

Background

- College enrollment increased among Hispanic students¹
- Number of Latinx students pursuing and graduating with a STEM degree is lower than White students²
- Hispanics/Latinxs comprise 16% of the U.S. workforce, only 7% of the STEM workforce is composed of these individuals¹
- Family's perspectives and beliefs affect the education and career path many youth pursue³
- Parental encouragement is a strong predictor of Latinx students' early educational aspirations⁴
- Some Latinx students do not feel supported by their families in regard to their STEM pursuit⁵

Research Question

What is the role of family among Latinx youth pursuing higher education and careers in the sciences?

Method

Context and Participants

- 11 Latinx students (54% high school, 45% college), with an mean age of 18.
- Over half the sample identified as male (55%).

Procedure

- One-on-one in-depth, semi-structured interviews with Latinx HS students from a science-support program.

Interview Protocol

- Included questions on experiences being in a science-support program and perceived support and the general perception of their families and peers.

Qualitative Analysis

- Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim.
- Transcripts coded inductively, using a thematic analysis approach (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003).

Results: What is the **positive** role of family in Latinx youth pursuing higher education and careers in the sciences?

Strong Sense of Pride in the Student

"My parents' hope for me is **not to work in a factory** as the actual worker because they think it's a **heavy job that doesn't pay** that well that you're at high risk and you can get injured."

"I guess, when I talk about it, they see how passionate I am about science, or it **makes them be more supportive**, and they let me know that, 'Yeah, it's **gonna be hard, but just not to give up. It'll be worth it.**'"

Positive Perceptions about Studying Science

High Educational Expectations from Family

"So that was **not an option, to have a minimum wage job** because they said, 'We coulda just stayed at Belize if you wanna just come here to have a minimum wage job. **We came for a better future**, not to keep the same.'"

Results: What is the **negative** role of family in Latinx youth pursuing higher education and careers in the sciences?

Traditional Gender Roles

"Instead of being there, you **have to figure things out for yourself**, and do things yourself. Rather than getting help from them or support."

"When you're a girl...you're not really even supposed to be in school. You finish school...you get married, have kids, and **the man is the one supposed to be providing** for you...There's **no reason for you to be in school**, when you're meant to be the one at home."

Lack of Instrumental Supports

"My aunt had gotten into Northwestern—and then my grandma just flat out said, 'You're not going. You're not gonna go,' 'cuz **she didn't value it and it was expensive.**'"

High Costs Associated with Attending College

Conclusions

- Study highlights familial barriers and factors that promote and support Latinx students pursuing STEM.
- Results can have implication on interventions to better support Latinx students and their families, while considering potential barriers and promotive factors.
- Biased sample – Latinx students who were motivated and interested in the sciences given their participation in a science support program.
- Future studies should consider recruiting a broader sample of students from predominantly Latinx schools.

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References

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