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Parenting, Family Processes, Relationships, and Parental Support in Multiracial and Multiethnic Families: An Exploratory Study of Youth Perceptions

Mixed-race or multiethnic youth are at risk for mental and physical health problems. We used data from the National Longitudinal Study of Youth 1997 to compare family characteristics of adolescents of a mixed-race or multiethnic background with those of a monoracial or monoethnic background. Mixed-race or multiethnic youth reported feeling less supported by parents and reported less satisfactory parent-adolescent relationships. Mixed-race/multiethnic youth were more like monoracial White youth in terms of being independent but were more like racial or ethnic minorities (African Americans, Hispanics) in regard to family activities. Reasons for these findings are explored. We discuss the need for future research on the experiences of mixed-race/multiethnic youth.

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A growing number of people in the United States are born into interracial, multiethnic, or mixed-race families. From 2000 to 2009, the number of self-identified mixed-race individuals increased by 32% (from 6,826,222 to 9,009,073; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). This mixed-race, multiethnic population appears to be young, as over 50% reported being under the age of 24 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). As the number of mixed-race or multiethnic (MR/ME) children in the United States continues to grow, it is important to understand their development. Furthermore, nascent research with MR/ME youth indicates that these youth are at higher risk for mental, physical, and behavior problems compared to monoracial and monoethnic youth (e.g., Bolland et al., 2007; Udry, Li, & Hendrickson-Smith, 2003). Research with these youth has not examined the relationships these youth have with their parents and families, factors that may be associated with their apparently higher risk. Building on prior work (Bolland et al., 2007; Udry et al., 2003), we examined perceived parenting and family-related variables associated with youth well-being. Specifically, the present study examined how parenting (e.g., parental control, monitoring, and supportiveness) and family experience (e.g., eating dinner as a

family, attending family events, parent-youth relationships, advice seeking from parents) perceptions of MR/ME youth differed from those of monoracial youth (i.e., Black, Hispanic, White, and other).

Parenting and Family Processes

Scholarship highlights the importance of parenting and family processes on youth development (Bronfenbrenner, 1986), and research has linked parenting (e.g., parental monitoring, control, and supportiveness) and family processes (family routines, family events, parent-youth relationships, and advice seeking from parents) with youth well-being (e.g., Bamaca, Umana-Taylor, Shin, & Alfaro, 2005; Corona, Lefkowitz, Sigman, & Romo, 2005; Lee, Lee, & August, 2011). Youth with low levels of parental monitoring (i.e., parental knowledge about youth's whereabouts) are at risk for problem behaviors (e.g., Bynum & Brody, 2005; Mrug et al., 2008; Richards, Miller, O'Donnell, Wasserman, & Colder, 2004). A concept related to parental monitoring is parental control (i.e., the degree to which youth or parents make decisions about youth's activities). According to Baumrind (1966), adolescents are less likely to experience problem behaviors if they are moderately controlled (i.e., whether youth or parents make decisions about youth's activities) by their parents. Too much or too little control exacerbates problem behaviors (Baer, 1999).

Moreover, negative parenting styles such as criticism and inconsistent and harsh parenting have been associated with adolescents' reduced well-being (Bailey, Hill, Oesterle, & Hawkins, 2009; Ge, Brody, Conger, Simons, & Murry, 2002; Narusyte, Andershed, Neiderhiser, & Lichtenstein, 2007). Other parenting behaviors that have been associated with youth development include unresponsive parenting (parent-child relationships that lack responsiveness, connectedness, mutual focus, and harmony) and use of nonauthoritative parenting (whether a parent gives in, fails to reinforce rules, or provides positive consequences for child misbehavior; Keown & Woodward, 2002; Mandara, Murray, Telesford, Varner, & Richman, 2012) as well as showing negative affect, less warm parenting, and less autonomy (Goldstein, Harvey, & Friedman-Weieneth, 2007; Trenas, Cabrera, & Osuna, 2008).

In addition to parenting behaviors, more time spent with family through family events (e.g., family reunions, birthday traditions, vacations, and visits to and from other family members) and daily family routines (e.g., dinner and leisure time) have been related to children's well-being (Koblinsky, Kuvalanka & Randolph, 2006).

Parenting and family processes are shaped by the larger sociocultural context of families (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Garcia-Coll (1996) has theorized that for families of color, culture, class, race, ethnicity, discrimination, prejudice, and racism shape parenting practices. Indeed, cross-cultural differences in parenting and family processes exist, stressing the need to examine cross-cultural differences in parenting and family processes. For example, Latino and Latina parents are often described as more controlling and protective in their parenting than parents from other races or ethnicities (Blocklin, Crouter, Updegraff, & McHale, 2011). Ogbu (1994) suggested that cultural differences between ethnic minority groups and the dominant U.S. culture arise for at least two reasons. First, primary cultural differences exist because members of two populations (e.g., Latinos and Latinas or African Americans and the dominant U.S. population) had their own ways of behaving, thinking, and feeling before the two groups came in continuous contact with each other. Secondary cultural differences, on the other hand, arise due to racial and ethnic minorities' responses to their life circumstances in the United States (e.g., discrimination, poverty, social class).

Interracial couples often enter a stage of negotiation regarding parenting practices, resulting in different parenting strategies (Caballero, Edwards, & Puthussery, 2008). Thus, as a result of these negotiations, secondary cultural differences in parenting and family processes may arise in families with MR/ME youth. Moreover, parents of MR/ME children may modify their parenting in response to existing stereotypes against MR/ME individuals as a way of shielding their children from the negative effects of these stereotypes. For example, Halgunseth, Ispa, and Rudy (2006) proposed that parental control in Hispanic families serves to protect children from ethnic discrimination (i.e., unfair, differential treatment due to one's ethnicity). Thus, observed cross-cultural differences in parenting and family experiences may constitute primary or secondary cultural

differences. It remains, however, largely unexplored how MR/ME children experience the parenting that they receive, which may help explain why MR/ME children are at greater risk for mental, physical, and problem behaviors than monoracial and monoethnic youth (Bolland et al., 2007; Udry et al., 2003).

Parent-Adolescent Relationships and Parental Supportiveness

The quality of parent-child relationships has been found to play a significant role in youth well-being (Aseltine, Gore, & Colten, 1998; Hair, Moore, Garrett, Ling, & Cleveland, 2008; Scaramella, Conger, Spoth, & Simons, 2002). Parent-adolescent relationships constitute a form of social support, and youth's access to social support systems can be an important determinant of youth well-being (Bronte-Tinkew, 2006; Paquette, 2004).

MR/ME youth may not have access to the same social support systems as monoracial youth (Crawford & Alaggia, 2008). Research shows that MR/ME youth report lower levels of neighborhood cohesion than monoracial and monoethnic youth (Bolland et al., 2007). Many youth turn to their parents for guidance and advice (Crawford & Alaggia, 2008; Laszloffy, 2008; Lester Murad, 2005), and biracial and biethnic children may not always receive the guidance and support they need from their parents. MR/ME children may have parents who are not biracial or biethnic themselves or who have limited understanding of what it means to be a racial or ethnic minority in the United States (Crawford & Alaggia, 2008; Laszloffy, 2008). Parents who are *not* racial or ethnic minorities or biracial or biethnic themselves may not have the tools or understanding to guide and help their children at times during which their children experience difficulties unique to their MR/ME status (Crawford & Alaggia, 2008; Lester Murad, 2005). As a result, multiracial and multiethnic youth may feel unsupported and not understood, which may increase their opportunities for loneliness and a reduced sense of belonging. Results from a qualitative study revealed that biracial children considered parental awareness of race issues a necessary element of support, and parental awareness was important because youth turned primarily to their parents for support (Crawford & Alaggia, 2008). Youth with parents who lacked awareness

of youth's biracial identity and associated issues felt frustrated and not understood. These dynamics affected youth's sense of belonging and legitimacy of discussing difficulties they experienced based on their biracial identity (Crawford & Alaggia, 2008). Altogether, the findings of these few studies indicate that MR/ME youth may not always receive the same support from their family as monoracial and monoethnic youth. More research is certainly needed to better understand the parenting and family characteristics of MR/ME youth.

Present Study

To fill the gaps in knowledge, the present study compared parenting and family-related experiences between MR/ME and monoracial and monoethnic youth who participated in a national survey. Understanding differences and similarities may help to better understand potential modifiable factors that may help reduce the at-risk status of multiracial and multiethnic youth in the United States. Study results can inform future research on pathways to mental, physical, and behavior problems of MR/ME youth. Because few studies have investigated the everyday experiences of MR/ME youth with their parents and family and because few studies have data on this unique group of youth, the research question and hypotheses are of a somewhat exploratory nature. The research questions that guided the study were, ''What are the parenting and family processes in MR/ME families, and how do these compare to monoracial/monoethnic families?'' On the basis of the nascent research reviewed earlier, we hypothesized that MR/ME youth would feel less supported by their parents and report less satisfactory parent-adolescent relationships compared to monoracial and monoethnic youth.

METHOD

Sample

Data came from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97), one of six surveys that make up the NLSY series. The NLSY97 is a nationally representative sample of 9,000 12- to 17-year-old U.S. adolescents born between 1980 and 1984. Youth were first sampled and interviewed in 1997 and assessed 12 more times, yearly, until 2008.

The present study used data from Wave 1 (1997; when adolescents and a resident parent were interviewed), and from Wave 5 (2001). In Wave 1, adolescents were asked questions in several areas, such as education, labor market, mental health, and drug use, and about their relationships with their parents and family members. Parents were asked questions about their child's and their educational history, the parent's employment status, and family income. In Wave 5, adolescents were asked questions about participation in family events and seeking advice from parents on educational and relationship matters. We used data from Wave 5 because in this wave questions were included that were not asked in Wave 1. Although we used data from two assessment waves, the analyses we conducted are cross-sectional, that is, wave specific.

Measures

Race and ethnicity. Youth were asked two questions. One question asked them to indicate their race (e.g., White, Black, or Asian) and the other asked about African or Hispanic ancestry. On the basis of these two questions, we constructed a race or ethnicity indicator with the following categories: mixed-race or multiethnic (those who indicated more than one race and ethnic group), White, Hispanic, African American, and Other Minority. Youth were coded as belonging to one racial or ethnic category if they only endorsed one group. This variable was used to explore differences in family and parenting experiences.

Wave 1 measures.
Parent-adolescent relationship. Eight items assessed youth reports of the quality of the mother-adolescent and father-adolescent relationship. Questions were adapted from the Iowa Youth and Family Project (IYFP; Conger & Elder, 1994) and were only asked of adolescents 12 to 14 years of age at Wave 1. Three items asked the adolescents to report their agreement with the following statements for each, his or her mother and father, separately: ''I think highly of him/her''; ''S/he is a person I want to be like''; ''I really enjoy spending time with him/her.'' The response categories for these three questions were *Strongly disagree* (0), *Disagree* (1), *Neutral* (2), *Agree* (3), *Strongly agree* (4). The rest of the items

assessed the adolescent's perception of parents' supportiveness. Sample items included ''How often does s/he praise you?'' ''How often does s/he help you do things that are important to you?'' and ''How often does s/he criticize you or your ideas?'' Responses to this last variable were reverse coded so that higher scores represent less criticism. The response categories for this second set of questions were *Never* (0), *Rarely* (1), *Sometimes* (2), *Usually* (3), and *Always* (4). A composite score of the participants' responses to the eight items was available in the data set, where higher scores indicate a more positive relationship between parents and adolescents; scores ranged from 0 to 32. Because the publicly available data set does not contain data on the individual questions but only the aggregate measure (composite score), we could not calculate the interitem correlation coefficient for the measure. This was the case for all variables utilized in the present study.

Parental monitoring. Adolescents between 12 and 14 years of age were asked to report the degree of parental monitoring received. Four questions tapped into the biological or residential mother and father knowledge about their youth. The term *residential* refers to a parent that lives in the household with the child but may not be the child's biological parent. Questions included ''How much does s/he know about your close friends, that is, who they are?'' and ''How much does s/he know about who you are with when you are not at home?'' Response options ranged from 0 (*Knows nothing*) to 4 (*Knows everything*). The parental monitoring scale consisted of the sum of the responses to the four items, and scores ranged from 0 to 16 for each, the mother and the father. For the present study, we used the parental monitoring variable available in the data set that captured information by both parents; thus the range of the new variable ranged from 0 to 32. Higher scores indicate greater parental monitoring.

Parental control. To assess the degree to which parents control adolescents' activities, parents were asked to indicate whether the youth or the parent made decisions in three domains. This question was asked of parents with youth who were between 12 and 13 years of age at Wave 1. The stem for this question was ''Please tell me whether you make rules about these things, or does [youth] decide for [himself/herself]?''

The lead statements for this construct was ''How late [this youth] can stay out at night,'' ''What kinds of TV shows and movies [this youth] can watch,'' and ''Who [this youth] can hang out with.'' The response options were *Parent makes rules* (2), *Child and parent decide jointly* (1), *Child decides for self* (0). The parental control composite score ranged from 0, which corresponds to the adolescent setting all limits, to 6, corresponding to the parent setting all limits. Higher scores indicate more parental limit setting.

Daily family routines. Four items assessed the frequency with which youth between 12 and 14 years of age engaged in family routines. Sample items included ''In a typical week, how many days from 0 to 7 do you eat dinner with your family?'' ''In a typical week, how many days from 0 to 7 does housework get done when it's supposed to, for example, cleaning up after dinner, doing dishes, taking out the trash?'' and ''In a typical week, how many days from 0 to 7 do you do something fun as a family such as play a game, go to a sporting event, go swimming and so forth?'' Response options ranged from *No days* (0) to *All seven* days (7). A composite score of all four items was available in the data set, with scores ranging from 0 to 28, where higher numbers indicate more days spent in routine family activities.

Parental supportiveness. To assess parental supportiveness, two separate questions asked respondents to indicate the degree of supportiveness by each parent or parental figure. Response options were *Very supportive* (1), *Somewhat supportive* (2), and *Not very supportive* (3). A preliminary examination of the distribution of this variable revealed that 2.2% of the sample indicated that their mother was not very supportive, and 4.6% of the sample reported that their father was not very supportive. The response categories 2 and 3 were then collapsed into one. As a result, respondents were categorized into two groups, those who indicated their parent was very supportive (1) versus those who indicated their parents were only somewhat or not at all supportive (0).

Wave 5 measures.
Family events. In Wave 5, youth were asked to report on the frequency with which their family gets together by answering the following question: ''How often do you and members of your family get together for family events, like birthday parties, holidays, family dinners, anniversaries, weddings, or reunions?'' Response options included *Never* (0), *Once or twice a year* (1), *Less than once a month* (2), *About once a month* (3), *About twice a month* (4), and *About once a week or more* (5). To capture families who spent time together frequently, a dichotomous variable was created such that those who responded that they met twice a month (about 12%) or more frequently (about 9%; response categories of 4 and 5) were coded as 1 (*meets frequently*) and the remaining respondents (response categories 0 – 3) were coded as 0 (*meet less frequently*).

Educational advice from parents. Youth reported on the frequency with which they sought out their (residential or biological) mother's and father's educational and job-related advice. Response options included *Often* (1), *Sometimes* (2), *Never* (3), *or Not applicable* (4). For the entire sample, approximately 30% reported that they asked educational advice of their mothers often, 48% sometimes, and 18% never, and 4% had not made any educational decisions. Approximately 17% reported asking fathers often, 43% sometimes, and 36% never, and 4% had not made any educational decisions. Responses were dichotomized into 1 (*Often seeks advice*) versus 0 (*less than often or not at all, or NA*).

Relationship advice from parents. Youth reported on the frequency with which they sought out their (residential or biological) mother's and father's relationship advice. Response options were the same as the item above. The response options were recoded to reflect participants who sought their parent's advice *Often* (1) versus the *Less than often* (0). About 21% reported asking their mothers often for relationship advice, 47% sometimes, and 30% never, and 2% reported that it did not apply to them. About 9% of the sample reported asking their fathers for relationship advice often, 35% sometimes, and 53% never, and 3% reported that this did not apply to them.

Demographic Characteristics

Table 1 presents demographic characteristics of the sample at Wave 1. The Youth Questionnaire, the main component of the NLSY97 data,

Table 1. *Demographic Characteristics of Adolescents and Their Parents at Wave 1 (1997)*

Demographic Characteristics	Mixed-Race/ Multiethnic (N = 206) M (SD) or %	White (N = 3,800) M (SD) or %	African American (N = 2,319) M (SD) or %	Hispanic (N = 1,826) M (SD) or %	Other Minority (N = 833) M (SD) or %
Adolescent age (years)	14.22 (1.47)	14.23 (1.46)	14.35 (1.49)	14.28 (1.47)	14.56 (1.43)
Percent female	49.03%	48.63%	49.94%	48.96%	46.10%
Percent of adolescent completed eighth grade	54.85%	53.11%	53.90%	53.45%	64.11%
Gross household income (in $)	42,907 (38,302)	59,140 (46,435)	29,540 (27,336)	31,030 (30,260)	60,665 (47,215)
Adolescent living with both biological parents	42.72%	58.37%	25.83%	53.56%	61.46%
Mothers as responding parent	88.21%	86.52%	90.29%	88.66%	83.86%
Fathers completing some college	49.51%	48.71%	47.82%	39.87%	54.74%
Mothers completing some college	40.78%	45.00%	30.70%	25.14%	45.86%

contained questions regarding adolescents' education, age, and gender, among other things. The Parent Questionnaire assessed the family's 1996 earnings and parents' and youth's education.

Analysis

To investigate whether youth of various racial and ethnic backgrounds differed as a function of perceived parenting and family characteristics, we used univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) for continuous dependent variables and the chi-square statistics for the dependent categorical variables. For the mean comparisons, a priori omnibus tests were conducted with ANOVA. This was followed with post hoc mean comparisons between the racial and ethnic groups using the Bonferroni correction. The chi-square statistic was used to test for differences in the distribution of the categorical variables among the various racial and ethnic groups. Because the chi-square statistic only indicates if there is an overall difference in the distribution of frequencies, when the results were statistically significant at $p < .05$ we subsequently used logistic regression to compare how each racial or ethnic group differed from the mixed-race or multiracial group (reference category) on the corresponding dependent variable. We also repeated the analyses by making White youth the reference category to allow for comparisons of the other youth with these youth.

RESULTS

A total of 8,984 adolescents were included in the analyses. For some analyses, the number was smaller because the NLSY systematically asked some questions of only a subsample of youth, as described in the Measures section. For example, the questions assessing adolescents' family relationships were asked only of 12- to 14-year-old youth at Wave 1. The resulting analytical sample for the mother-adolescent relationship questions was thus reduced to the 5,214 youth (12- to 14-year-olds) in the total sample.

The ages of participating youth at Wave 1 ranged from 12 to 18 ($M = 14.3$, $SD = 1.47$), and about 48% of the sample was female (see Table 1). The mean age of youth ranged from 14.22 ($SD = 1.47$) for MR/ME youth to 14.56 ($SD = 1.43$) for other minority youth. The percentage of girls in each group ranged from 46% for other minority youth to 50% for African American youth. The percentage of youth who had completed eighth grade was highest for other minority youth (64%) and lowest for Hispanic youth (53%). We also observed a relatively wide range in household income, which was lowest for African American families ($M = \$29,540$, $SD = \$27,336$) and highest for other minority families ($M = \$60,665$, $SD = \$47,215$).

Group Differences in Family-Related Experiences

Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations for MR/ME, White, African American,

Table 2. *Means and Standard Deviations for Each Parenting and Family Variable in the National Longitudinal Study of Youth 1997 by Racial or Ethnic Group*

Parenting and Family Variables at Wave 1 (1997)	Mixed-Race/ Multiethnic ($N = 206$) Mean (*SD*)	White ($N = 3,800$) Mean (*SD*)	African American ($N = 2,319$) Mean (*SD*)	Hispanic ($N = 1,826$) Mean (*SD*)	Other Minority ($N = 833$) Mean (*SD*)	Racial/Ethnic Group Differences ($p < .05$)
Mother-adolescent relationship[a]	24.34 (5.30)	25.36 (4.69)	24.74 (5.05)	24.93 (4.74)	25.05 (4.76)	AAW
Father-adolescent relationship[a]	24.66 (5.66)	24.93 (5.37)	23.43 (5.96)	24.34 (5.12)	24.58 (5.55)	AAH, AAO
Parental monitoring[a]	10.07 (3.27)	10.77 (3.03)	10.04 (3.40)	10.20 (3.41)	10.28 (3.34)	AAO, AAW, HW
Parent control[b]	4.24 (1.28)	4.08 (1.30)	4.68 (1.26)	4.33 (1.39)	4.07 (1.24)	AAH, AAMR, AAO, AAW, HW
Daily family routines[a]	14.66 (5.21)	14.98 (4.93)	15.01 (6.45)	15.05 (5.59)	15.49 (5.17)	

Notes: All variables are continuous. Between-group mean differences were conducted with ANOVA and post hoc comparisons with the Bonferroni test. The last column denotes the differences that were found to be statistically significant at $p < .05$. AW: differences between African American and White; AAH: differences between African American and Hispanic; AAO: differences between African American and other minority; HW: differences between Hispanic and White; AAMR: differences between African American and mixed-race or multiethnic.
[a]These constructs only apply to 12 – 14-year-olds. [b]This construct only applies to 12 – 13-year-olds.

Hispanic, and other minority youth on mother-adolescent relationship, parent-adolescent relationship, parental monitoring, parental control, and involvement in daily family routines. In all, omnibus ANOVAs revealed significant group differences in the mother-adolescent relationship, $F(4,5209) = 4.57$, $p < .01$, the father-adolescent relationship, $F(4,3952) = 10.08$, $p < .001$, parental monitoring $F(4,5357) = 13.31$, $p < .001$, and parental control $F(4,3289) = 28.60$, $p < .001$. Results of the a posteriori analysis (between racial or ethnic group comparisons) with Bonferroni correction are described below.

Parent-adolescent relationships. MR/ME youth scored lowest ($M = 24.34$, $SD = 5.30$) and White youth highest ($M = 25.36$, $SD = 4.69$) on mother-adolescent relationship ($M = 25.36$, $SD = 4.69$). Only the difference between African American ($M = 24.74$, $SD = 5.05$) and White youth ($M = 25.36$, $SD = 4.69$) was statistically significant ($p < .05$). Regarding the father-adolescent relationship, African American youth had the lowest mean score ($M = 23.43$, $SD = 5.96$) and White youth the highest ($M = 24.93$, $SD = 5.37$). Differences between African American and Hispanic ($M = 24.34$, $SD = 5.12$; $p < .001$) as well as African American and other minority ($M = 24.58$, $SD = 5.55$; $p < .05$) youth were statistically significant. Other differences

may not have been significant because of the groups' larger standard deviations.

Parental monitoring. White youth reported the highest level of parental monitoring ($M = 10.77$, $SD = 3.03$) and African American youth the lowest ($M = 10.04$, $SD = 3.40$), and this difference was statistically significant ($p < .001$). The difference in scores between Hispanic and White youth was significant ($p < .001$), as was the difference between White and other minority youth ($p < .05$).

Parental control. White youth scored lowest ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 1.30$) and African American youth highest ($M = 4.68$, $SD = 1.26$) on parental control, and MR/ME youth fell in between ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 1.28$). The scores for African Americans were significantly higher than those for mixed-race or multiethnic ($p < .05$), White ($p < .001$), and other minority ($p < .001$) youth. Hispanic youth scored significantly higher on parental control than White youth ($p < .001$).

Daily family routines. MR/ME youth scored lowest ($M = 14.66$, $SD = 5.21$) and other minority youth highest ($M = 15.49$, $SD = 5.17$) on daily family routines.

Table 3 displays the percentage distribution of youth who reported having very supportive fathers, having very supportive mothers,

Table 3. *Percentages for Each Parenting and Family Variable in the National Longitudinal Study of Youth 1997 by Racial and Ethnic Group*

Parenting and Family Variables	Mixed-Race/ Multiethnic (N = 206) (%)	White (N = 3,800) (%)	African American (N = 2,319) (%)	Hispanic (N = 1,826) (%)	Other Minority (N = 833) (%)	Racial/Ethnic Group Differences (p < .05)
Wave 1 (1997)						
Mother very supportive vs. (less than very supportive)	73.98	78.33	76.56	76.36	76.61	
Father very supportive vs. (less than very supportive)	71.23	68.85	64.27	66.18	70.32	AAW
Wave 2 (2001)						
Family events at least twice/month vs. (less than 2×/month)	26.06	19.77	26.63	34.02	21.78	HW, MRW, AAW
Often ask Mom for educational advice vs. (less than often)	25.67	28.85	31.24	31.12	24.34	MRH, MRW, AAW
Often ask Dad for educational advice vs. (less than often)	21.43	19.99	12.68	16.58	17.47	MRAA, HW, AAW
Often ask Mom for relationship advice vs. (less than often)	19.79	20.14	22.87	23.05	15.25	HW, OW, AAW
Often ask Dad for relationship advice vs. (less than often)	11.31	8.55	8.66	9.99	7.23	

Notes: Differences in frequency distributions were first compared with the chi-square statistics. Because the chi-square statistic only provides an overall measure of differences, we also used logistic regression to compare if answers to the dummy-coded parenting and family variables differed between the racial and ethnic groups first by using the mixed-race or multiethnic category as the reference and then another set of analyses with Whites as the reference category. The last column denotes the differences that were found to be statistically significant at $p < .05$. AAW: differences between African American and White; HW: differences between Hispanic and Whites; MRH, MRW, MRAA: differences between mixed race with Hispanics, Whites, and African Americans, respectively; OW: differences between other and White.

participating in family events, and seeking advice from mothers and fathers by racial and ethnic group. We observed significant racial and ethnic group differences on father supportiveness, $\chi^2(4,6436) = 12.67, p < .05$, frequency of attending family events, $\chi^2(4,7718) = 125.71, p < .001$, educational advice from mother, $\chi^2(4,7619) = 11.13, p < .03$, educational advice from father, $\chi^2(47,022) = 45.71, p < .001$, and relationship advice from mother, $\chi^2(4,7619) = 16.32, p < .05$.

Parental supportiveness. White youth (78.33%) felt the most supported by their mothers and mixed-race or multiethnic youth the least (73.98%). However, MR/ME youth felt the most supported by their fathers (71.23%) and African

American youth the least (69.85%). When compared to White youth, however, African American youth reported feeling significantly less supported by their fathers ($p < .01$).

Family events. Hispanic youth had the highest reports of attending family events (34.02%) and White youth the lowest (19.77%). We found significant group differences in reports of attendance to family events at least twice a month between mixed-race or multiethnic (26.06%) and Hispanic (34.02%; $p < .05$) youth and between MR/ME and White ($p < .05$) youth. Additional analyses revealed differences between White and Hispanic (34.02%, $p < .001$) youth and between White and African American (26.63%, $p < .01$) youth.

Educational and relationship advice from mother. About 31.24% of African American youth reported frequently asking their mothers for educational advice. This number was followed by Hispanic (31.12%), Whites (28.85%), MR/ME youth (25.67%), and other minority youth (24.34%). We observed statistically significant differences in advice seeking for relationships from mothers between White and Hispanic ($p < .05$), White and other minority ($p < .05$), as well as White and African American ($p < .05$) youth.

Educational and relationship advice from father. MR/ME youth had the highest rate of asking their fathers for educational advice (21.43%), and this number was followed by White (19.99%), other minority (17.47%), Hispanic (16.58%), and African American (12.68%) youth. The difference in educational advice from fathers between MR/ME and African American youth was significant ($p < .01$). Also significant were differences between White and Hispanic ($p < .01$) and between White and African American ($p < .001$) youth. MR/ME youth also had the highest rate of asking their fathers about relationship advice (11.31%) and other minority youth had the lowest rate of asking their fathers for relationship advice (7.23%).

DISCUSSION

The influences of globalization, immigration, and postcolonization have transformed the face of U.S. society. These changes have resulted in a steady increase in the number of MR/ME families over the last two decades (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). These population changes exemplify the diversity of modern societies. Unfortunately, multiethnic and multiracial children face unique challenges potentially related to their identity formation and exposure to negative stereotypes and racial discrimination against MR/ME families (Crawford & Alaggia, 2008; Laszloffy, 2008). Evidence indicates that MR/ME youth are at risk for mental health, physical health, and behavior problems (Bolland et al., 2007; Udry et al., 2003). Yet, despite their growing number and elevated risk, only limited information is available about the everyday experiences of multiracial and multiethnic youth.

Drawing on prior scholarship (Bronfenbrenner, 1986), we sought to better understand the microsystem experiences of MR/ME youth. Specifically, we investigated parenting and family-related experiences because these have been linked with youth well-being (e.g., Mrug et al., 2008; Richards et al., 2004). We also compared the experiences of MR/ME youth with those of monoracial and monoethnic youth, as potential differences may point toward areas that can be targets of preventive interventions and future research.

On the basis of prior work, we hypothesized that MR/ME youth would feel less supported by their parents and report less satisfactory parent-adolescent relationships. We found no differences in the quality of the youth's relationships with their parents and the extent to which they felt supported by their parents. There was, however, a trend where MR/ME children reported not feeling very supported by their mothers when compared to other youth. We think this may be due to lack of statistical power. Also, MR/ME youth were more likely to indicate that their parents exert less control than African Americans and Hispanics and were more likely to attend family events at least twice a month than White youth. The first finding may suggest that MR/ME youth are more like monoracial White youth, where youth independence may be more highly regarded than among the monoracial and monoethnic African American and Hispanic families. However, MR/ME youth were more like racial and ethnic minorities in participating in family activities.

Altogether, these findings may indicate that compared to monoracial or monoethnic youth, MR/ME youth may generally experience less cohesion with and support from their mothers (but not fathers) and they may experience greater independence. Whether the decreased closeness with their mothers and greater sense of independence during adolescence may be contributing to their apparently at-risk status, as documented by other studies, is a question that remains to be investigated. Studies have demonstrated that a positive mother-child relationship is associated with youth well-being and can even buffer the negative effects of peer problem behaviors, father absence, and stressful live events (Mason, Cauce, Gonzalez, & Hiraga, 1996). Thus, perceived distance from their mothers may contribute to MR/ME youth's risk.

Interestingly, these youth did not seem to lack support from their fathers. That is,

MR/ME youth reported feeling closest and most supported by their fathers. Also, they, more often than monoracial and monoethnic youth, turned to their fathers for educational and relationship advice. Research has shown that positive father-child relationships are associated with youth well-being (Bronte-Tinkew, 2006; Paquette, 2004). As such, the perceived positive nature of interactions with their fathers may counter the potential negative effects of distant mother-child interactions for MR/ME youth. These findings raise important questions about the role of mothers and fathers in the well-being of MR/ME youth. Research is needed to extensively examine the relationships that MR/ME youth have with their fathers and mothers within the context of racial and ethnic and cultural differences that may exist in household with MR/ME children.

Research indicates that parents of MR/ME children face unique challenges in raising these children. For example, helping their children form a strong ethnic identity as a MR/ME individual and navigate a world that not always welcomes MR/ME individuals are two important challenges these parents face (Caballero et al., 2008; Crawford & Alagia, 2008). For example, O'Donoghue (2004) reported that mothers had not been confronted with issues of race and ethnicity until they were raising a biracial child. Crawford and Alaggia further showed that even parents who were racial and ethnic minorities did not understand their biracial or biethnic child's experiences, and children felt unsupported.

The possible lack of experience by parents addressing racial or biracial or biethnic issues may foster in parents feelings of helplessness and inadequacy in effectively supporting their children. Parents may only be learning to cope with their own feelings of inadequacy as parents of MR/ME children, let alone being able to effectively guide their children. Although fathers and mothers alike face these difficulties, mothers may be more affected by these additional parenting challenges than fathers because parenting and childrearing is a gendered experience. In other words, although mothers *and* fathers may feel challenged by raising multi- and biracial or biethnic children, women may be more affected by these difficulties because they may spend more time with their children than men or feel a greater sense of responsibility for the well-being of their children compared to fathers due to gendered parenting roles

and expectations (Gaviria & Rondon, 2010; Paquette, 2004). If, indeed, mothers have more opportunities to not know how to respond to the needs of their biracial and biethnic children, compared to fathers, these children may feel more frustrated with their mothers, possibly leading them to report less satisfying mother-adolescent relationships, as was the case in our study. Additional parenting responsibilities of raising MR/ME children may 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.

Moreover, scholars have demonstrated that mothers are frequently responsible for the transmission of cultural norms, traditions, and practices (Mahalingam & Haritatos, 2006). The transmission of cultural norms, traditions, and practices may be particularly challenging for women in interracial relationships. Caballero et al. (2008) reported that in multiracial families, fathers and mothers often entered a stage of negotiating differences and parenting strategies. This negotiation and creation of shared parenting approaches may require parents (and particularly mothers) to learn about and adopt new cultural norms, traditions, and practices. Mothers may feel less apt to effectively transmit new ways of thinking and behaving to their children, because mothers themselves may be struggling with the integration of their new cultural norms, traditions, and practices. Furthermore, it is possible that parents of MR/ME children initially experience more family conflict while negotiating a common ground in their parenting.

It is also plausible that gendered parenting expectations and stereotypes in children may lead them to set higher standards for their mothers, expecting mothers to always be supportive and to always know what to do in difficult situations (Fuegen, Biernat, Haines, & Deaux, 2004; Kobrynowicz & Biernat, 1997; Moloney, 2001). Children may have lower standards for their fathers, therefore rating support from and relationships with fathers higher (Chesler, 1991; Kobrynowicz & Biernat, 1997). Mothers *and* fathers may not always have an answer to their children's needs, but children may be more critical toward their mothers than their fathers, ultimately viewing their mothers as less supportive and rating their relationship with their mothers as more distanced. All of these explanations are plausible, but more research is clearly needed to investigate why MR/ME

children report less cohesive and supportive mother-child interactions than monoracial and monoethnic youth and why they feel closer to and more supported by their fathers than their mothers.

As mentioned earlier, we found that MR/ME youth were more likely to participate in family events than White youth. Research shows that for Hispanic youth, close family relations can protect against external stress such as discrimination (Canino, Vega, Sribney, Warner, & Alegria, 2008). Possibly, greater participation in family events may play a similar protective role for MR/ME youth who may experience discrimination resulting from their multiracial or multiethnic status. These experiences may result in their participating in more frequent family interactions than White youth or they may simply reflect the greater value placed by Hispanic and African American families on family interdependence and interconnectedness. Certainly more research is needed to understand the benefits (i.e., emotional and instrumental support) and potential downsides (i.e., increased burden) of more frequent participation in family events by MR/ME youth.

It is interesting that MR/ME youth's report of parental control placed them somewhere in between White and minority youth (mainly African Americans and Hispanics). The higher degree of parental control among African American and Hispanic families may reflect cultural styles of rearing their children with the concomitant advantage of serving to protect youth from the negative effects of stressors from such experiences as racial or ethnic discrimination, or both (Halgunseth et al., 2006). That MR/ME youth fall somewhere in between may be a reflection of their heterogenous racial or ethnic status. Some studies suggest that parental control is associated with better mental health and reduced problem behaviors whereas others suggest that it is associated with worse outcomes (e.g., Bean, Barber, & Crane, 2006). Some of the differences depend on the definitions of control used but also on the population under investigation (e.g., Bean, Bush, McKenry, & Wilson, 2003). Scholars propose that both too much and too little control lead to risk behaviors among youth, and moderate levels of control are most adaptive (Baumrind, 1966). Others have suggested that parental control interacts with other parent-child relationship variables such as parental monitoring and knowledge,

thereby creating complex ways in which parental control influences youth (Engels, Finkenauer, Kerr, & Stattin, 2005). More research is clearly needed to understand if and how parental control influences the well-being of MR/ME youth and why their reports tend to fall somewhere in between White and minority youth.

With the exception of the variables discussed above (parent-adolescent relationships, parental control, and participation in family events), MR/ME youth did not significantly differ from other groups on parenting and family variables measured in the present study. It is possible that parental negotiation of differences in parenting, family processes, and family interactions results in a blending of practices that does not fully represent the practices and behaviors of one or the other parent. Instead, the practices are a blend of the experiences and values of both parents and depend on parents' personalities and family and neighborhood context in that the influences of one parent versus the other may be more salient in the youth's lives. Furthermore, youth behavior may not be static in that they may display different ways of communicating depending on the context (school vs. neighborhood vs. their home).

As with any research, there are limitations to this study. First, data were obtained via youth self-report. This prevented us from examining friends', parents', teachers', and school officials' information. Students may have misrepresented their experiences. Although studies of youth behavior would benefit from obtaining information about the youth from multiple informants, youth perceptions of their relationships with parents and others are an important reflection of their lived experiences. As a result of the influences of the multiple identities racial and ethnic minority youth experience, self-reports are particularly important because the information they provide about their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors likely reflect the multiple identities they have to negotiate (knowingly or unknowingly) and how they function in society and face the challenges the encounter in life. Second, data used in this study are based on a cross-sectional design and analyses were descriptive in nature. These analyses can provide insight into the experiences of MR/ME youth but do not provide information about the complex, multilayered, processes their experiences reflect. Future studies should examine how these experiences

unfold over time, interact with other identities (i.e., socioeconomic status), and influence each other in potentially complex ways, thereby unfolding the mechanisms that may increase or decrease MR/ME youth's risk for mental health, physical health, and behavior problems.

Third, although we used data from a nationally representative sample, we worked with a relatively small sample of MR/ME youth, which considerably reduced the statistical power to detect significant differences if these existed, and some of the questions were only asked of younger adolescents. This limited our ability to conduct more complex analyses and restricted the generalizability of the findings. Power was particularly problematic, as there were a number of differences between MR/ME youth and other groups that could have been significant if the sample size of this group had been larger. Fourth, our sample of MR/ME youth was fairly heterogeneous. Unfortunately, we were unable to examine within-group differences among our sample of MR/ME youth because of the limited sample size. Similarly, as a result of small sample size and limited information on acculturation, immigration, time of residence, and parents' ethnicity or race, we were unable to examine whether within-group differences existed as a result of these additional identities and experiences. Finally, because of sample size differences and differences in measurement of at-risk behaviors across the NLSY97 waves, we did not conduct analyses to examine the associations between the parental and family characteristics included in this study and at-risk behaviors such as substance use and sexual activity, for example.

Notwithstanding these limitations, this study contributes to the limited knowledge of the everyday experiences of MR/ME youth. It provides descriptive information on family-related experiences of MR/ME youth using nationally representative data. We have also compared experiences across different racial or ethnic groups to shed some light into the experiences that might be contributing to the higher rates of risky behaviors of MR/ME youth. As one of a very few studies that have attempted to describe the parenting and family characteristics of MR/ME youth, ours can guide future research with MR/ME youth and their families. This research is crucially needed given the growing number of MR/ME families in the United States.

Implications

Our findings suggest that MR/ME youth experience less cohesion with and support from their mothers than monoracial and monoethnic youth. Moreover, compared to monoracial and monoethnic youth they may feel more supported and connected with their fathers. Although these findings can have important implication for practice, it is important to note that the current study represents only a beginning step in research on the everyday experiences of MR/ME youth. Future research should continue to illuminate the full spectrum of experiences of these youth and their families.

Implications for research. In light of the aforementioned limitations, the next logical steps in research with multiracial and multiethnic youth is to systematically (a) examine the ethnic and racial composition of mixed-race or multiethnic youth, (b) examine differences in everyday experiences between MR/ME families and monoracial and monoethnic families, (c) investigate whether and why within-group differences exist among multiracial and multiethnic youth, and (d) examine parents' experiences raising a MR/ME child. Lastly, research should investigate whether these experiences explain the high-risk status MR/ME youth. This line of work requires time. In the meantime, findings from the present study can have useful implications for practitioners and educators.

Implications for practice. Our findings can have direct implications for parent education programs. Parents of MR/ME youth may benefit from learning about the unique challenges their children face and that these challenges may come to the forefront as their children navigate adolescence and ethnic identity development. Parents may not be aware that their children may feel unsupported or not understood due to possible ethnic and racial differences between children and their parents (particularly mothers). Parent education programs may further normalize potential difficulties parents face in raising a MR/ME child, possibly reducing parental distress and feelings of inadequacy (if these exist). Parents may also benefit from learning about how to listen to and openly discuss ethnic and racial issues with their children.

In regards to practitioners and therapists, these professionals should familiarize themselves with

the unique challenges parents of MR/ME youth and their children face. This will allow them to remain alert and assess potential problems and difficulties in communication and parent-child relationships. Similar to parent education programs, practitioners and therapists may want to provide parents of MR/ME youth with psycho-education about children's challenges in navigating various cultural contexts and ethnic identities. In light of the present research findings, practitioners and therapists may discuss with parents that some MR/ME youth feel unsupported and distanced from their mothers. It can be elaborated that reasons for this perceived lack of support and closeness are not fully understood but that some research indicates that sometimes MR/ME youth feel their parents cannot understand their youth's experiences with being a MR/ME individual. With this in mind, therapy could focus on listening and communication strategies and on normalizing potential parenting difficulties for parents. This could be achieved in individual therapy sessions with parents or in joint sessions by allowing parents and their children to work through communication difficulties together.

In working with MR/ME youth, practitioners and therapists should be attentive to signs that children indeed suffer from distanced relationships with their mothers (but also fathers). Psycho-education about the challenges of parents of MR/ME youth may provide youth the knowledge needed to understand their parents' position, and, rather than feeling unsupported, they may be more active in reaching out to their parents.

Lastly, schools are unique environments in which children can learn about the diverse nature of the U.S. population. Classes that focus on issues of ethnicity, race, and gender might prove to be useful in raising awareness of the challenges but also benefits multicultural societies and their people face. As awareness grows, youth may learn to address these issues comfortably with their parents, thereby improving communication and relationships with their parents.

NOTE

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