mier, Ory, & Medina, 2010; Moyer-Gusé, 2008; Scheinmann, Chiasson, Hartel, & Rosenberg, 2010; Singhal & Rogers, 2002; S. Vaughn, 2012; Wilkin et al., 2007). E-E has roots in storytelling (Singhal & Rogers, 1999), which is consistent with folklore and storytelling traditions in Latino culture (Kim, Koniak-Griffin, Flaskerud, & Guarnero, 2004; Larkey, Lopez, Minnal, & Gonzalez, 2009), making this a culturally consistent approach for Latino audiences. E-E differs from entertainment in that it

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teaches, or brings about “functional learning” (O’Dea, 1993). E-E seeks to pique audience curiosity, while also positively changing their knowledge, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors related to health (Glik et al., 2002). Using dramatic portrayals, E-E draws on observational learning techniques, where audiences can experience behaviors and consequences vicariously through the characters (Bandura, 1977; Sood, Shefner-Rogers, & Sengupta, 2006; Wilkin et al., 2007). The likelihood of resultant behavior change by viewers is linked to the extent to which viewers identify and empathize with the characters (Slater & Rouner, 2002; Sood et al., 2006).

Storytelling has been shown to be an effective method for empowering Latino young adults (Rodriguez, 2010), decreasing substance abuse and sexual risk behavior in youth (Nelson & Arthur, 2003), conducting research with youth (Drew, Duncan, & Sawyer, 2010), informing youth programming (McClintock, 2004; Nelson, McClintock, Perez-Ferguson, Shawver, & Thompson, 2008), and it has also been used as a pedagogical tool to understand and transform the educational lives of Latino students (Nunez-Janes & Cruz, 2013). Digital storytelling in particular is “the modern expression of the ancient art” that has been adapted from “the circle of the campfire to the silver screen, and now the computer screen (Digital Storytelling Association, 2011). Digital storytelling has been increasingly used to provide a voice for Latino youth, increase participation and cultural identity formation, and for health and risk behavior prevention efforts (Streng et al., 2004; Toussaint, Villagrana, Mora-Torres, de Leon, & Haughey, 2011; L. M. Vaughn, Rojas-Guyler, & Howell, 2008). However, studies that examine the effect of digital storytelling on Latino youth are limited, calling for more research in this area.

E-E is particularly useful in reaching adolescents with health information. Immigrant Latino youth in particular represent a rapidly growing population in the U.S. that often experiences multiple health disparities and marginalization (for example, see (Guilamo-Ramos, Lee, & Huiak, 2007; Vigil, 2007). Latino immigrant populations tend to be harder to reach in terms of health communication, and face additional challenges to accessing prevention messages and services, including poverty, language barriers, literacy, health literacy, mistrust, immigration status, and cultural barriers (Beacom & Newman, 2010; M. Edberg, Cleary, & Vyas, 2011). This warrants gaining a better understanding of strategies for reaching this population with prevention information and engaging them in health promotion programs. Reaching immigrant Latino populations through digital media strategies shows enormous potential, given the overall media and social media consumption by Latinos and internet usage through mobile devices, particularly among Latino youth and young adults. According to the Pew Hispanic Center’s 2013 report, *Closing the Digital Divide: Latinos and Technology Adoption* (Lopez, Gonzalez-Barrera, & Patten, 2013), Latinos own smartphones, go online from a mobile device, and use social networking sites at similar – and sometimes higher – rates than do other groups of Americans. Over 78% of Latinos say they use the internet, an increase of 14% from 2009–2012. Although Spanish-speaking and foreign-born Latinos still lag behind their English-speaking and U.S.-born counterparts in terms of internet use, from 2009–2012, internet use rates increased drastically for Spanish-speaking Latinos (by 27%) and for foreign-born Latinos (by 18%). Latino internet users are more likely (76%) than non-Latino internet users (60%) to go online using a mobile device. Two-

thirds of Latino internet users frequent social networking sites (compared to 58% of all U.S. internet users), and 84% of Latinos ages 18–29 use social networking sites. There is limited data on the access of recently arrived immigrant Latino youth to the internet and mobile technologies. However, based on our experiences implementing the *Adelante* youth intervention, a majority of Latino youth ages 12–17 have access to the internet via mobile devices, and approximately half of the intervention’s participants are recently-arrived immigrants to the U.S. Using this channel for prevention messaging among Latino immigrant youth is one that merits further investigation.

The current article reports on the process of active engagement of Latino youth in Langley Park, MD for the development and filming of an innovative webnovela entitled, *Victor and Erika* (V&E). V&E is part of a larger branding strategy of the *Adelante* Positive Youth Development (PYD) intervention, as described by Evans et al. (Evans et al., unpublished). This study will describe research and development activities that have taken place since 2013 and have resulted in the achievement of the following specific aims:

- Conceptualize and develop a series of web-based dramatic episodes using a youth-driven methodology and guided by the *Adelante* brand identity and features;
- Film and produce the webnovela, enacted by *Adelante* program youth; and
- Begin engagement of Latino immigrant youth in the *Adelante* program and disseminate key prevention messages.

By achieving these aims, we hypothesize that the V&E E-E project will help to build brand equity (i.e., positive mental associations with *Adelante*) among Latino youth (Evans, Blitstein, Nilsen, Vallone, & Wallace, 2014), and in turn, positive associations with behaviors linked to the theme of “turning the corner,” which is described more later. Dissemination of the webnovela through multiple digital media channels will engage youth and create a following for the series. Youth participating in *Adelante* will also have opportunities to be involved in episode creation and share the episodes with their social networks, thus further engaging them in the brand and contributing to a diffusion of the *Adelante* brand in the Latino youth community (Rogers, 2003).

BACKGROUND

The Avance Center for the Advancement of Immigrant/Refugee Health at The George Washington University Milken Institute School of Public Health is a university-community collaboration to address health disparities among immigrant/refugee Latinos living in in Langley Park, MD, located outside of Washington, DC. The community-based, multi-level *Adelante* intervention is central to the work of the Avance Center. *Adelante* uses a modified asset-based PYD approach (Competence, Connection, Confidence, Contribution, or 4 of the 6 overall PYD “C’s”) that seeks to build individual, family and community assets as a prevention mechanism (M. A. Edberg et al., unpublished; Lerner, 2005; Silbereisen & Lerner, 2007) for multiple contributing factors for youth substance abuse, sexual risk and violence.

Adelante Positive Youth Development Intervention Branding Strategy

The *Adelante* intervention employs several inter-related capacity-building and educational intervention components. An overall community engagement strategy is to build awareness of and promote *Adelante*'s brand equity, and a compelling identity (Evans, 2013; Evans et al., 2014; Evans et al., unpublished). The overall branding strategy entails the execution of *Adelante* brand features through an interactive program website, *Adelante* Facebook page, *Adelante* "gear" and promotional materials, *Adelante* Youtube channel, mobile phone-based promotion including text message campaigns, and web-based narrative stories, including the *V&E* series and blog page. The *Adelante* brand represents a desirable and aspirational approach for negotiating the challenges faced by Latino immigrant youth, and these ideals are personified in the *V&E* characters. The overarching "turning the corner" theme of *Adelante* is that at-risk youth find themselves at a point in life where they can continue down the "same street" they are on, or they can "turn the corner" to a better life (Evans et al., 2014). The main goal of the *Adelante* branding strategy is to build positive brand equity among Langley Park Latino youth (Keller, Heckler, & Houston, 1998), with the brand associations created by health messaging mediating their decisions to engage in risk behaviors related to substance abuse, risky sex, and violence. The next phase of our research will evaluate the *Adelante* brand's role in behavior change among program participants. Using an active audience engagement methodology (Hecht & Miller-Day, 2010), *Adelante* also uses an innovative, youth participatory approach, whereby Latino youth are actively involved in the creative and production process for the *V&E* webnovela; under the guidance of facilitators, youth participants defined the concepts underlying the *V&E* series and co-created the scripts and video content. Youth are writers, actors, film crew, and promoters of the series. The web series not only engages a broader online youth audience in the stories of these characters and *Adelante* messages, but it is also a creative outlet where youth can express their point of view.

METHODS

The *V&E* webnovela is a six-episode, web-based series that follows the lives of two immigrant Latino teenagers living in Langley Park. This series is a dramatic portrayal of the everyday lives, struggles, failures, successes and humanity of urban Latino youth. It entertains young audiences through a dramatic story, while educating about choices Latino youth must make with regards to risk behaviors. Each episode's duration is between 4–12.5 minutes, and episodes were recorded in English with some Spanish inclusions and subtitles. The series was uploaded to the *Adelante* Youtube channel, where it can be viewed and shared by *Adelante* youth and the public as individual episodes or through a combined playlist: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLg6Vbt7uvvWt4K1f_KfPnqF-nbo1EUGg7. It was also posted on the *Adelante* program website, <http://www.adelantelp.org>, and Victor and Erika Blog page: <http://victoranderika.blogspot.com/>.

V&E Formative Research

Prior to the development of the *V&E* series, formative research was conducted in order to: 1) test the brand positioning and personality – what *Adelante* stands for and how it should be best represented to Latino teens – through focus groups with youth, 2) create a final brand

positioning and logo concept, and 3) create *consumer archetypes*, or characters who personify what the brand stands for (Evans et al., 2012). The characters, Victor and Erika, were developed at this formative stage in collaboration with Langley Park youth. This article will detail the process of working with youth to elaborate on the initial Victor and Erika characters created in the formative research phase and to create youth-driven webnovela episode storylines. We will also discuss plans to use these episodes for additional community-wide youth online engagement.

Setting and Participants

The setting where webnovela development activities took place is Langley Park, MD, a predominantly low-income, Latino immigrant community outside of the Washington, DC area. Focus groups and creative development sessions took place at the Avance Center's key partner site where most of the *Adelante* program's activities take place – the Maryland Multicultural Youth Center in Langley Park (an extension of the Latin American Youth Center in the District of Columbia). Filming took place at various sites, including at a community clinic, high school, a mobile phone store, homes of participants, and in public places. Permission for filming at these sites was requested in advance. Filming and production equipment used was very minimal, including only a video camera, sound equipment, and editing software. Characters in the series included youth from the *Adelante* program, program staff, community clinic staff, and one local female boxing celebrity.

We recruited a total of thirty-four participants from the *Adelante* program for formative research related to character development (n=20) and creative development/enactment of the episodes (n=14). All participants were Latino teenagers between the ages of 14–18 who attended a local public high school. We conducted the character development sessions either in Spanish or English and the episode creative development sessions mostly in English (depending on participant preference). Sessions were led by one bilingual *Adelante* staff member with previous film experience, and were supported by bilingual research staff from the Avance Center, including the authors.

Webnovela Development, Filming and Dissemination

For the development of the *V&E* characters, we conducted four focus groups with twenty youth. The research team provided initial descriptions of the *V&E* characters and sought feedback from youth on: style of dress, likes/dislikes, family situation, personality features, things they would/wouldn't do, and core values. We worked with youth to ensure that characters embodied the *Adelante* brand, especially in their actions/decisions in the episodes. The goal was to show that Victor and Erika were “trying to turn the corner,” as specified in the *Adelante* brand position statement. For the creation of the *V&E* dramatic webnovela series, we met with a regular group of fourteen youth (script writers and actors) on a weekly basis for 2–3 hours after school and on scheduled school holidays. Over approximately 8 months, we involved youth participants in a storytelling process that included brainstorming on issues/experiences that affect youth today, developing scripts, and recording each episode. Production of each episode followed a general process of creative development/narrative creation, script writing, rehearsal and filming.

For episodes 1–3, we used a more guided approach until rapport was built and youth became more confident in sharing their ideas. Based on formative research findings, for episodes 1–3, facilitators first drafted a script that highlighted key risk topics experienced by teenagers in this community, including sexual risk, interpersonal violence, school performance, family conflict, and experimenting with drugs. We created the initial dialogue, and during the session, youth read through the dialogue, indicating where the language or actions of characters should be changed to reflect youth realities and style of communication. We then edited the script accordingly, and rehearsed the final script with youth for filming.

For episodes 4–6, we further engaged youth in the actual mapping of each episode. Youth decided what would happen in the next scene, what characters would be involved, who would play each role, and what decisions the protagonists would make when faced with challenges. Many times the occurrences in a given episode were reflective of participants' direct experiences. During these sessions, after the episode was mapped out, youth were instructed to improvise dialogue between characters, with our team taking notes, which became the script. In order to prompt improvisation, facilitators said "For youth faced with this situation, what would they say, do, think, feel. Improvise a scene based on what you think youth like you would say and do." Based on these improvisational exercises, the script was developed, and we went through the same process of reading through the script with participants, editing, and finalizing the script. For these final episodes, youth were also encouraged to improvise to a certain extent during filming; in other words, they were encouraged to spontaneously deviate from the written script as they felt appropriate. The overall process of episode development evolved over time, as youth became more involved in leading the creative storytelling process, and the result was a digital storytelling product that includes prevention messages and that was developed by the target audience. We are currently developing a curriculum that documents this episode development process. The product of these efforts is a series that is very relevant and appealing to Latino youth audiences, and is grounded in the experiences of this group. After development, filming and editing of each episode, they were posted on the *Adelante* Youtube channel, and cross-posted on the V&E blog page. The blog page was developed prior to the launch of the *Adelante* program website. The episodes were disseminated widely through text messaging by youth and posting on the *Adelante* Facebook page https://www.facebook.com/victoranderika?hc_location=timeline, with the goal that a broader audience of Latino youth living in Langley Park would become interested in the storyline of V&E and would become involved with the *Adelante* program or participate in the program through the interactive *Adelante* website that was launched in December of 2014. It may also be the case – and this is the next step in our research – that youth viewing V&E episodes might incorporate elements of the brand identity and thus change their own behavior trajectories.

Qualitative Analysis

For character development of the V&E protagonists, we analyzed transcripts using substantive coding to identify themes that emerged among groups of participants (Maxwell, 2009). For development of the V&E storyline, we reviewed the discussions that took place during the creative development sessions with youth participants and conducted thematic content analysis. We coded session transcripts into broad topic areas, allowing us to map

concepts and key issues for webnovela episodes. The following section provides a description of the resultant characters, major themes identified in the analyses and an overview of the content for the webnovela episodes.

RESULTS

Based on formative research and creative development sessions with *Adelante* youth, the following overall characters and storyline were created:

Victor and Erika live in Langley Park, MD an immigrant Latino community, where they experience a number of risks. Despite living in a community full of temptations and perils, Victor and Erika are two determined, resilient Latino youth. Both experience complex challenges at home and in school that require them to grow up quickly to move forward in life. This year, Victor and Erika's troubled past and hopeful present meet, and their future depends on the decisions they make.

Victor is about to turn 17 and has had a turbulent life. He and his family are undocumented and his father was recently deported for drunk driving. With his father gone and his mother working two jobs to support him and his younger brother and sister, he works to bring home extra money. He finds inner strength in his girlfriend Erika and his job at a local electronics shop. He looks forward to finishing high school next year. Victor dreams of going to college and starting his own IT business. Victor is strong, confident, and independent, but he is constantly surrounded by people and circumstances that present challenges to his plan. Victor never used to take his education seriously. However, after seeing his dad get deported, he realized that without a high school diploma he could also get deported if he got in trouble with the law. After this realization, he decided to change. But bad habits are hard to break, and dating Erika has caused him more problems because of her ex-boyfriend, a local gang member. Everything starts to get overwhelming, but with the support of a mentor from the Adelante program, things are looking up for him.

Erika is almost 16. She's smart, speaks English and has always done well in school. She is in the U.S. legally, but has an older sister, who is 17 and undocumented. She is outgoing, happy and friendly despite the challenges in her life. Her mother works two jobs and her father is still with the family but has gone to South Carolina to take a job (and send back money). She has a past full of risky decisions, which come back to haunt her. Her home situation has recently changed when her sister joined them from their home country and this has affected household dynamics. Last year she started hanging out with gang-involved friends. During that time she dated Ricardo. After a bad experience with him she ended the relationship. However, Ricardo keeps pursuing her and is ready to "squash" anyone who foils his plan. She doesn't like to spend time at home, and would rather be out with her friends, but her grades are starting to slip. Victor wants her to focus on school so they can both graduate.

The webnovela takes viewers through different aspects of these protagonists' lives, bringing up issues that are at the forefront of modern teenage life (themes identified in analyses), including sex, unintended pregnancy, fidelity, trust, family dynamics, immigration status,

violence, school drop-out, respect, home life, and poverty. Ultimately, the *V&E* series shows immigrant Latinos thriving, even when the cards seem stacked against them, and it shows the lengths they will go to keep their families and relationships together. Viewers live vicariously through Victor and Erika, experiencing the emotions, realities, and consequences of their decisions. Through the topics included in the series and the modeling of behavior, the series has an educational quality, promoting positive decision-making with the goal of preventing risky behavior among viewers. Finally, the protagonists are the embodiment of the *Adelante* brand identity and represent the concept of “turning the corner” to a better life, or resilience in the face of adversity. The *V&E* storyline for episodes 1–6 is as follows:

Episode 1 - First Day of School

Victor and Erika return to high school from summer vacation, and conflict arises when Erika’s ex-boyfriend, Ricardo, picks a fight with Victor. After insults push Victor over the edge, a fight breaks out. A lunchroom full of students watch and record the incident on their cellular phones, landing Victor in the Principal’s office. Victor has a lot on the line and risks it all to defend his girlfriend’s honor. Between January 22nd and December 22nd, 2014, this episode received 2,059 views on the *Adelante* Youtube channel.

Episode 2 - Two Lines

Victor and Erika are at Erika’s house, where they have a misunderstanding about being intimate. Victor is jealous of her past relationship with Ricardo, and leaves angry. Victor rides with his *Adelante* Case Manager, Sebastian, to his new job, during which Victor has an opportunity to reflect on his fight at school, his new job, responsible decision-making, and moving forward in life. Erika and Victor face a new challenge when she discovers she is pregnant, but there is a twist. Between February 25th and December 22, 2014, Episode 2 had received 1,315 views on the *Adelante* Youtube channel.

Episode 3 – The Secret

Victor is busy at his new job at a mobile phone/computer repair store, and during his lunch break he meets up with his friend, Nicole. Victor admits that Erika and he are fighting, and Nicole reveals shocking details about Erika. The plot thickens as more people become involved in Erika’s secret. Both Erika and Victor face important decisions. Between April 6th and December 22, 2014, Episode 3 had received 1,077 views on the *Adelante* Youtube channel.

Episode 4 - Decisions

The scene opens at a local community clinic. Erika is seen by a midwife and a counselor, where they discuss her pregnancy test results, potential health risks, and the circumstances surrounding her pregnancy. While Erika is in her counseling session, Raquel, Erika’s sister, is waiting for her outside the clinic, where she aggressively confronts Ricardo’s twin brother, Fabio, who she mistakes for Ricardo. Between May 9th and December 22, 2014, Episode 4 had received 1,112 views on the *Adelante* Youtube channel.

Episode 5 - Together

Victor and Nicole are leaving a shop with flowers to apologize to Erika. Meanwhile, Fabio confronts his brother, Ricardo, about the incident with Raquel. Ricardo denies harsh accusations and seeks out Erika to settle the score. As Victor approaches Erika's house, he is met by Ricardo, whose arrival preceded his. Victor stands at the front door holding flowers and in shock. Between June 11th and December 22, 2014, Episode 5 had received 674 views on the *Adelante* Youtube channel.

Episode 6 - Resilience

There is a physical altercation between Victor and Ricardo after their encounter at Erika's house. Victor leaves and is tormented by the situation. Victor is tested by how he chooses to deal with his troubles, and considers drinking. Erika's pregnancy takes an unexpected turn, and the future of Victor and Erika's relationship hangs in the balance. Between September 7th and December 22, 2014, Episode 6 had received 561 views on the *Adelante* Youtube channel. From January 22nd to December 22nd, 2014, additional views of the entire webnovela playlist were captured on the Adelante Youtube channel (588 views) and on the Victor and Erika blog page (423 views).

DISCUSSION

The *V&E* webnovela contributes to the overall branding strategy of the *Adelante* intervention, in portraying ideals of the *Adelante* brand, guiding youth to understand life choices and consequences, and disseminating prevention messages through a form of entertainment education. This webnovela is also more than just a branding and communications tool, it is also an intervention and engagement tool. Through the process of involving youth in character development and episode creation and enactment, participants gain: *Competencies* in acting, screenplay writing, video production, communications/messaging, self-expression and leadership; *Confidence*; *Connection* to their peers and to their cultural group; and *Contribution* to their community through the dissemination of risk prevention messages. This contributes to the overall PYD approach to risk prevention, which emphasizes the building of individual, group and community assets (the C's). Participation in this form of storytelling also provides an outlet for youth to work through challenges they have in their daily lives and to communicate to a broader peer audience about these experiences. In terms of audience engagement, the *V&E* webnovela also creates a mechanism through which a broader audience of youth can connect with *Adelante*, with other youth their age, and can engage in a discussion of issues affecting Latino teenagers today. The *V&E* series has the potential to effectively engage youth in prevention topics, especially since the series was developed by youth, and the storyline's authenticity appeals to this audience's interests. The series has indeed proven to be popular among youth who attend school with the actors, with comments like "hey, you're the guy from that video" and "I want to be part of this." The next phase in our research will examine the level of engagement of youth in the series and in the brand.

The strategy of online engagement of Latino immigrant youth in the *Adelante* program and in prevention topics through webnovelas has demonstrated itself to be appropriate for four

reasons: 1) youth are increasingly present online, especially through mobile devices. Even the most digitally marginalized populations have increasing access to mobile phones for viewing of online content and engagement in social media. Latino youth in Langley Park are no exception. Furthermore, Langley Park has been one of the leading destinations for recently-arrived, undocumented and/or unaccompanied Latino immigrant youth. Approximately half of *Adelante* program participants are recently arrived immigrant youth, having arrived to the U.S. within the past year. The V&E series is heavily promoted among *Adelante* participants and has potential to reach this particularly vulnerable population with prevention messaging. 2) Latino youth in low-income urban settings cannot always travel to community center sites for in-person activities for a number of reasons, such as an unsafe community context, cost for bus fare, time constraints, or family obligations. Online activities are a useful alternative. When youth cannot be physically present, they can still access prevention information and interact with their peers and *Adelante*. Furthermore, youth centers with limited space may not have the capacity (staff or space) to serve more than 15–20 youth at a time. Online activities can reach hundreds or thousands at a time. 3) Youth respond to the video format, which seems more like entertainment and less like health class; thus it is an effective way to communicate prevention messages. 4) Based in storytelling, the webnovela is innovative, dramatic, engaging, and culturally appropriate for Latino youth, who have clearly demonstrated a great deal of creativity, enthusiasm and interest in the making and watching of the web series.

There were some limitations to the current study that should be noted. First, the study was for formative development and pilot testing of the V&E episodes only. In addition, the sample of youth participants in the V&E session development and enactment were a convenience sample, and may not represent all Latino youth living in Langley Park or in other immigrant communities. Furthermore, although all youth participants were immigrant Latinos, most were predominantly English-speaking or bilingual in Spanish, and their perspectives may not be reflective of more recent immigrant, Spanish-speaking youth. A final limitation is the limited data collection on consumption of the series by immigrant Latino youth or youth in our program. With the launch of the *Adelante* program webpage in December of 2014, we are now adding capabilities to track consumption.

For the V&E series future plans include the production of additional episodes in Season 2, dissemination of the series through film screenings and at film festivals, and arranged talks between Langley Park youth and the V&E actors. We also have plans to utilize the V&E webnovela as an online engagement tool through a portal on the *Adelante* program website, where youth can engage in dialogue about the social and health issues raised, propose content and become involved in episode production. Through the *Adelante* website, we will track consumption as a next step in our research. Furthermore, an additional step in our research will be to evaluate actual behavior change by program participants in the areas of substance abuse, sexual risk and interpersonal violence as part of the larger *Adelante* quasi-experimental evaluation study. As part of this larger study, we will model *Adelante* brand equity as a mediator on *Adelante* program risk behavior outcomes. Future studies should quantitatively examine engagement effects of E-E and digital storytelling on brand equity, program participation, and behavioral outcomes.

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