

Mary Albee
Cynthia Reyes, Ph.D. (Faculty Sponsor)
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The Impact of Adolescent Identity on Views Towards Education and School

Psychologist Erik Erikson believed that the main “crisis” of adolescence centered on identity development. Who am I? What is my place in the world? How do others view me? These questions are central to the lives of adolescents who are attempting to structure a fixed definition of their identity. However, identity development does not occur in a vacuum; as Erikson stated in his book *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, identity is shaped just as much by environmental and cultural factors as by internal forces. Since adolescents spend the majority of their time in school, it is undoubtedly one of the environments that has a large impact on identity formation. How do students incorporate education into their identities? What are some of the reasons that adolescents develop positive views towards school, and how can educators encourage this? This study is interested in further exploring the ways in which education and identity intersect in adolescence.

The framework of the study is structured by four main goals. The first is to gain a better understanding of the ways in which identity creation occurs in adolescence. The second is to determine if the self-perceived identities of students impact their views towards education and school. The third is to hypothesize and hopefully determine the complex personal, cultural, and environmental factors that lead to the students’ views towards school. The fourth is to explore possible implications for teaching and educational public policy based on the findings of the research. I will work with a local high school to recruit a group of 20-25 diverse students who are willing to participate in a written questionnaire on their identity and views towards school, and then analyze the data collected through the four lenses presented above.