

# Member Spotlight: Gabriela Chavira, Ph.D.



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## **How did you choose developmental science as a career?**

As an undergraduate psychology major, I didn't feel as if my lived experiences were represented in the textbooks and articles I read. And, I wondered about the experiences of other youth from similar backgrounds as mine. Navigating through the education system. I became most interested in the roles of families and schools in supporting children along their educational journeys.

## **Is there a mentor or mentors who have been instrumental to your career path so far, and, if so, who and how?**

Brennis Lucero-Wagoner, a neuropsychologist at California State University Northridge (CSU Northridge), mentored me in research and helped me prepare for graduate studies. Initially, I was interested in pursuing cognitive developmental psychology. However, after reading Catherine Cooper and Hal Grotevant's research

on individuation in relationships and adolescent identity development, I knew that I wanted Catherine to be my mentor. She treated me as a "professional in training" and helped uncover the hidden curriculum of academia. I don't think I would have gone into academia without her guidance.

**What advice would you give to a prospective graduate student thinking about beginning their Ph.D. studies in the developmental science field?**

Find a team of mentors who can guide you through graduate studies and beyond. Don't expect one person to meet all your needs. Also, passion and determination will get you through. I was never the "smartest" in a room full of very smart people, but I knew that I had something that many lacked – ganas – a Spanish term that means "desire," but it goes beyond that. It is about having a will, desire, strength, and determination to succeed.

**What is your best SRCD memory?**

My first SRCD Biennial Meeting was in 1997 in Washington D.C. Hilary Clinton was then First Lady of the United States and served as a keynote speaker, and we protested against the government's decision to end the welfare program, affecting millions of low-income children and their families. I felt like I found a community.

**Why did you join the [Latinx Caucus](#) and how does it facilitate connection among members all year long?**

I joined the Latinx Caucus because, after attending several meetings, I still felt like an "outsider," and didn't feel that the organization addressed the needs of Latinx and immigrant youth and families.

We are a familia within the Latinx Caucus. We support one another. And it is a great place to network with like-minded scholars.