

Acculturation may be a predictor of psychological birth trauma adolescent Latina moms

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Acculturation may play a key role in psychological birth trauma among young Latina mothers, according to a study by a researcher at the University of Texas at Arlington's College of Nursing and Health Innovation.

But the relationship between psychological birth [trauma](#) and acculturation, a process in which one culture overshadows another, among Hispanic adolescent mothers is largely unexplored and that needs to change in light of the state's rapidly changing racial and ethnic demographics, said Cheryl Anderson, a UTA associate professor of nursing. Psychological birth trauma is a form of mental or emotional distress suffered by some mothers following childbirth.

In the study, which was published in the July edition of the journal *Hispanic Health Care International*, Anderson observed a sample of 66 Hispanic females between 13 and 19. Most of them were either first or second generation Americans. Anderson noted that lack of support and depression have been associated with psychological birth trauma for both adolescents and adults. Age has also been associated with higher risks for PTSD. Compared to some other ethnic groups, young Latinas are more likely to have some form of support from other women, particularly during childbirth. Anderson believes that for this reason, there may be additional factors that contribute to psychological trauma in this [population](#).

But given the relatively large number of births by younger Latinas, Anderson said, more research needs to be done to determine if acculturation is a risk factor than contributes to a more traumatic birth experience.

The article was co-written by Sarah Strickland, a registered nurse who served as Anderson's graduate assistant.

Hispanics, the largest ethnic group in the United States, make up approximately 15 percent of the population. More than half of them reside in Florida, California or Texas and about half of married Hispanic households in the United States include children who are 18 or younger, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. In general, birthrates for young Latinas are higher than that of any other group: 38 out of 1000 compared to 23 in 1000 for the rest of the population. But no research exists on the link between acculturation and psychological birth trauma, said Anderson.

Anderson's study is an example of UTA's commitment to conducting high impact research and developing diagnostic, prognostic and technological advancements that will help people live longer, healthier and happier lives.

"There's less literature on childbearing minorities than on whites. It's imperative for us as Texans to know that," she said. "We have a high population of Hispanics. This has practice implications for healthcare providers in this state, especially those in border towns with higher Hispanic populations. We need to have more research that looks at acculturation as it relates to the birth experience."

Anne Bavier, dean of the College of Nursing and Health Innovation, called the study an important building block in tackling [health](#) issues among some [ethnic groups](#). Health and the Human Condition is one of

the four pillars of UTA's Strategic Plan 2020 Bold Solutions | Global Impact.

"We can't have a healthy, vibrant state or nation if the health care needs of a significant percentage of our population are not thoroughly understood," said Bavier. "Cheryl has spent nearly a decade studying birth trauma and PTSD among young [birth](#) mothers. But this study is particularly remarkable because it views this subject through the acculturation lens."

Provided by University of Texas at Arlington

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