

**Peering a generation into the future: NSF's Young Scholars Program (YSP) and the nation’s STEM workforce**

Eric Hamilton, Pepperdine University (eric.hamilton@pepperdine.edu)
Seung Lee, Pepperdine University (seung.lee@pepperdine.edu)

NSF Award Number: 2109443 Dates: 2021 - 2023

Project type: EAGER

Project Overview: The study seeks to assess retrospectively the impact of the 1990s era Young Scholars Program (YSP) on STEM workforce development and to develop insights for future NSF workforce programs. for fut

**New Challenges & Next Steps**

* ***What have you needed to reconsider?***Ways for integrating survey and interview data in the analysis (ENA models)
* ***What have you been able to creatively overcome and how?***Use of social media and public information databases to gather participant contact information
* ***What are you still grappling with?***Currently exploring approaches to effectively incorporate participant affect in the analysis of interview data

**Equity**

* Findings show that having a diverse group of participants contributed to enhancing their sense of belonging and identity, especially for students from underrepresented groups and communities.
* Analyses have examined factors affected the STEM workforce participation of underrepresented groups, including Black, Latinx, Native American and female individuals.

**Lessons Learned & Insights Gained**

* Insight: Acquiring STEM skills and career paths rarely if ever occurred outside of rich and holistic social contexts ~ the social context and the STEM activities proved synergistic.
* Lesson Learned (Methodological): How to apply of epistemic network analysis (ENA) to model the connections between YSP experiences, social-cognitive factors, and subsequent academic and career pathways.

The combination of STEM learning, exposure to new experiences, engagement with like-minded peers, and a holistic sense of identity and belonging was central to developing STEM interest and subsequent careers.