

Talking with parents empowers Latino youths to engage in community

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When Latino youths lend their voices to political causes—from immigration policies that have separated families to recent Black Lives Matter protests—their resilience originates from home.

A new University of Michigan study suggests that when Latino youths have conversations surrounding their ethnic heritage and history at home, they also tend to discuss contemporary political issues. These discussions embrace a greater sense of collective responsibility for helping [community members](#) in need.

"These findings come at a critical juncture in time, providing insight into ways we, as a society, can support the positive ethnic-racial identity development and build the civic capacity of Latinx [youth](#)," said Bernardette Pinetta, the study's lead author and a graduate student in the U-M Combined Program in Education and Psychology.

Pinetta and colleagues wanted to better understand the developmental outcomes and [civic participation](#) Latino youths exhibit after [political discussions](#) they have at home, a group that "has been severely understudied in terms of their civic engagement early in life," they said.

"The idea is that these conversations, at home or in their communities, can be empowering among youth in communities that are marginalized, and ultimately set the stage for activism as youth get older," said co-author Deborah Rivas-Drake, professor of psychology and education.

To understand how Latino youths fight back against oppressive forces, 267 self-identified Latino adolescents attending [middle schools](#) in the Midwest answered questions in 2018-2019 about the messages they received from their parents surrounding their ethnic-racial culture and the sociopolitical climate. They also responded to questions about how accountable they felt in regard to their civic responsibilities.

The findings indicated that more sociopolitical discussions and cultural socialization were linked to more collective responsibility. These discussions were also associated with future expectations for community involvement.

The findings appear in the current issue of the *American Journal of Community Psychology*.

More information: Bernardette J. Pinetta et al. Inherently Political? Associations of Parent Ethnic–Racial Socialization and Sociopolitical Discussions with Latinx Youths' Emergent Civic Engagement, *American Journal of Community Psychology* (2020). [DOI: 10.1002/ajcp.12435](https://doi.org/10.1002/ajcp.12435)

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