

Mixed-race youth feel less cohesion with mothers, but greater independence

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(Phys.org)—Multiethnic and mixed-race youth feel less satisfied with their moms—but more independent—compared to other youth, according to a new University of Michigan study.

U-M researcher Elma Lorenzo-Blanco and colleagues compared parenting and family-related experiences between multiethnic/mixed-race youth and those from one racial/[ethnic background](#).

Data came from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, which included responses from nearly 9,000 12- to 17-year-olds. Teens and [preteens](#) were first sampled in 1997 and assessed annually in several areas—such as education, [drug use](#), mental health and [family relationships](#)/events—until 2008.

The youth assessed the quality of mother-adolescent and father-adolescent relationships, as well as parental monitoring, support and control.

Mixed-race youth had the lowest mean score and white youth the highest for mother-adolescent relationships and maternal support, the study showed. For father-adolescent relationships, African-American youth had the lowest score, while whites had the highest.

Mothers may be more affected by parenting challenges because they may spend more time with children and/or feel a greater sense of responsibility for their children's welfare compared to men—due to gendered parenting roles and expectations, said Lorenzo-Blanco, a U-M [graduate student](#) in psychology and women's studies.

And if these additional parenting responsibilities take a toll on the mother's well-being, this "may hinder their ability to respond to their children's needs and form closer bonds with them," she said.

Mixed-race youth also indicated their parents exerted less control than other ethnic groups surveyed and reported the lowest score for daily family routines.

"Altogether, these findings may indicate that mixed race/multiethnic youth may generally experience less cohesion with and support from their mothers (but not fathers)," Lorenzo-Blanco said.

Parents of mixed-race children may feel helpless in effectively supporting their children if they don't experience the same racial issues as their children, she said.

"Parents may only be learning to cope with their own feelings of inadequacy as parents of mixed-race/multiethnic children, let alone being able to effectively guide their [children](#)," Lorenzo-Blanco said.

More information: The findings appear in the current issue of *Family Relations*: onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/famr.12292

Provided by University of Michigan

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