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Challenging Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs: Perspectives of Latino Migrant Adolescents in U.S. Agriculture

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Introduction. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) has been popularized in the psychology of business as the predominate theory to explain human motivation; however, its applicability to populations beyond those of Western, individualistic cultures remains ambiguous. As the hierarchy progresses toward higher motivations, a greater emphasis is placed on independence and realizing one's own potential; however, there is limited information on the appropriateness of this theory regarding individuals from cultures that alternatively emphasize interdependence.

Purpose. The qualitative study had two core aims. First, we explored the extent to which Maslow's original theory applies to Latino migrant adolescents in U.S. agriculture. Second, we proposed a more culturally-appropriate model based on cultural influences that may take place for Latino migrant adolescents.

Methods. To accomplish these aims, we analyzed $N = 20$ semi-structured voice-recorded interviews transcribed in Spanish with migrant farmworker youth from Guatemala and Mexico (aged 15 to 20 years old). Deductive analysis was utilized to determine the applicability of Maslow's Hierarchy before subsequently identifying themes not formerly addressed in the theory through inductive methods.

Results. The foundational motivations of physiological and safety needs remain pertinent to the Latino farmworker youth population. However, higher motivations, proceeding toward the top of Maslow's Hierarchy, were less universally applicable. Instead, findings highlighted that collectivistic upbringings (i.e., benefit of community) and a focus on family-oriented values (i.e. familism, or *familismo*), informed a hierarchy prioritizing familial love, communal sacrifice, co-actualization, and meaning of life through family and work.

Discussion. This revised hierarchy accounts for cultural differences and family upbringings of the focal population. Future research should seek to determine the applicability of the revised hierarchy to other groups of adolescents to identify any variability on the basis of ethnic group membership, age, socio-economic status, and U.S. region.