

As of 2000, the U. S. Census began allowing individuals to identify themselves as belonging to more than one racial category. This reflects an important demographic development in our society. Not only is the multiracial population growing at a significant rate, but also, socially, multiracial identity is becoming more acceptable, and its acknowledgement by the U.S. Government is just one piece of evidence supporting this trend. Much research on multiracial individuals and households has been conducted over the last 20 years, including investigations of the self-identification process of multiracial children (Harris and Sim, 2002), the demographic characteristics of the multiracial household (Chew, Eggebeen, and Uhlenbeen, 1989), and variation in the salience of multiracial identity across settings (Jaret and Reitzes, 1999; Harris and Sim, 2002). Prior research has also investigated the wellbeing of multiracial youth, finding that for many wellbeing measures multiracial adolescents experience more negative outcomes than their monoracial non-Hispanic White counterparts but more positive outcomes than their monoracial minority counterparts (Campbell & Eggerling-Boeck, 2006). But what causes this group to fare better than their monoracial minority counterparts or worse than their monoracial non-Hispanic White counterparts? This paper will explore how various aspects of family relationships, family structure and gender affect outcomes for multiracial adolescents. Specifically, this paper will focus on three domains of wellbeing for multiracial adolescents: psychological, social and educational. Using a nationally representative sample of adolescents in the United States, the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health), this paper will attempt to find the effect of parent-child relationships, family composition and the intersection of gender and racial identity of parents and children, on wellbeing for multiracial adolescents.

### **Data**

The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health is a nationally representative school-based sample of adolescents in grades 7-12 that has employed three waves of data starting in 1995. Data from this sample was collected both at home and in school for the adolescents that this study will be analyzing. This study will utilize the restricted access data, which will secure a large sample size, an important issue when studying this particular population. This data is also particularly useful for studying the multiracial adolescents because it allows the researcher to use both adolescents' self-reported race and parental self-reported race to classify multiracials.

### **Methods and Measures**

I will focus on three aspects of family background that are potentially important for understanding differences in wellbeing between multiracial adolescents and their monoracial counterparts: parent-child relationships, household structures, and race and gender of parents. Adolescent race will be measured by both adolescent self-identification and parental racial combination, much like previous literature that used the same data (Campbell & Eggerling-Boeck, 2006). Psychological wellbeing will be measured by the Modified Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale, and social acceptance will be measured using a series of questions about adolescents' feelings described below. Also, I focus on three measures of educational wellbeing all measured by students' self reports: students' feelings about school, school performance, and feeling of self-efficacy in school. I will also create a measurement for parent-child relationships, which will include time spent with guardian(s), adolescents' feelings of closeness to parents, and parental involvement in adolescent life. I will use logistic regression models for binary outcomes and will also explore the possibility of using ordered or multinomial

logistic regression techniques to analyze educational aspirations.

#### Independent Variable measures:

*Adolescent Race:* To measure adolescent race I will use the technique that Campbell & Eggerling-Boeck used in their study of multiracial adolescents using the Add Health data. I will use both adolescent self-identification and parental racial combination. This will allow racial data for all of the adolescents in the sample without worrying about leaving out adolescents due to missing parent data, and using the parental match will reduce the missing adolescents who have multiple-race ancestry but don't self-identify as multiracial.

#### *Parent-Child Relationship:*

*Closeness:* To measure parent-child closeness, I will rely on the adolescents' responses to the following two questions: (1) How close do you feel with your residential parents, and (2) how much do they care about you? I will create a dummy variable for having a very close relationship with one's parents or a not very close relationship.

*Parental Educational Aspirations for Child:* To measure parental aspirations for child's education I will use the adolescents' reports of how disappointed parents would be if they didn't graduate from high school or college, and if in the past four weeks the parents have talked about school or grades. I think that using adolescents' responses to these questions rather than parental responses will be particularly useful because it will more accurately account for how adolescents perceive parental aspirations, and research has shown perception and internalization is particularly important for determining adolescents' own aspirations (Cheng & Starks, 2002).

*Parental Involvement:* To measure involvement of parents I will use responses to seven questions of activities shared with parents in the last four weeks to create a three-pronged scale: (1) involved, (2) somewhat involved and (3) not involved. These include activities such as, talking to parents about social life, engaging in social events with parents and attending leisure activities with parents.

*Family Structure:* Will use data from the parental portion of the survey to place the child in one of 4 categories: two-parent family, single mother/female guardian family, single father/male guardian family, and ward of the state

*Gender/Racial Combination of Parent to Child:* Will place adolescents in one of these four categories: minority mother-daughter, minority mother-son, minority father-daughter, minority father-son

#### Dependent Variable measures

*Psychological Wellbeing:* Will use a modified Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D)-19 questions, and a logged depression score will be computed. Also will use a dummy variable for whether or not considered suicide

*Social Acceptance:* Agreed or Disagreed with "I feel socially accepted"- dummy for strongly agree. Also, question for whether they feel positive connection to school and dummy variable for whether or not respondent participated in any clubs, sports teams or other organized activities at school

*Educational Wellbeing:* Will use a ten-question measure that accounts for self-reported grades in school, effort put into success in school and college aspirations. Then the responses will be used to compute a wellbeing scale.

## **Previous Literature**

A growing literature addresses the demography, psychology, and wellbeing of multiracial adolescents. For example, several studies investigate the importance of context for expressions of multiracial identity. Using data from Add Health, Harris and Sim (2002) find that multiracial youth provide inconsistent responses to racial identification questions depending on place of interview and racial groups involved. Specifically, they found that in the presence of family members, adolescents are more likely to follow more historically restrictive racial norms of choosing one race. Also, they found regional and residential differences in racial identification. For example, White/Black youths were more likely to only identify as Black if they lived in Southern states, and Asian/White youths were more likely to identify as White if they lived in predominantly White areas. Along these lines, Jaret and Reitzes (1999) argued that researchers should not place multiracial individuals into a single racial category and expect that all individuals who identify as multiracial experience their race in the same way. Rather, these researchers claim, it is important to recognize that multiracial individuals come from a variety of mixed racial/ethnic ancestries that cause different racial experiences and self-perceptions of the importance of their own race.

Other work investigates the demographic characteristics of the multiracial population. For example, Chew et al. (1989) analyzed the general characteristics of biracial households and found persistent differences in family income that relate to the gender and race of the minority parent. These researchers found that the average socioeconomic status of multiracial households falls somewhere between that of the average two parent minority and two parent White households. However, there are clear differences when the gender and race of each parent are taken into account. For example, among Hispanics, Hispanic mother-White father households have a lower family income than households with a Hispanic father-White mother. Furthermore, with the exception of Asian father-White mother households, all biracial combinations have an average family income that is less than homogenous non-Hispanic White families. These income disparities suggest potential for other measurable differences amongst multiracial families on the basis of the gender and racial composition of the parents within the household.

Other work similarly shows that it is important to consider variation by gender and by specific racial background when attempting to understand wellbeing outcomes among multiracial adolescents. For example, while both multiracial boys and girls were more likely than their monoracial counterparts to have seen professional counselors, only multiracial boys had higher rates of being held back in school, experienced more disciplinary actions in school, and had higher rates of depression than their monoracial counterparts (Cooney & Radina, 2000). Furthermore, regarding racial categorization, Campbell and Eggerling-Boeck found that in many cases the American Indian-White multiracial group has a significantly higher rate of negative outcomes than other racial combinations, these negative outcomes often pulled down the wellbeing scores for all multiracial adolescents when they were measured as a collective group.

Previous research on monoracial families has also found gender and race of parent to have important influences on the nature of parent-child interaction and educational outcomes for adolescents. For example, Cheng & Starks (2002) found that adolescents respond differently to educational aspirations of specific family members depending on race of parent. In particular, these researchers found that minority parents typically have high educational aspirations, but Asian mothers, Hispanic mothers and Black fathers have less impact on their own children's aspirations than do white parents from either gender. These aspiration differences coincide with further literature that has shown that, within the monoracial category, racial differences persist

for grades, test scores and attitudes towards school. Kao & Thompson (2003) found that, other than Asians, children of ethnic minorities systematically fare worse for grades and test scores compared to non-Hispanic Whites when socioeconomic status is held constant. Specifically, these researchers found that the average GPA was highest for Asians (3.24) and non-Hispanic Whites (2.96) and lowest for Hispanics (2.74) and Blacks (2.73). The same order was true for standardized test scores, with Asians scoring as good as or better than Whites and Hispanics and Blacks scoring significantly lower. Research has claimed that some of these differences can be explained by the attitudes and aspirations of children and community members toward school (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Zhou & Bankston III, 1998).

This current research project will go beyond prior work by disaggregating multiracial adolescents by race, gender, and gender/racial relationship with parents. In addition to considering gender and race of parents and adolescents, this paper will also examine another important consideration when studying the family: family structure. Much research has investigated the impact of non-traditional household structures on outcomes for monoracial adolescents. For example, Moore (2001) found that Non-Hispanic White adolescents have more negative outcomes for sexual wellbeing in non-traditional two-parent households (e.g. stepfamilies), whereas black adolescents experience no such negative reaction to this alternative household form. As no research has attempted to understand the multiracial adolescent reaction to alternative household forms, this variable could be very important in understanding wellbeing differences for this group.

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