

1-1-1996

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NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

***The Relationship of Ethnic Identity Development
to Cognitive Development
In Preschool Children***

A Thesis Submitted to the
University Honors Program

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements of the Baccalaureate Degree

With University Honors

Department of Human and Family Resources

by

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Dekalb, Illinois

May 11, 1996

HONORS THESIS ABSTRACT
THESIS SUBMISSION FORM

AUTHOR: Teresa L. Henegar

THESIS TITLE: The Relationship of Ethnic Identity Development to Cognitive
Development in Preschool Children

ADVISOR: Dr. Sherry Fang ADVISOR'S DEPT.: Human and Family Resources

DISCIPLINE: Child Development YEAR: 1996

PAGE LENGTH: 20 BIBIOGRAPHY: 3 ILLUSTRATED: No

PUBLISHED: No COPIES AVAILABLE: Hard Copy

ABSTRACT:

Current research seeks to determine when children first become aware of salient ethnic differences. It has been theorized that children's ethnic identity development follows the same sequence as that of cognitive development. The focus of this thesis is on children's ethnic identity development and the relationship of ethnic identity development to cognitive development.

This thesis is based on literature on Piaget's theory on children's cognitive development and recent research on ethnic and identity development. It is done in accord with the current study, "Cognitive Development and The Perception of Skin Color in Young Children," by Dr. Shi-Ruei Sherry Fang, Human and Family Resources, Northern Illinois University. This study examines children's perception of the origin of skin color in relation to the concepts of causality and conservation. It also measures children's understanding of social identity and racial attitudes. It should be noted, here, that this study is still in process, and that all information and conclusions are based on observations of the data collection process, and not on final data analysis itself.

Ethnic identity research flows over into many areas including research, policy making, social services, counseling, and health care, but more important is in the area of education. Approaches to promote positive ethnic identities and cross-group appreciation and respect were discussed. By understanding how children perceive and process information about ethnic differences, adults who work with children can create an environment and experiences that will maximize a child's positive ethnic identity and reduce negative attitudes toward others (Ramsey, 1987, p. 72).

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*The Relationship of Ethnic Identity Development
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With increasing racial tensions, visible in the Rodney King incident and the L.A. Riots, and with an increasing demand for cultural sensitivity and cultural diversity, the need for research on ethnic identity development is greater than ever before. Until recent years, these efforts were focused upon school-aged children, but recent research suggests that children have a greater sense of their ethnic identity than previously thought (Phinney, 1987, p. 265). Many researchers have found that racial attitudes are acquired at a much earlier age, and, once formed, these attitudes may form a strong intractable foundation for racism (Phinney and Rotheram, 1987,20; Katz, 1987, 99). This has led to an increase in research in the development of racial attitudes and in the development of racial identity. Poston (1990) states:

Racial identity development is important for several reasons: (1) it helps shape individuals' attitudes about themselves, attitudes about other individuals in their racial/ethnic group, attitudes about individuals from other racial/ethnic minority groups, and attitudes about individuals from the majority and (2) it dispels the cultural conformity myth, that is, that all individuals from a particular minority group are the same, with the same attitudes and preferences. Both of these issues lead to the idea that there are different levels of development and specific attitudes associated with these various levels (p. 152).

It has been theorized that the development of racial attitudes and biases are directly related to one's identity development, and it is suggested that children's

ethnic identity development follows the same sequence as that of cognitive development (Vaughn, 1987, p. 75).

The focus of this study is on preschool children's ethnic identity development and the relationship of ethnic identity development to cognitive development. For this study, literature on Piaget's theory on children's cognitive development will be reviewed, as well as recent literature on ethnic and racial identity development. The ultimate goal is to relate the two, to develop a better understanding of the developmental sequence of children's ethnic identity development and the ways children develop different racial attitudes. This study will also concentrate further on Black children's ethnic identity development versus White children's ethnic identity development, and how ethnic identity development differs for a minority child from that of a majority child (or how they are similar).

Possible implications for this research include effective multicultural education, designed to be implemented at the preschool level, to promote cultural sensitivity and interracial harmony.

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

James S. Wulach (1977) compares the cognitive development theories of Piaget and Freud in "Piagetian Cognitive Development and Primary Process Thinking in Children." He states that, "both Freud and Piaget propose models of cognitive development in which internalized representations of reality mature from autistic and illogical structures to socialized and realistic modes of thought" (p. 230). This study was based on the hypothesis that, "as children develop from the preoperational to the concrete level of intellectual organization there is a corresponding reorganization in the structure of primary process ideation,

which results in more socialized and logical expressions. libidinal and aggressive wishes become more integrated and differentiated, while condensations and symbolizations become more adaptive" (p. 230). This study tested 37 white middle-class children, from 5-8 years of age on eight Piagetian tasks and the Roschach test. He found that Piagetian development significantly correlated with Freudian primary process thinking in children.

laurendeau and Pinard (1962) discuss the work of Jean Piaget and his theories on precausal thinking in the child. They discuss the cognitive development of the child based on theories put forth by Piaget, specifically, the five stages of precausality: phenomenism, finalism, artificialism, animism, and dynamism. Research based on Piaget's theories, controversies over Piaget's theories, conditions affecting causal thinking, and numerous arguments against Piaget's theories, as well as a defense to each of the aforementioned arguments are also presented.

They also discuss the existence of stages in the cognitive development of a child. Laurendeau and Pinard refute numerous arguments proposed by those who disagree with the developmental stages Piaget proposed. The first arguments are on the overlapping of stages within the age series, and on the gradual progression of mean percentages, spaced out throughout the age series. However, Laurendeau and Pinard state that this argument is, "tantamount to assuming that all children of the same chronological age should have the same level of intellectual maturity," but that psychology is constantly finding new evidence for the existence of "tremendous individual differences in the mental functioning of children of the same age, and in the rhythm of each child's development" (p. 46). The next argument is that, "the level of answers varies according to the nature of the problems to be solved" (p. 49), that the

child demonstrates a higher level of thinking in regards to items more common within the child's environment. Laurendeau and Pinard feel that it is illogical to demand that a child reason the same way for different problems. They argue that:

The child's intellect must also interact with surrounding things. It is to the extent to which the external world comes to clash with concepts already established in his mind that the child will be forced to modify these concepts and thus develop intellectually. In relation to familiar objects in his immediate environment, the child's conceptions will become objective sooner, and this phenomenon will manifest itself externally in the level of his reasoning which will vary according to the problem (pp. 51-52).

In conclusion to these arguments, they offer Piaget's definition of primordial character:

...in dealing with stages, the order of successive types of behavior is to be considered as constant, that is, a given characteristic will not appear before another in a certain number of subjects, and after another in a different group of subjects. When there is such alternation, the characteristics involved therein cannot be used to identify stages (p. 52).

laurendeau and Pinard go on to relate Piaget's five stages of precausal thinking, specifically the third stage of artificialism, to the origin of night, a study Piaget proposed to determine what stage a child is in. According to Piaget, they say, absolute artificialism is finalistic in the first stage; Night is for man's sleep, and it's origin is attributed to the intervention of man or of God. The second stage is characterized by finalistic reasons supplemented by, "a system aiming at explaining how night is effected; a large black cloud steered directly, or ordered from a distance, by God or man, moves in to fill the atmosphere" (p. 69). In the next stage, artificialism gives way almost completely

to physicalistic interpretations; the clouds hide the daylight. The disappearance of the sun is finally given in the fourth stage.

The origin of night is discussed in more detail, including substages, in accord with a current study on the origin of night. It provides the results from the current study, compared to those of Piaget's. These results reaffirm "the existence of primitive beliefs of a precausal type" (p. 245), and clearly illustrates the development of the child's causal thinking, "in a progressive substitution of physicalistic interpretations for primitive beliefs" (p. 260).

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT AND ETHNIC IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Rotheram and Phinney (1987), in the introduction to their book, attempt to define terms and introduce ideas about children's ethnic socialization used in the chapters to come. They begin by defining ethnic socialization as, "Developmental processes by which children acquire the behaviors, perceptions, values, and attitudes of an ethnic group, and come to see themselves and others as members of such groups" (p. 11). They also explain the different perspectives, and the importance of each different perspective in research on ethnic socialization, as well as each different approach to the study of children's ethnic identity. Psychoanalysts, social psychologists, and cognitive developmental psychologists, all examine the developmental processes that children progress through in forming an ethnic identity. Rotheram and Phinney outline and summarize four cognitive developmental stage models of children's ethnic identity development (p. 15). Each model assumes a developmental model of change, "describing an age-related progression in the ability to

perceive, process and interpret racial or ethnic stimuli, which leads to the establishment of ethnic identity" (p. 14).

Aboud (1987) presents a "developmental and social psychological approach to the study of ethnic identity and attitudes" (p. 32). She states that, "The development of identity and attitudes is conceived of as proceeding from rudimentary forms of identity and attitudes to fully developed adult forms." "The development of identity and attitudes can be traced as children gradually acquire the adult criteria" (p.32). Based on previous research, she gives developmental milestones and ethnic status differences on identification of self and on attitude to one's own group and other groups.

Katz (1987) briefly summarizes Aboud's developmental sequence of self-identity, stating that:

Self-recognition is the first clear phase in this process and that this generally occurs at 3 or 4 years of age. Following this, the child demonstrates increasing competence in (a) perceiving similarity of the self to one's own group, (b) categorizing various groups based upon perceptual cues, (c) labeling groups appropriately (that is, in a manner consistent with adult patterns), and (d) recognizing that ethnicity is generally unchangeable. The various steps as outlined take about 4 years to develop, and the constancy aspect generally is not acquired until 7 or 8 years of age (pp. 92-93).

Helms (1993) discusses possible stages within children's racial identity development. She believes that stages of racial identity should be, "viewed as levels of racial complexity within the individual, with higher or more advanced

stages representing greater sophistication in one's conceptualization skills with regard to one's own racial characteristics as well as those of other racial group members" (p. 241). She goes on to say, "Whether a stage matures within the individual is determined by a combination of the individual's unique cognitive processes (personal identity) as well as the quality of the (racial) environments in which he or she interacts" (p. 241).

Patricia G. Ramsey (1987) also discusses the connection between cognitive development and early ethnic socialization. She notes that, "to gain an understanding of children's thinking one must explore the informational content of children's perceptions and ideas as well as the processes by which they construct their social knowledge" (p. 56). In this chapter, Ramsey focuses on three specific cognitive processes relevant to the study of children's ethnic socialization: perception and categorization of ethnic differences, assimilation, of ethnic information, "the process by which children absorb overt and covert beliefs and attitudes that prevail in their social environment" (p. 57), and the search for coherence, "the attempt to deal with new situations in a manner that is consistent with one's beliefs and self-image" (p. 57).

She also looks closely at Piaget's theories of causality and conservation and how they relate to children's ethnic socialization, and ethnic identity development. She states that:

As children develop their concepts about ethnic differences, their ideas about the origins of various characteristics follow a developmental sequence that is correlated with their understanding of physical phenomena such as conceptions of causality and conservation of matter (p.69).

She states that, "According to Piaget, preoperational children are psychological, phenomenistic, and finalistic in their explanations of causal relationships" (pp. 69-70). She cites the stages of children's ideas about the origins of ethnic differences identified by Clark et al. to illustrate this. She goes on to say that children in Piaget's preoperational stage often confuse changes in state with changes in quantity. Likewise, they cannot conserve ethnic characteristics. Although children believe that people, in general, can change their skin color, the white children insisted that they, themselves, could not change their skin color, whereas the black children gave various ways of changing their skin color. Children, sometimes, believe that they can change their identity by dressing in clothing of other cultures etc. Ramsey states, "just as in conservation tasks, children cannot simultaneously maintain their own identity and see themselves dressed as someone else" (p. 71). In conclusion, Ramsey states that, "early ethnic socialization has a clear cognitive component" (p. 72).

Graham M. Vaughan (1987) states that it is, "obvious today that cognitive processes underlie ethnic identity and attitude development" (p. 75), and discusses early studies that were, "theoretically important in demonstrating that children's responses varied with age, that there was a developmental trend, and that race awareness was not developed fully at birth" (p. 75).

Phinney and Rotheram (1987) explain how the impact of ethnicity varies with the child's age. They state:

As children develop, their mental and physical growth, together with their widening experience of the world, bring about changes in their cognitions, attitudes, and self-awareness with regard to ethnicity. Children's early understandings are inconsistent, concrete, and idiosyncratic. With

increasing cognitive abilities children develop more stable, differentiated and abstract conceptions of ethnicity. Children's sense of their own ethnic group membership (that is, their ethnic identity) also undergoes clear developmental changes (p. 275).

BLACK CHILDREN'S ETHNIC SOCIALIZATION

One should note that a great deal of identity development research was conducted on white majority children by white majority researchers. It has been shown that identity development for minority children differs from that of majority children (Phinney and Rotheram, 1987, p. 276). Therefore, it is important to gain more information specifically on the study of black children's ethnic identity formation.

The study of black children's ethnic identity formation has been impeded by a number of factors. Spencer (1987) discusses these factors, including the fact that most available research on black children lacks "a developmental thrust" (pp. 104-105), and that:

...much of this research fails to recognize differences in the way that individuals 'make meaning' from their experiences as a consequence of their developmental status. If the research on Black ethnic identity is examined developmentally and the constructs subcategorized multidimensionally (for example, cultural awareness, group identification, racial preferences, racial attitudes, color stereotyping), nontraditional conclusions are generated (p. 105).

Also, she discusses the challenges castelike minorities (a group incorporated into an existing social structure involuntarily and permanently) must

face, and the importance of race consciousness, and race pride, which provides a foundation for the coping strategies needed by black children. Minority children are constantly facing a society that devalues their ethnicity, and places them in a lower social status. She states, "the critical socialization task of minority-status children is the acquisition and internalization of positive *identity* elements in a nonminority preferred society" (p. 107). This highlights the importance of child-rearing strategies which will promote such race consciousness and race pride, but also highlights the important role society has in the positive development of minority children's ethnic identity.

Smith (1989) argues that, "racial identity development is situational" (p. 280). She states that, "identity development might be different for members of the Black underclass than for members of the Black middle class or the Black upper class" (p. 280). She then offers propositions that might be used to form the basis of a theory of racial identity development, that focus on both racial identity development and ethnic identity development. The first proposition is that biological, ethnic, cultural, and environmental factors all influence human development. The second proposition is that these determinants (biological, psychological, cultural, and environmental factors) interact over the life span of an individual.

Clark and Clark (1947) give research on the "analysis of the genesis and development of racial identification as a function of ego development and self-awareness in Negro children" (p. 602). Results presented in this paper were based on the Dolls Test given to 253 Negro children aged 3-7. Eight questions were designed to determine knowledge of racial difference, *racial* self-identification, and racial preferences. They determined that a majority of these

children preferred the white doll and negated the brown doll. Also, based on the differences in attitudes and responses at different ages, they determined the critical period for the formation of attitudes and preferences to begin at 4 or 5 years of age. Therefore, appropriate intervention at the preschool level could help children, both minority and majority, to develop positive attitudes at the earliest possible age.

Cross (1987) states that a panel of experts on child development, called together by national officials for Head Start, found that "minority status does not result in automatic inferiorization; on the contrary, it appears that young minority children enter school with a strong and positive global self-concept through incorporation of a 'self-as-student' or 'self-as-leamer' component that facilitates successful performance in traditional middle-class academic contexts."

Smith (1991) agrees with this. She states that:

A large part of the minority child's ethnic identity development entails dealing with this sense of initial rejection of one's ethnic group. The ethnic self moves from an early stage of unawareness and lack of differentiation to one of ethnic awareness, ethnic self-identification, and increasingly ethnic differentiation on the basis of contact situations. Whereas the ethnic identity development of the majority group individual is continually validated and reinforced in a positive manner by both his membership group and by the structure of the society's institutions, such is not the case for many ethnic minorities (p. 183).

Therefore, she also believes that one's ethnic membership group can effect one's self-esteem. Her theory of ethnic identity development proposes that:

Acceptance of one's ethnic membership group as a positive reference group leads to positive self-esteem, whereas rejection of one's ethnic membership group as a positive reference group leads to self-estrangement and maladaptive psychological behavior (p. 186).

A major thesis of Smith's theory is that, "both minority and majority status influence the process of ethnic identity development. In comparison with majority children, minority children are confronted with their ethnicity at an earlier age and they are more consistently aware of ethnic differences" (p, 183). Based on this theory, it is important to a child's self-esteem to develop a positive attitude about their ethnic group. It is not whether a child is minority or majority that determines self-esteem, but rather how they view their own ethnic group and whether or not experiences relating to their ethnicity are positive or negative.

Keeping all of this in mind, the importance of good multi-cultural education at an early, preferably preschool (refer to Clark and Clark, 1947), age is obvious. If children are given positive information about their ethnicity, then they will develop a positive self-esteem which stems from this knowledge.

RESEARCH ON THE RELATIONSHIP OF ETHNIC IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT TO COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

Current research seeks to determine when children first become aware of salient ethnic differences. Some say that children may begin to pick up on subtle environmental clues as early as 10 months. Others say that children's ethnic socialization follows Piaget's cognitive developmental sequence, that children's levels of cognitive understanding influences the way their experiences are interpreted and lead to attitudes towards others (Phinney, 1987, p. 20).

According to Piaget's theories, children's understanding of the origin and stability of ethnic differences would require an understanding of causality and conservation. The current study, "Cognitive Development and the Perception of Skin Color In Young Children," by Dr. Shi-Ruei Sherry Fang, Human and Family Resources, Northern Illinois University, is examining children's perception of the origin of skin color in relation to Piaget's concept of causality and conservation. It, also, is utilizing Lemke's measure of social identity, which tests a child's sense that an individual's identity remains the same through time, despite physical change, and the Preschool Racial Attitude Measure II (PRAM II), which measures a child's attitude toward skin color. It should be noted, here, that the current study is still in process. All information to follow is based on observations of the data collection process - not on final data analysis itself.

The first test given to the subjects is a test of physical conservation. It is theorized that in order for a child to understand that people are continuous beings, the child must be able to conserve nonsocial objects. This is assessed using Piaget's clay and water manipulation task. Children are first given two approximately equal balls of clay. One clay ball is then changed in shape and divided in two. Children are then asked if they are still the same amount. Next, one ball of clay is placed into a pitcher of water, while the child observes the water level. Then, the child is asked to predict what will happen if the other clay ball (which is the same size) is placed into another identical pitcher of water.

In observing this test, the difference in cognitive levels between children two and three years of age and between children three and four years of age is very apparent. However, some children were unable to attend to the questions asked, and therefore may have shown a lower level of understanding than they actually have. Some children may have benefited from, and remained more

focused on the questions asked, if allowed to play and explore the clay on their own first.

The second test measures physical causality and is to determine children's ability to understand that natural phenomena have physical causes. This test parallels children's understanding of the origin (or cause) of night to the causes of peoples skin color. Laurendeau and Pinard's (1962) standardized version of Piaget's "The Origin of Night" questions are given to the children to determine what they attribute night to, dark to, day to, and light to.

Children's level of reasoning on this measure varied greatly. For most children, the concept was unclear. "I don't know," was the predominant answer. When this occurred, children were prompted with a multiple-choice option (sleep, the disappearance of the sun, the clouds). This may have been too leading. Making the question into multiple-choice may have put the thought into the child's mind, rather than letting the child come up with something on his/her own. This kind of suggestive questioning may introduce error into the child's true level of causality. This section of the test may have been improved, had time allowed, by, simply, giving the children more time to think, without offering any suggestions.

The next test measures a child's sense of social identity, that a person's identity is constant despite normal changes in physical appearance. According to Lemke's (1973) social identity measure, the children were shown three photos, taken years apart, of the same family. The child is told who each person is in one picture, then asked to identify each person in the next picture by pointing as they are named. Then, the earliest photo, with the youngest child missing, is shown. The child is asked to identify each person, and tell who is missing from the photo. Once it is established that the youngest is not there, by

prompting if need be, the child is asked why this child may be missing. The child is then asked to put the pictures in order from earliest to most recent.

For children who are very verbal, this test is very successful. However, It appears to be developmentally inappropriate for children of this age. Very few of the children tested were able to give an accurate response to this questioning, and, in fact, few of the children gave any unprompted response at all. And, once again, when the child would not give reason for the absence of the youngest child, suggestions are made. Again, I feel this may be leading. The child is not necessarily coming up with those answers, but rather is repeating what the adult has suggested. According to this test, very few of the children tested showed any sense of social identity.

The final test is the PRAM II. For this test, children are given the opportunity to choose one of two persons whom a negative or positive quality describes. The only difference between the two persons shown in the drawings is skin color or gender. (Gender is included to prevent the child from ascertaining the primary purpose of the study.) For example, the child was asked which girl is pretty; which man is kind. Also, for two specified sets of pictures, one in the middle of the series and one at the end, a series of questions are given to determine the degree of certainty with which the child attributed positive or negative qualities to the pictures, to assess the child's awareness of skin color differences, and to determine if the child can relate to the picture of the child with the same skin color.

In observing this test, with some children a possible racial preference was noted. With some children, responses were obviously random. Some children would point before hearing the question. This may have been due to the added questions. Having asked the child to note the skin color difference may have cued the children into the purpose of the study (which defeated the purpose of

having gender role pictures to distract from the purpose.) This may have been avoided by reserving the added questioning for the final two pictures. At this point it would no longer affect any results of the study if it did indeed point out a difference that the child had not previously noted. On the contrary, it may prove interesting to note if the child tended toward anyone certain race any more or less after discussing skin color differences than before.

It will also be interesting to see if the race of the examiner plays any part in the final results of this current study. Dr. Shi-Ruei Sherry Fang's ethnic background, and personal experience as a minority will definitely be a great attribute to the study of ethnic identity development; more research by minority researchers is needed.

Also needed is more collaborative work between counseling psychologists, child psychologists, developmental psychologists and social psychologists (Ponterotto, 1989, p. 269). A complete understanding will result only from seeing the way these various aspects interact and influences each other (Phinney 1987, p. 25). Helms states, " the possibility of collaborative research across settings or involving racially diverse researchers should not be overlooked" (Ponterotto, 1989, p. 268).

It would also be interesting, in future research, if the amount of previous interracial interaction that the child has had could be ascertained from the children's parents and factored into the final data analysis. Parental attitudes, in comparison to children's (keeping in mind developmental differences among children in their understanding of ethnic differences), would also be informative, although both of these aspects of ethnic identity development would be very difficult to research due to lack of parental interest and involvement. It would also prove to be beneficial if a more racially diverse group of subjects could be attained for future research. Another possibility for future research includes

observations in more naturalistic settings. Though children are quick to notice and question differences between ethnic groups, it has been noted that most of these children will still play with children of many different ethnic groups (Phinney, 1987, p. 282). This shows that noticing the differences does not necessarily signify a concrete attitude formation. It would be interesting to research further at what age children begin to choose same ethnic group children, over other ethnic group children, in their play. This could be done by observing the play of racially mixed groups of children, at various different age levels, or longitudinal studies could provide this kind of information. Though the possibility of finding subjects whose parents are wholly cooperative is recognizably difficult, it would benefit scientific research greatly to be able to follow children through their childhood experiences, into their adolescence and adulthood. To note the attitude of others around them and their experiences with other races, in relation to their own attitudes and attitude changes, would be a great contribution to research in this area.

Implications for this research are endless. "In the area of ethnic research it is virtually impossible to conduct research that does not have evaluative implications" (Phinney, 1987, p. 28). Ethnic identity research flows over into many areas including research, policy making, social services, counseling, and health care, but more important is in the area of education.

This kind of research is especially valuable for designing educational programs to promote positive ethnic identities and cross-group appreciation and respect. By understanding how children perceive and process information about ethnic differences, adults who work with children can create an environment and experiences that will maximize a child's positive ethnic identity and reduce negative attitudes toward others (Ramsey, 1987, p. 72).

The most common effort in education, working toward interracial harmony, is multi-cultural education. This refers to "materials and programs that foster understanding and appreciation of ethnic diversity and promote positive interethnic relations" (Phinney, 1987, p. 277). These programs attempt to educate children about different ethnic cultures, so as to prevent any prejudice formed due to a lack of understanding. Although the idea is a movement in the right direction for interracial harmony and unity in diversity, the methods being used have been, at least, controversial. It has been argued that these multi-cultural programs stress differences too much, and do not point out similarities enough. In fact, it should stress both differences and similarities, only honest knowledge will prevent prejudice; but, more importantly, these programs need to be designed to fit the developmental level and interests of children.

Further research is needed to determine, positively, what developmentally appropriate multi-cultural education is, but current research suggests that the best approach in early childhood is personal experience with members of different ethnic groups (Phinney, 1987, p. 277). "At this age, bringing together children of different groups in a positive atmosphere with many opportunities for cooperative play provides a base for good intergroup relations" (Phinney, 1987, p. 282). And, "If exposure forces the child to focus on individuals rather than groups, it can promote more positive attitudes (Katz & Zalk, 1978)." (Aboud, 1987, pp. 45-46).

An equally important implication for ethnic identity development is an understanding of how children develop positive self-esteems based on the positive development of ethnic identity. Race pride, especially for minority students, may contribute to resilience and coping strategies that are necessary for positive ethnic identity development. Teachers who have an understanding of the variations among groups can work more effectively with children from

diverse ethnic backgrounds. Teachers need more training in order to understand and deal effectively with the issues surrounding ethnicity (Phinney, 1987, p. 282). They need to be aware of similarities and differences between the majority and minority cultures, and the potential classroom conflicts and opportunities they create for social groups. Only through a solid understanding of the different cultures can a teacher help the students to develop a positive ethnic attitude toward both their own and other ethnic groups.

Another implication for teachers is being able to serve the educational differences of children coming from different backgrounds. Some researchers see classrooms in pluralistic societies as, "an interface of cultures, in which the learning process is disrupted because teachers and pupils have incongruent expectations, motives, social behaviors, and language and cognitive patterns" (Phinney, 1987, p. 278).

Effective solutions also involve working with the family unit. Understanding ethnic identity development has important implications for educating parents on training children with positive ethnic identities, and a positive attitude toward other ethnic groups, especially with children of preschool age. Many children of this age do not attend a school where effective multicultural education will reach them, especially for some minority children whose socioeconomic status makes preschool impossible. Most of these parents have little understanding of the importance of ethnic identity development, and these children, often times, have no experience with ethnically diverse groups. It is important that these parents are educated in developmentally appropriate ways of encouraging a positive ethnic identity development and a positive attitude toward other ethnic groups.

In conclusion, the importance of research on cognitive development with regards to ethnic identity development should be reiterated. As children

develop, their mental and physical growth, together with their widening experiences of the world, bring about changes in their cognitions, ethnic attitudes and ethnic identity. With increasing cognitive abilities they develop more stable, differentiated, and abstract conceptions of ethnicity. Children's ethnic identity undergoes clear developmental changes. If we can learn more about these changes, we can use that knowledge to create, in each child, a positive ethnic identity, and a positive attitude toward other ethnic groups. With this we can create interracial harmony, and, perhaps, prevent any further incidents like the Rodney King incident, and the L.A. Riots.

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