

Fathers plays a critical role in family values for Mexican-origin youth

April 11 2016

Past research has indicated that Latino families, particularly Mexican-origin families, tend to be more family oriented and place a significant emphasis on family time. New research from the University of Missouri found that a father's family values can predict family values held by Mexican-origin youth as well as family time for late adolescents. Research also indicated that the link between family time and young adults' depressive symptoms depended on parental acceptance and warmth.

"Familism refers to an individual's identification with and attachment to family; it is characterized by a sense of responsibility, loyalty and solidarity among [family members](#)," said Katharine Zeiders, assistant professor of human development and family science in the College of Human Environmental Sciences. "Familism is a core cultural value among Latinos; yet, until now we have known little about the precise role it plays in youth development."

The study is among the first to address the long term implications of parental family values on social development among Mexican-origin [young adults](#). Zeiders and her colleagues followed families across an eight-year period to test whether mothers' and fathers' familism values, and the interaction of those values, had a developmental impact on adolescents. They tested youths' familism values in [middle adolescence](#) and the proportion of time youth spent in shared activities with family members as possible mechanisms linking familism values to [depressive symptoms](#) in young adulthood.

Researchers found that fathers' familism values, not mothers' values, predicted the values held by sons and daughters in middle adolescence. Those values carried over to predict the amount of time daughters spent with their families in late adolescence. Family time, in turn, predicted fewer youth depressive symptoms when parental warmth was high; however, when parental warmth was low, family time predicted greater depressive symptoms in girls.

"When it comes to [family values](#) and family time, dynamics within the family need to be considered," said Zeiders. "Simply spending time together is not adequate if relationships within the [family](#) unit are strained and if warmth and acceptance is missing from the parent-child relationship."

The study was published in the *Journal of Marriage and Family*.

More information: "Familism Values, Family Time and Mexican-Origin Young Adults' Depressive Symptoms," *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 2016.

Provided by University of Missouri-Columbia

Citation: Fathers plays a critical role in family values for Mexican-origin youth (2016, April 11) retrieved 14 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2016-04-fathers-critical-role-family-values.html>

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