

# DEVELOPMENT OF IDENTITY IN NATIVE INDIAN CHILDREN: REVIEW AND POSSIBLE FUTURES

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## **Abstract / Résumé**

Early studies initiated theory and research on the development of racial/ethnic identity in minority and majority group children. This paper reviews the major theories and research on the development of own group identity in majority (White) and minority (Aboriginal) children. Early research with Aboriginal children, based on ideas derived from psychodynamic theory, experimenter bias, ingroup language usage or generalized response biases are examined. They only partially explain identity development in these children. A model of identity development which integrates both motivational and cognitive developmental perspectives is discussed, supportive research is provided, and suggestions for future research are made.

D'anciennes études ont amorcé des théories et des recherches sur le développement de l'identité raciale/ethnique chez des enfants des groupes minoritaires et majoritaires. Cet article fait un compte-rendu des théories et recherches majeures sur le développement d'une identité de groupe chez les enfants du groupe majoritaire (blanc) et du groupe minoritaire (autochtone). D'anciennes recherches sur des enfants autochtones, basées sur des idées tirées de la théorie psychodynamique, du parti pris du chercheur, de la langue utilisée au sein du groupe ou de la nature des préjugés généralisés des réponses sont examinées. Ces recherches expliquent en partie seulement le développement de l'identité chez les enfants. On a étudié un modèle du développement de l'identité incorporant des perspectives du développement qui motivent et infusent le désir de connaissance. L'article fournit des recherches de soutien ainsi que des suggestions pour des recherches futures.

Nearly Fifty years ago Clark and Clark (1947), following the procedures outlined earlier by Horowitz (1939), presented Black children with black and white dolls and asked questions about racial similarity (e.g. "which one looks like you?"), preference (e.g. "which one has a nice skin color?"), evaluation (e.g. "which one is smart?"), and labelling (e.g. "which one is the Black doll?"). Clark and Clark found that while children could correctly label the dolls as representing Blacks or Whites, they expressed a positive evaluation of and preference for white dolls, and chose those dolls as looking most like themselves. Clark and Clark concluded that Black children are aware of physical differences between minority and majority group members, and that for Blacks, these differences form part of their identity as minority group members. For the Clarks, physical cues were central features in defining for African American children their identity as group members.

Subsequent research has not only confirmed these findings, but has indicated that they are not limited to African Americans. Asian, Hispanic American, Native and Maori children show cross-racial preferences or what Brown (1965) called "reverse ethnocentrism"; that is, minority group children perceive themselves as being more similar to, and positively evaluate, pictures or dolls representing majority group members. In contrast, children from majority groups demonstrate a strong own group bias: perceiving more similarity with and positive evaluations of pictures or dolls representing own group members (see Aboud, 1988).

This long research tradition has produced a large body of empirical findings (for reviews see Brand, Ruiz and Padilla, 1974; Aboud and Skerry, 1984; Phinney and Rotheram, 1987; Aboud, 1988; Spencer and Markstrom-Adams, 1990). The results of many of these studies were instrumental in the United States Supreme Court decision *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka*, that reduced segregation in American public schools (Kluger, 1976). Nevertheless, there remains considerable disagreement about what these results actually mean. Many studies were done without firm theoretical guidance (see Aboud, 1988) thus complicating interpretation, and when a theoretical explanation was provided, it was typically in terms of children's attempts to maintain self-esteem (e.g. Spencer, 1982; Tajfel and Turner, 1989) or in terms of cognitive developmental theory (e.g. Aboud, 1988). Unfortunately, there has been little attempt to identify the relative influence of motivational and developmental factors on the processes by which children come to know about and evaluate the groups in which they hold membership. As will be shown later, cognitive and developmental factors influence, in an equal but opposite manner, the development of attitudes that Native children hold toward own group members. One of the major developmental tasks facing these children is the integration of diverse and

often conflicting sources of information into a unified sense of self. Finally, past research has focused on describing cross-racial preferences and evaluations, and has little to say about the antecedents or consequences of racial/ethnic identity development in minority and majority group children.

Over the last several years I have been involved in exploring the development of racial/ethnic identity among Native and White children. These studies address the influence of self-esteem and cognitive development on children's understanding of racial/ethnic group membership and examine the antecedents and consequences of identity development; as a result, a more unified picture of the processes underlying identity development in Native and White children is now emerging.

In this review, some of the racial/ethnic identity research which has been interpreted in terms of motivational or cognitive developmental theories will be examined with particular emphasis given to those studies on identity development in Native children. Conclusions from studies done with Native children lead to a discussion of investigations which integrate motivational, cognitive and mediating variables into a more unified explanation of identity development in these and other minority group children. Methodological concerns and suggestions for future research are also discussed.

### **Motivational Explanations of Own Group Identity and Preference**

One interpretation of cross-racial preference and identification is that such choices reflect motivational concerns, such as attempts to maintain self-esteem. Spencer (1982), for example, suggests that minority group children experience dissonance between their ethnic/racial group membership and the predominantly Eurocentric values of the majority group. From this perspective, majority group members are a reference group and a source of normative and informational social influence for minority group children. Dissonance occurs because the child's self-esteem is threatened by the perception that the majority group holds his or her group in low regard.

According to social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979), people seek to maintain a positive social identity by accentuating, in a positive direction, differences between own and other group members on those dimensions which favour their group. One way children in minority groups can achieve positive identity is by trying to "leave" their group (symbolically, in the case of doll and picture choice) and join one that is perceived to be more valued (see Yee and Brown, 1992). Symbolic passing and other means of achieving positive identity (see Tajfel and Turner, 1979) occurs

when group membership is not valued within the larger culture or when dimensions used for social comparisons are discounted by others.

The idea that self-esteem or social identity concerns underly cross-racial identification and preference has received considerable attention (Cross, 1987; Markstrom-Adarns, 1990). Empirical support for the idea, however, is mixed; some studies report inverse relationships (e.g. Rosenberg and Simmons, 1971; MacAdoo, 1970 cited in Branch and Newcombe, 1988), others report positive relationships (e.g. Ward and Braun, 1972; Rosenfield and Stephen, 1981), while others found no relationship (e.g. Spencer, 1982; Cross, 1987). It is unclear whether these inconsistencies reflect variations in methodology or subject samples, or whether the self-esteem measures, of which there were many, were appropriate for the cultural groups under study. Moreover, the fundamental idea in these studies--that because of their status, minority group children think poorly of themselves (Proshansky and Newton, 1968)--has also received little support. Porter and Washington (1979), for example, found no significant difference between American Black and White children on various measures of self-esteem, and Corenblum and Annis (1994) found no such differences in samples of Native and White children. Lefley (1975) did find higher self-concept scores among White than Native children, but methodological problems probably account for these differences. Motivational factors may influence children's responses to questions about own and other group members, but the extent, nature and direction of that influence has not been adequately demonstrated.

### **A Cognitive Developmental Approach to Own Group Identity and Preference**

An alternate explanation for children's answers to similarity and evaluation questions is given by cognitive developmental theory. According to this perspective, responses to questions about own and other group members reflect children's levels of cognitive development which, in turn, influences what they know about race and ethnicity. With the advent and development of concrete operational thought between ages five and nine (Piaget and Weil, 1951), what children know about the biological, social and personal implications of race begins to approach the reasoning and understanding of race shown by adults. Clark, Hovecar and Dembo (1980) found that children who had attained concrete operational thought and who showed race constancy (knowledge that self and other's attributes remain constant despite superficial external changes) were able to correctly explain the origins of skin colour. Spencer (1982) found a positive correlation

between social cognitive abilities and identification of own and other group members. With the emergence of complex cognitive structures, children learn the cues and attributes that describe own and other group members, and as a result, come to perceive themselves as similar to group members; similarity, in turn, may lead directly (Byrne, 1971) or indirectly through perceptions of common fate or perceived unit relationships, to greater identification with own group members. As predicted by cognitive developmental theory, the presence of concrete operational thought has been associated with own group identification among Black (Semaj, 1980; Branch and Newcombe, 1986), Asian (Fox and Jordan, 1973), Hispanic (Rice, Ruiz and Padilla, 1975) and Native children (Corenblum and Annis, 1987). One assumption underlying the cognitive developmental perspective is that as cognitive complexity increases, children develop more complex knowledge structures or schemas about race. One implication of this idea is that children who have achieved concrete operational thought should recall and process information about race differently than children who have not attained this level. Research on gender schemas (Slaby and Frey, 1975; Martin and Halverson, 1981) has shown that with advent of concrete operational thought, children show gender constancy, a preference for information consistent with gender stereotypes and a tendency to distort information inconsistent with normative expectations so as to make it consistent with existing gender stereotypes (see Ruble and Stangor, 1986 for a review). Similarly, Bigler and Liben (1993) found that White children recalled more information consistent with their schemas about African Americans, and Corenblum, Annis and Young (in press) observed that White children recalled more information about Whites than Natives, whereas Native children reversed this pattern of recall. Although there are few studies on race schemas, these findings suggest some parallels in children's understanding of race and gender.

It is important to note that while increases in cognitive development are associated with perceived similarity between self and own group members, such increases are not necessarily associated with favourable own group evaluations. Corenblum and Annis (1987), for example found that even though six and seven year old Native children identified with own group members they were just as likely as younger Native children to positively evaluate Whites (see also Aboud, 1977; Spencer, 1984; Fine and Bowers, 1984). One reason for the discrepancy between identification and preference is that when categorizing others, individuals implicitly or explicitly categorize themselves; evaluations of others involve self-evaluations (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). One implication of this is that self-esteem concerns are likely to be raised when evaluating own and other group members

(Hoffman, 1981). Thus while cognitive-developmental theory is an advance over earlier descriptive studies, it does not address the role of motivational factors such as self-esteem on what are largely social judgements.

### **Research on Identity Development in Native Children**

Much of the research on the development of ethnic/racial identity has focused on African American or Hispanic children; relatively little research has been devoted to children from other minority groups. Research with Native children differs from that done with other groups in that much of it is conducted in Canada; moreover, unlike many African Americans, many Native peoples live in non-urban or rural areas where the political issue of race and ethnicity is, until recently, less salient. When race/ethnicity become a political issue it is unclear whether responses to questions about own and other group members reflect children's actual choices, or, as Vaughan (1987) points out, a reflection of the current social climate. Studies with Native children help resolve some of these issues.

Hunsberger (1978) following the tradition set by Clark and Clark, presented five to nine year old White, Mohawk and Iroquois First Nations children with white and native dolls and asked questions about racial labelling, similarity and evaluation. Self-esteem was also assessed by asking children to draw pictures of themselves and family members. In the Draw-a-Person technique (Machover, 1949), the height of one's own picture compared to those of others has been used as a projective measure of self-esteem. Hunsberger found that although most Native and White children could correctly identify white and native dolls, a high percentage of Native children preferred the white doll and a majority of them chose that doll as looking most like themselves. White children, in contrast, showed a strong own race bias selecting the white doll as the most preferred, and as the one that looked most like themselves. Although Hunsberger did not correlate drawings of self and family members with doll choices, drawings of Whites were larger than those of Natives suggesting higher self-esteem among Whites.

Corenblum and Wilson (1982) replicated Hunsberger's study, and in addition tested whether experimenter's race (Katz and Zalk, 1978; Trent, 1964) or response biases may have influenced his results. White, Dakota and Ojibway five and six year olds attending racially homogeneous elementary schools answered similarity, evaluation, and labelling questions by pointing to white and native dolls. Half of the subjects were tested by a Native experimenter, the other half by a White. To test the idea that the choice of white dolls indicates a more general preference for light colored

objects (Williams and Morland, 1976), subjects were presented with pictures of light and dark cups and rabbits and asked, for example, "which one do you want to play with?". As in the Hunsberger study, Native children chose white dolls as looking most like themselves; this effect being greater with a White than Native experimenter. But even with an own group experimenter, only 52% of Native compared to 80% of White children chose an own group doll as looking most like themselves. A Native experimenter reduced but did not reverse cross-racial preferences and similarity. The experimenter's race and the colour of objects influenced children's answers to questions about dolls, cups and rabbits, but no pro-light colour bias emerged from these findings.

In perhaps the most extensive survey of Native children's racial/ethnic identity, Rosenthal (1974) presented Chippewa and White children with pictures of Whites and Natives and asked labelling, evaluation, preference, and similarity questions in a manner similar to Clark and Clark. In this study, unlike many others, the Native population constituted a numerical majority in the community, outnumbering Whites by nearly three to one. Despite being in the majority, Native children chose pictures of Whites as looking most like themselves. In addition, over 70% chose pictures of Whites in response to questions about whom they wanted to play with and who was nice, smart and clean, but over 75% chose pictures of Natives when asked who looks bad. These results were obtained despite the fact that over 90% of all six year old Native children were able to accurately categorize and label pictures of the two racial/ethnic groups. Unfortunately, Rosenthal did not ask any other questions so it is difficult to determine whether developmental, motivational or other factors influenced children's responses. Nevertheless, the finding that Native children perceived themselves to be more similar to majority group members when Native peoples were in the majority suggests that other group biases reported in other studies cannot be attributed solely to being a numerical minority or attending a White dominated school system.

In many studies of racial/ethnic identity it is assumed that physical differences are the major cues children use to distinguish between own and other group members. There are, of course, many other attributes and characteristics which could be used to differentiate between group members. Ryan and Giles (1982), for example, note that own group identity, solidarity and pride are enhanced when minority group members use the minority language when talking to each other. Annis and Corenblum (1986) examined the influence of language usage and race of experimenter on Native children's responses to labelling, evaluation and similarity questions. Ojibwa children living on a remote, northern Canadian Reserve answered

questions about own and other group members posed by bilingual White or Native testers speaking English or Ojibwa. Neither test language nor race of experimenter had a large influence on childrens' responses. Children were able to accurately label the dolls, but, as in the Rosenthal study, many positively evaluated the white doll, and chose it as looking most like themselves.

One implication of the idea that children have schemas or knowledge structures about own group members is that they should be more likely to seek out schema consistent information. Aboud (1977) tested this idea by presenting White, Native, and Chinese children in kindergarten and grade one with picture books about children from these three groups. Children were asked to select which story character was most and least like themselves, and using the ethnic label of the story character, to indicate whether that label applied to themselves. Native (in comparison to White) children were less likely to choose an own group story character when asked about perceived similarity, but just as likely as Whites to point to another story character when asked about perceived dissimilarity. White children appear to have developed cognitive representations about own group members. These children knew their ethnic label and the cues and attributes associated with own group members. Native and Chinese children, on the other hand, do not appear to have such detailed representations. They were unsure of their ethnic label, particularly in kindergarten, and used a contrast strategy (which one who is not like you), to learn more about their group and its attributes (see Corenblum and Annis, 1993 for similar results).

One trend that emerges from these studies is the consistency with which Native children answered similarity, evaluation and preference questions. Despite differences in subject samples, location of the studies, time period (1974-1986), racial group membership of the experimenters, language in which the study was conducted, and accuracy in labelling pictures or dolls, Native children chose pictures or dolls representing majority group members when answering questions about own and other group members. These results are consistent with those theories that suggest that responses to questions about own group members reflect attempts to enhance self-esteem. According to this perspective, minority group children wish to symbolically join the high status majority group, and, by so doing, enhance their social identity and maintain self-esteem (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). According to this perspective, choosing white dolls reflects Native children's desire to close--at least symbolically--the distance between themselves and those whom they perceive to be high status, in-group members. Other explanations of these results, however, are also possible. Since many of the studies are correlational in nature, it can be argued that rather than trying



to bring about a change in self-esteem, cross racial identification and preference reflects the current level of self-esteem among Native children. As noted earlier, Native and White children showed comparable and high levels of self-esteem (Corenblum and Annis, 1994); cross racial identification and preferences may indicate attempts by both groups to maintain positive evaluative consistency among objects and people in their social environment. There was little support in these studies for explanations based on cognitive-developmental theory. In the Hunsberger and Rosenthal studies, 9 and 10 year olds displayed the same preferences and evaluations as did younger children (see also Corenblum and Annis, 1987). It should be noted that in these studies no direct measure of cognitive development was used, and it is difficult to determine whether these results were due to level of cognitive development or to factors associated with it.

### **Methodological Issues**

There are several methodological concerns which can be raised about the findings from these initial studies. For example, all of the studies reviewed here, and many not reviewed, used the same basic procedures as did Clark and Clark (1947): minority and majority group children had to choose between dolls, pictures, or drawings of own and other group members. The use of a standard methodology is a mixed blessing when interpreting research results. On one hand, generalizations can be easily drawn when similar methods are used, but on the other, it is unclear whether results are due to the specific methodology. Happily, other studies using different methods have found results similar to those reported using dolls and pictures. Preference for and positive evaluation of majority group members has been found when rating scales and other continuous measures have been used (see Aboud, 1988), as well as when alternate methods were used to evaluate own and other group members. Banks and Rompf (1973), for example, found that White and Black children awarded more points to a White than Black game player even though children from both groups correctly recalled both players doing equally well on the task. Corenblum, Annis and Young (in press) reported that White and Native children attributed the success of a White child to ability and predicted similar outcomes in the future, whereas similar levels of success by a Native were attributed to effort and the outcome was seen as unlikely to occur again.

As stated earlier, it is assumed in many studies on racial/ethnic identity, that physical differences between groups are the primary cues children use to classify self, own and other group members. Such an assumption may

not be warranted even when examining Black-White relationships, and it is certainly suspect when comparing majority and minority group children from other racial or ethnic groups. Physical attributes are often correlated with other dimensions such as dress, language usage, religion, degree of enculturation, play and interaction styles, and it is often difficult to distinguish between the effects of racial/ethnic group membership and these other dimensions. What appears as evaluations based on race or ethnicity may reflect inferences based on other attributes or inferred characteristics.

Perceived social status, for example, is sometimes correlated with racial group membership, and has been shown to influence evaluations of own and other group members. Ramsey (1991) reported that preschoolers are sensitive to cues that distinguish between rich and poor, and rate people from these groups as different and unlikely to be friends. Yee and Brown (1992) found that despite the fact that children assigned to a low status group scored as well as those assigned to a high status group, over 70% of children assigned to a low status group wanted to leave and join the other group (see Banks and Rompf, 1973).

School performance, like perceived social status, may be associated with racial/ethnic cues, and is sometimes used by teachers and students to evaluate own and other group members. Children in minority groups typically do poorly in White dominated school systems and are frequently in trouble with school authorities (Brophy, 1983; Schofield, 1982). Since many studies on racial identity are done in schools, own and other group biases may reflect perceived school performance rather than group membership based on student race. St. George (1983) found that majority and minority group students matched in terms of expected end of term grades, received similar teacher evaluations, and that expected end of term marks accounted for more variance in teacher ratings than did racial group membership. Many studies on development of own group identity use samples drawn from local elementary and middle grade schools without sufficient attention given to dimensions which may be associated with group membership. It is often difficult to draw clear inferences from children's answers to questions about racial/ethnic identity when other dimensions or categories are confounded with racial group membership.

Finally, studies on the development of racial/ethnic identity typically ask children to respond to questions about own and other group members, and largely ignore the impact of broader social influences. For example, parents, peers, teachers, and classroom or school norms may be important sources of information about own and other group members. While there has been little direct research on this issue (Carlson and Iovini, 1985), a number of studies have shown that other people's expectations influence (for exam-

pie): student performance on class exams (e.g. Rosenthal and Jacobsen, 1968; Rist, 1970), nonverbal behavior (Word, Zanna and Cooper, 1974), self-evaluations (Fazio, Effrein, and Fallender, 1981), and children's perceptions of their own ability (Eccles, Jacobs and Harold, 1990). Attitudes and stereotypes that important others hold about own and other group members may lead children to develop similar expectancies, and these, in turn, influence interpersonal relations as well as children's attitudes about themselves, own and other group members (Miller and Tumbull, 1986).

Few would doubt the importance of parent's or teacher's attitudes or expectancies on children's own beliefs, but it is unlikely that this influence would be obvious or direct. Doyle and Aboud (1993) found that children believed their parents and friends held the same attitudes as they did; in actuality, there was no significant relationship between children's level of prejudice and that of their parents or friends. One explanation of these results may be that attitudes and expectancies of significant others may act indirectly, other variables, e.g. cognitive development, self-esteem, may mediate the relationship between expectancies and measures of perceived similarity and evaluation (see Corenblum, et al., 1995). Alternatively, it may be that children's rating of their own attitudes as being similar to those of parents and peers may reflect normative social influence (Turner, 1991). Children's concerns about gaining acceptance or avoiding rejection by important reference group members may lead children to see themselves not only as similar to significant others, but to see those others as more homogeneous in their views than they actually are (Linville, Fischer and Salovey, 1989). Perceptions of homogeneity reduces response variability thereby reducing the likelihood of significant associations between children's attitudes and those of parents or peers. Although few studies address these issues, a more complete understanding of identity development should include measures to assess the influence of those people who directly or indirectly shape children's understanding of social reality.

## **Current Studies on Identity Development in Native Children**

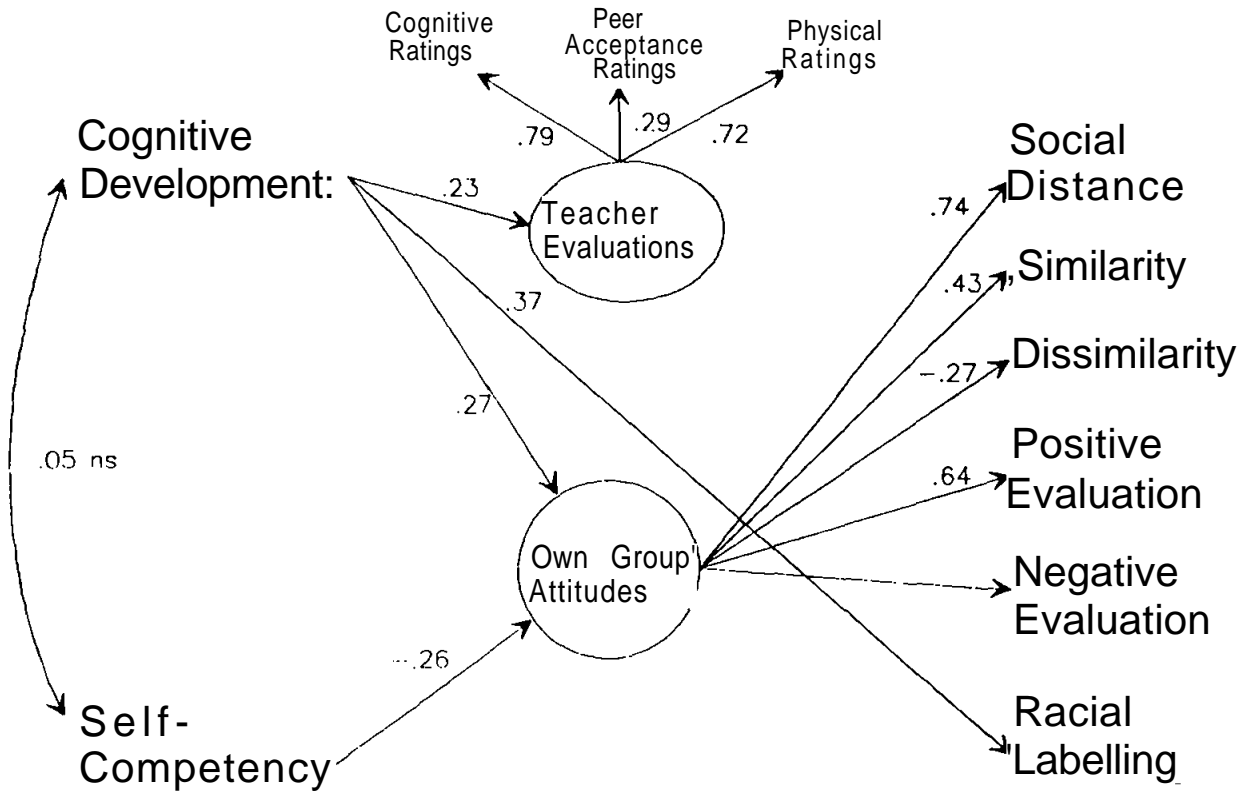
Cognitive developmental theory argues that cross racial preferences and identification reflect children's level of cognitive development whereas motivational theories predict that such responses reflect attempts to maintain self-esteem. Corenblum and Annis (1993) and Corenblum, Annis and Tanaka (in press) tested these theories by asking White, Dakota, Ojibway and Métis children in kindergarten, grade one and grade two to answer questions about their attitudes toward own group members, their perceived

competencies (Harter and Pike, 1984) and their level of cognitive development (Goldschmid and Bentler, 1968). To assess the influence of teacher evaluations on children's own group attitudes, classroom teachers evaluated each student on several dimensions.

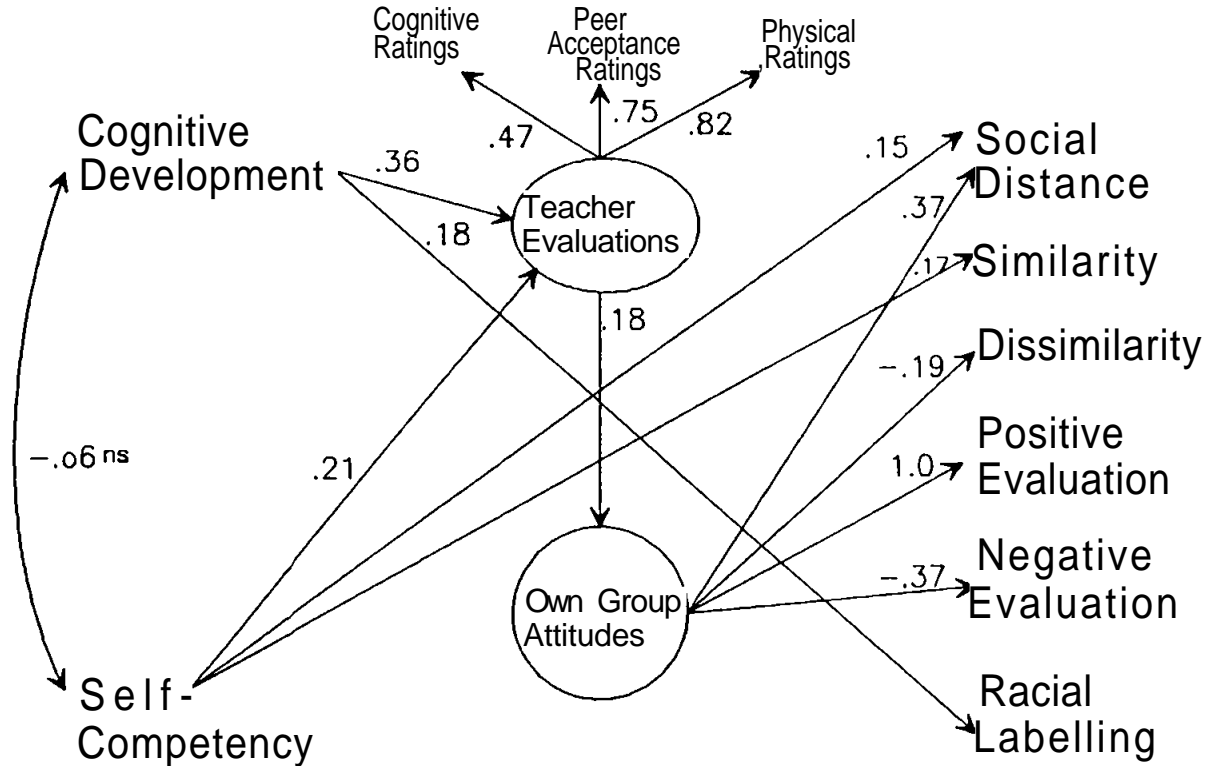
As can be seen in Figure 1, a structural equation model of White children's responses to these questions indicated that for these children, perceived self-competencies and the presence of concrete operational thought predicted positive teacher evaluations; teacher evaluations, in turn, predicted favourable own group attitudes. For these children, self-competency, cognitive maturity, and the opinions of an important other act in an evaluatively consistent manner to foster positive attitudes toward own group members.

A very different model, however, emerged for Native children (see Figure 2). In fact, comparisons of the structural equation models for White and Native children indicated a significant difference,  $X^2(79) = 102.39$ ,  $p = .03$ . As levels of cognitive development increased, Native children held more favourable attitudes toward own group members, but as their levels of self-competency increased, attitudes toward own group members became more negative. Among these children, there appears to be a discrepancy between positive feelings that arise from own group identification and negative feelings that occur when being a minority group member implicates the self. It is important to note that while results from the structural equation modelling suggest that similar factors may operate in different ways in the development of own group attitudes in Native and White children, these results do not mean that there are different cognitive structures underlying those differences. Structural differences can be assessed (albeit indirectly) by selective recognition and recall of race/ethnic information or through priming studies (Corenblum *et al.*, in press; Bigler and Signorella, 1993).

Contrary to Corenblum *et al.*'s hypothesis, teacher evaluations did not significantly predict Native children's attitudes toward own group members. Although, Native children's level of cognitive development was positively associated with teacher evaluations (as it was for White children), what classroom teachers thought about these students did not predict what these children thought about themselves or own group members. However, it appears that teachers are more sensitive to individuating information about White children (in this case, level of cognitive development and children's self-competencies) and, as a result, may be less likely to use stereotypes when evaluating these children than those from other groups (Judd, Ryan and Park, 1991). Such sensitivity may arise because teachers attend more closely to and have more interaction with high achieving students, many of whom are White (Brophy, 1983); alternatively, since teachers and most



**Figure 2:** Path diagram relating measures of cognitive development and self-competency in Native children to latent or inferred variables, own group attitudes and teacher evaluations. Except for racial labelling, measures on the right of the diagram were developed to assess own group attitudes. All path weights are significant at  $p < .05$ ; model fit:  $\chi^2(39) = 53.07$ ,  $p = .07$ ; CFI = .91.



**Figure 1:** Path diagram relating measures of cognitive development and self-competency in White children to latent or inferred variables, own group attitudes and teacher evaluations. Except for racial labelling, measures on the right of the diagram were developed to assess own group attitudes. All path weights are significant at  $p < .05$ ; model fit:  $\chi^2(36) = 41.48$ ,  $p = .24$ ; CFI = .93.

students are from the majority group, teachers may be more knowledgeable about these children and, as a result, may be more sensitive to individual differences among them. One implication of these ideas is that the implicit assessment model that teachers use to evaluate children may not be sensitive to (or even appropriate for) the assessment of minority group children.

Results from Native children support predictions from motivational and cognitive-developmental theories, but in this case motivational and cognitive factors appear to influence own group attitudes in equal but opposite ways. Children in minority groups are aware of their group membership, but it may be that when social comparison processes make own and other group comparisons salient, self-esteem concerns come to guide children's responses to queries about racial/ethnic group membership. What is unclear are the factors which arouse self-esteem concerns. It may be, as Spencer (1982) suggests, that minority children experience dissonance when questions about own and other group members are raised; alternatively, normative and informational social influence may arouse self-esteem by making conformity to majority group norms a condition for acceptance into that group. Self-esteem concerns may also be aroused from attempts to understand what it means to be a minority group member. These children may be receiving inconsistent information from a number of sources about who they are, where they fit into their peer group and the dominant culture, and the value and meaning associated with perceiving oneself to be a member of a minority group. Native children, and others from economically and politically disadvantaged groups, may have difficulty in reconciling such information and affective experiences into a unified sense of self (see Corenblum, Annis and Young, in press). Harter (1986) suggests that with the advent of formal operational thought at age 10 or 11, children are able to integrate self-relevant but conflicting sources of information into an integrated sense of identity (see Phinney, 1992). This does not mean that own group solidarity and pride is a result of individual growth alone. Acquisition of positive group attitudes also reflects a change in social, economic and political forces that constrain identity development in minority group peoples (for an example see Vaughan, 1987).

## **Future Research and Directions**

In this review, Native children, like other children who perceive themselves as being a minority within their environment, favourably evaluated and perceived themselves as being similar to majority group members. In the past, these results have been interpreted to mean that children in

minority groups have low self-esteem or wish to join the majority group. This explanation, however, is not well supported, nor is a model of identity based solely on cognitive development. Level of cognitive development, perceived self-competencies, and other motivational measures, e.g. race constancy, need to be considered as concurrent processes influencing attitudes toward own group members. Only recently have relationships among social skills, interracial problem solving abilities and own group attitudes in minority and majority group children been examined (Doyle and Aboud, 1993).

One limitation of much of the previous research is that own group attitudes are often taken as the sole criterion of own group identity. Too often questions focus on how children feel about themselves and others; as a result, an incomplete picture of identity often emerges. By changing the nature and focus of the questions, other aspects of identity can be examined. Moreover, there has been little attempt to relate own group attitudes to other predictors, processes or outcome variables. Corenblum *et al.* (in press) found that as own group attitudes became more positive, Native children made internal attributions for the success of own group members--the same type of attributions White children gave for the success of other Whites. Relationships between own group attitudes and other variables remains largely unexplored.

As noted previously, many studies use the same methodology as did Clark and Clark nearly five decades ago. Results from this paradigm are now well established and it is time either to ask new questions within that paradigm or to change the paradigm. Few studies, for example, have focused on children's attributions, predictions and evaluations of what own and other group members actually say or do (Banks and Rompf, 1973; Corenblum *et al.*, in press). These kinds of social judgements are important because they contribute not only to evaluations of competencies and strengths of own and other group members, but by attending to actual behavior, the influence of stereotypes and category-based expectancies may be reduced.

Finally, while it is clear that majority group children hold favourable attitudes toward own group members, it is also clear that many majority and minority group children enjoy cross-racial friendships and associations. Although predictors of interracial peer relations and the psychological processes mediating those relationships have not been extensively studied, conflict and friendly interactions are present in peer relations and reflect social engagement with the outgroup. In contrast, avoidance may be associated with prejudice and a reduction in attempts to, or interest in, understanding others (Patchen, 1982). Relations among measures of conflict, avoidance, cross-racial friendships, and processes predicting identity



development in minority and majority group children hold open the promise of further insights into children's experiences of their social reality.

### Notes

1. There are a number of terms which can be used to describe Amerindian peoples, and those of Amerindian descent. In this review the more inclusive term Native will be used except where specific group names are available.
2. To overcome some of the methodological problems discussed above, Corenblum et al. determined that the tests used in these studies were appropriate for use with Native samples. The "Native sample" was considered as a single group as Blue, Corenblum and Annis (1987) found no significant differences in responses to own and other group members between Métis and Indian children who were similar to samples used here. To reduce the influence of socio-economic differences between White and Native samples, the schools from which children were drawn have been relatively stable in their racial composition, and fairly homogenous in their socio-economic status; the catchment area could be described as lower to lower middle class. The influence of school success and teacher evaluations on own group identity was assessed asking teachers to rate each child's academic success, physical development and peer relations.

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