

Encouraging Latinx youth to embrace ethnic pride can enhance their well-being

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Encouraging Latinx adolescents of Mexican origin to embrace their ethnic pride, cultural values, and connections to their cultural community contributes to positive development and better adjustment during

adolescence, a new University of California, Davis, psychology study suggests.

Moreover, researchers said, cultural preservation can help Latinx youth cope with adverse life experiences and social threats such as racism and discrimination.

The study results were published in *Developmental Psychology*, an American Psychological Association Journal.

"We found evidence suggesting that increasing ethnic pride and connection to cultural values may significantly improve psychological well-being for Mexican-origin adolescents," said Lisa Johnson, lead author and doctoral student in the UC Davis Department of Psychology and the Center for Mind and Brain.

In this study, researchers collected questionnaires from nearly 700 Latinx adolescents when they were 14 and 16 years old and in ninth and 11th grades between 2011 and 2014. Participants completed a battery of self-report measures capturing their ethnic pride and endorsement of traditional Mexican values as well as their sense of well-being across multiple social, emotional and academic domains.

Research on Mexican-origin families

The UC Davis study is part of a continuing assessment of multiple generations of Mexican-origin families living in the United States called the California Families Project. In this group of adolescents, 29% were born in Mexico and moved to the U.S. as first-generation residents, 62% had one parent born in the U.S., and 9% had both parents born in the U.S. Most of the families were two-parent households.

The study was designed as a conceptual replication of the Five Cs model

of Positive Youth Development in psychology, which proposes that adolescent thriving is reflected by caring, character, competence, confidence and connection. They reflect prosocial tendencies, socioemotional skills, [self-esteem](#) and social connectedness.

One of the goals of this research was to test whether adolescents' ethnic pride and connection to cultural values promoted [adolescent](#) thriving through the Five Cs. Indeed, findings revealed that teens who reported strong, positive connections to their ethnic/racial background at age 14 showed more evidence of psychological well-being at age 16. Findings were consistent for girls and boys and remained the same regardless of adolescents' generational status.

The findings have significant practical implications, Johnson said.

"Families, teachers and [community leaders](#) have a crucial role in supporting Mexican-origin and other Latinx youth by modeling and fostering a healthy, positive and strong connection to their ethnic/racial community," Johnson said. "Empowering youth to recognize and draw strength from the cultural wealth of their ethnic/racial background is critical for their well-being, especially during mid-adolescence when they are forming their sense of self by exploring who they want to be, what they value and what their goals are."

She said programs that engage youth and their cultural community during mid-adolescence can have a significant impact on adolescents' psychological health and well-being. "These benefits may last throughout their lives."

Co-authors of the study include Richard W. Robins, professor in the Department of Psychology; Amanda E. Guyer, professor in the Department of Human Ecology and Center for Mind and Brain; and Paul D. Hastings, professor in the Department of Psychology and Center for

Mind and Brain, all of UC Davis.

More information: Lisa E. Johnson et al, Ethnic pride and cultural values promote positive youth development in a conceptual replication of the Five Cs model., *Developmental Psychology* (2023). [DOI: 10.1037/dev0001570](https://doi.org/10.1037/dev0001570)

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