

## HEALTH AND HUMAN SCIENCES

### **Are School and Family Experiences Related to Multiracial Adolescents' Ethnic Identity Development?**

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Adolescents with mixed heritage have a unique and challenging experience in their process of identity formation. They must negotiate expectations and self-representations from two different minority groups and the mainstream culture. Grounded in the Cultural Ecological Model of Biethnic Identity, this study aimed to fill some of the gaps in the literature on multiracial adolescents' ethnic identity development by examining associations between this development and school behavioral problems (school trouble), feelings of being accepted at school (school belonging), and relationship quality with their parents. Data were collected from 45 multiracial adolescents from a Midwestern middle public school, in 6th ( $N = 16$ ), 7th ( $N = 16$ ), and 8th ( $N = 13$ ) grades. The students answered a survey at school with items on school belonging ( $\alpha = .69$ ) and school trouble ( $\alpha = .75$ ), parent-adolescent relationship quality ( $\alpha = .85$ ), and ethnic identity development ( $\alpha = .83$ ). The

results showed that on average, multiracial adolescents reported having moderate levels of resolution of their overall Ethnic Identity ( $M = 3.0$ ,  $SD = .57$ ). Multiracial adolescents who had more positive relationships with their parents reported less school trouble ( $r = -.34$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Contrary to expectations, parent-adolescent relationship quality, school trouble, and school belonging were not associated with ethnic identity formation in this sample. Further research must investigate other factors that may affect multiracial adolescents' developmental outcomes, such as parenting practices, social conditions, and discrimination. This study increased the field's understanding of the complex experience of multiracial adolescents' ethnic identity formation.

*Research advisor Aryn Dotterer writes, "Renata noted that multiracial adolescents were at risk for a number of poor psychological and health-related outcomes, but she realized that not much was known about their family relationships or school-related outcomes. Renata's project explored whether ethnic identity development was related to parent-adolescent relationship quality, school belonging, and school trouble."*