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Member Spotlight: Gabriela Livas Stein, Ph.D.

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What does the Latinx Caucus mean to you?

To put it succinctly, the Latinx Caucus is my academic family, and like most Latinx families, it is big, festive, and connected. As a familism researcher, I see the many ways in which these values permeate the Caucus - the sense of obligation and duty to do our best for our community, pushing ourselves to shine a bright light on our wonderfully resilient and diverse community, the way our Caucus provides social, instrumental and emotional support to all of our members whether at the biennial or anytime a Caucus member reaches out, and how we are inspired by the more senior leaders who paved the way for us and who we work hard to honor their legacy.

Without the Latinx Caucus, I wouldn't be where I am today.

What's your favorite aspect of SRCD membership?

In addition to the Latinx Caucus, my favorite part of my SRCD membership is the connection I get to build with other academics across the country. We work together to bring national attention to issues of equity and inclusion whether through the work with the other Caucuses or when I was a member of the Ethnic Racial Issues Committee. Through these collaborations, I learned about issues facing other minoritized communities and the innovative work that my colleagues are doing in their own research.

What words of wisdom might you pass on to someone on their very first day after deciding to get a Ph.D. in developmental science or related?

Always stay centered on what drives you to do this work. Write down why you are pursuing this degree - both personal and academic reasons - and keep revisiting and revising this as you go through your program. Who are you hoping to help with your research? What research questions excite you? What will you get to do with your degree when you are done? Who is in your corner that motivates you (e.g, your family, etc)? The daily life of grad school can take you astray from these, and that can add to your stress, so make sure to keep these in mind and try to do things related to your why each week.

What is something you learned in the last month?

This summer we have discovered that the link between mental health functioning and academic motivation and outcomes in Latinx youth is not consistent with research in other groups that typically finds a connection. We have now seen this in three different samples of Latinx youth and their families where mental health symptoms do not impede academic motivation and/or outcomes - and most recently - this was during COVID-19. This suggests to me that Latinx youth push themselves no matter if they are not doing well emotionally, and that other societal drivers continue to serve as academic barriers for our population.

The 2021 Hispanic Heritage Month theme from the National Council of Hispanic Employment Program Managers is "Esperanza: A Celebration of Hispanic Heritage and Hope.' What brings you hope?

I feel hope every time I meet with Latinx undergrad and graduate students whose ideas, passion, energy, intelligence, drive, and creativity will change our field. They will bring new insights to the study of Latinx children, adolescents, and their families, and they will conduct community-engaged work that will endeavor to solve problems alongside their community. They will mentor and train a new generation of development scientists. They will build on the legacy of past Latinx developmental scientists, and more importantly, the legacy of their own families who brought them here for better lives. That brings me hope for my community, and for our field.

Visit the

Latinx Caucus website

to learn about benefits, networking opportunities, and more!