Latinxs and Hispanics in Mathematical Sciences

Claudia Galindo

"Hispanic Heritage Month is a good time to recognize and elevate the struggles and accomplishments of the Latinx community in the United States. However, sometimes it feels that this celebration focus on superficial dimension of what it means to be Latinx and does not foster substantive understanding of our history. There is so much "wealth" in our communities (e.g., values, aspirations) that I wish that Hispanic Heritage Month would focus more our strengths and histories. Nevertheless, Hispanic Heritage Month is a space to enjoy our accomplishment but also to affirm our commitment to continue dismantling inequalities. I look forward to celebrating our heritage year-round!"

Claudia Galindo is an associate professor of education policy at the University of Maryland, College Park. Her research, teaching, and service demonstrate a strong commitment to improving educational opportunities for racial and ethnic minority students in K-12 grades, with an emphasis on the Latinx community. Her projects highlight the cultural assets and strengths of Latinx families and children and are grounded in eco-cultural perspectives, which emphasize the importance of structural, historical, and cultural contexts as well as the interactions among those contexts. Her research also examines key mechanisms in families and schools that may perpetuate or ameliorate inequalities.

Addressing issues of math learning as they relate to the school and family experiences of Latinx students in the early years is at the core of Dr. Galindo's research. In one of her published papers on the math achievement gaps in the early years, she showed that Latinx children are dramatically behind their peers in math skills as they enter kindergarten, in large part due to their initial low levels of English proficiency and lack of socioeconomic resources (Reardon & Galindo, 2009). Her research doesn't simply document math learning disadvantages, but also illuminates the cultural strengths of Latinx families and children. For instance, she found that although Latinx children are entering school with academic disadvantages, they have strong social skills, which are key drivers of academic and labor market outcomes (Galindo & Fuller, 2010). Moreover, her research has examined how Latina mothers facilitate children's math learning and the multiple socialization approaches to teach math that Latina mothers take, regardless of their education levels. The results from this paper also identified potential areas for optimizing family engagement in math, developing interventions that facilitate culturally responsive teaching in the classroom, and strengthening family-school partnerships (Galindo et al., 2019).

Overall, as a teacher, she strives to prepare future scholars and educational leaders to affect change in the field of education and the lives of K-12 students, especially students in underserved and low-resource communities. One way to do this is by teaching applied statistics courses at the graduate level. These applied statistics courses provide training in descriptive and inferential statistics with social science applications. These statistics courses also emphasize how to use procedures and interpret results. Students in her class also spend a significant amount of time discussing the importance of being systematic and rigorous, as well as the limitations of quantitative research. In addition to her graduate-level courses, mentoring is a very important aspect of her teaching. She constantly involves graduate and undergraduate students in her ongoing research projects, presentations, and publications.