

Latina Futures 2050 Lab: From California Through the Nation

Researchers across the state are collaborating with scholars nationwide, fueled by Latina Futures grants and deepening engagement and influence

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The past few months have been a rich period of discovery, highlighted by thought-provoking literature, and a conference that drew experts from across the continent.

Latina Futures 2050 Lab cosponsored the inaugural “Quebrando Barreras: Breaking Barriers in STEM Conference,” a two-day event on UCLA campus that drew approximately 270 attendees from across the United States, Canada, and Mexico, representing 56 institutions.

The April 17-18 gathering, hosted alongside the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center (CSRC) and the UCLA Physical Sciences Division, offered attendees [three tracks with nine concurrent sessions](#) that dug deep into chemistry, other STEM fields, and personal journeys of perseverance and success.

In addition, Latina Futures scholars contributed essays to the Spring 2026 edition of *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies*. This [first of two Latina Futures 2050 Lab Dossiers in the journal](#) features the research by fourteen faculty whose writings capture the lived experiences of Latinas, including those who identify as Afro-Latinas, Indigenous, queer and/or trans. Veronica Terriquez, CSRC director, authored the Dossier’s introduction and offers valuable data that underlines the importance of researching Latina’s livelihoods and wellbeing: in 1970, Latinas made up fewer than one in twenty women nationwide; by 2023, they accounted for nearly one in five.

Access the Dossier in [Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies](#).
<https://online.ucpress.edu/aztlan/issue/51/1>

Latina Futures continues to reveal how its California-based grants can organically grow with faculty-led collaborations with scholars and communities around the nation. This summer, will be publishing new research, connecting California to Washington State and as far as Wisconsin.

A few months ago, Latina Futures researcher [Bernardette J. Pinetta](#), assistant professor of psychology at UC Riverside, coauthored a study published in [Psychology of Women](#), focused on understanding how girls and young women's lives — as well as their identities and sense of self—are affected by their experience with race and gender-based discrimination.

Pinetta worked alongside first author [Taina B. Quiles-Kwock](#), a recent graduate of the University of Virginia and a University of California research consultant, as well as Gabrielle Kubi, a postdoctoral research fellow at Boston College; Channing Mathews, assistant professor of psychology at University of Virginia; and Seanna Leath, associate professor of psychology and brain sciences at Washington University in St. Louis.

The authors used *pláticas* as a mode of interviewing and capturing qualitative data. According to the authors, “*pláticas* was originally developed as a community-centered approach to working with Latinx populations in research settings that honors cultural traditions of mutualistic and authentic relationship building; this methodological approach aligns with similar cultural methods like ‘kitchen table talks’ that stem from shared values of relationality and collectivism within Black communities.”

“Considering how research has documented the significant threats internalized gendered racism poses to Black, Latina, and Afro-Latina girls’ well-being, more research is needed to explore how we can support girls and young women as they cope with and challenge gendered-racial stereotypes,” the authors stated in the paper. “In the current study, we merged self-definition theory and the integrative model of ethnic-racial and critical consciousness to explore how Black, Latina, and Afro-Latina girls and young women critically reflect on and resist gendered-racial stereotypes to form positive self-valuations.”

Access the full article in [Psychology of Women](#).
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/03616843251394698#con1>

[María G. Rendón](#), associate professor of urban planning and policy at UC Irvine and Latina Futures researcher, [authored an article in Life Sciences Education](#) focused on the gender parity that has been reached in biology and biomedical sciences in the U.S. However, her research points to a crucial fact: despite gender parity in the field, race and class disparities persist among women in biology.

Most existing research examines the experience of underrepresented minority (URM) students at predominantly white and affluent universities. Rendón’s work focuses on diverse college campuses, often known as minority serving institutions (MSI). Rendón’s coauthors were Glenda M. Flores, professor of sociology with UCI’s Department of

Chicano/Latino Studies, and David R. Schaefer, professor of sociology with UCI's Department of Sociology. Together they examined qualitative data from a diverse sample of biology students at one University of California MSI campus to analyze how Latinas' experience in the major compares with that of self-identified Black and Asian American women.

"Specifically, we combine two qualitative datasets to examine the factors that shape Latina experiences in this STEM field, and how they are similar or different from self-identified Asian and Black undergraduate women, who are either attributed with the model minority myth and stereotype lift or deal with stereotype threat," the authors stated.

Rendón and her collaborators found that most Latina and African American study participants noted distinct class and racial dynamics that made their experience in the competitive major at times unwelcoming, less collaborative, and more difficult, compared to Asian and white-presenting Latinas.

"First, low-income and working-class students pointed to unequal K-12 schooling that left them academically disadvantaged to many of their middle and upper-class peers at UC-MSI. They noted class bias in the major, which was racially inflected in favor of STEM-dominant Asian students. These women experienced and understood the competition in biology differently, questioning the 'neutrality' of academic expectations and norms in the major and the belief that success in biology came about primarily through hard work and effort," the authors wrote in the study. "These students quickly confronted structural disadvantages in relation to most of their biology peers, voicing how class and race intersected and shaped their experience in the major. Secondly, working-class Latinas and Black women, most who were middle-class in this study, identified racial dynamics and stereotypes in the major that made collaboration with this group hard to establish."

Access the full article in [*Life Sciences Education*](https://www.lifescied.org/doi/10.1187/cbe.25-05-0101).
<https://www.lifescied.org/doi/10.1187/cbe.25-05-0101>

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