

A MODERN DOLL STUDY: SELF CONCEPT

Byrd, Diane ¹ ; Ceacal, Yasmin R ² ; Felton, Jansen; Nicholson, Carmen; Rhaney, David Martin Lakendra; McCray, Nakia; Young, Jaceline ¹ Fort Valley State University ² Kennesaw State University . Race, Gender & Class ; New Orleans Vol. 24, Iss. 1/2, (2017): 186-202.

[ProQuest document link](#)

ABSTRACT (ENGLISH)

Our first African American president of the United States is in his second term. Does the broad spectrum of success of Blacks have influence on Black children's self-perception today? The purpose of the current study was to replicate the "Doll experiment" originally conducted by Clark and Clark (1947). Fifty African American children (five to ten years of age) were examined to determine whether preference for skin tone still exists. Participants viewed pictures of dolls of varying skin tones and responded to questions relating to doll preference as well as self-concept. As hypothesized, there was a shift in children's preference for the White doll over the Black doll. This may indicate that positive self-concept regarding skin tone is on the rise.

FULL TEXT

Headnote

Abstract: Our first African American president of the United States is in his second term. Does the broad spectrum of success of Blacks have influence on Black children's self-perception today? The purpose of the current study was to replicate the "Doll experiment" originally conducted by Clark and Clark (1947). Fifty African American children (five to ten years of age) were examined to determine whether preference for skin tone still exists. Participants viewed pictures of dolls of varying skin tones and responded to questions relating to doll preference as well as self-concept. As hypothesized, there was a shift in children's preference for the White doll over the Black doll. This may indicate that positive self-concept regarding skin tone is on the rise.

Keywords: self-concept; skin tone preference; doll experiment; racial identification; eurocentric perspective; self-identification; hair texture; self-hatred thesis

Our first African American president of the United States is nearing his second term of office. Over the past few decades African Americans made great strides with our first African American attorney general, secretary of state and female Oscar winner. Therefore, does the broad spectrum of success of African Americans have an influence on African American children's self-perception? With the country's first Black or multiracial president, one may inquire how much have this country's race relations changed? Are Americans headed toward a positive attitude toward diversity to the extent that skin tone preference is no longer an issue? Despite the fact that there is growing representation of individuals of color in governmental leadership, the United States, a country very diverse in people, continues to be plagued by racial conflict and protest. Believing that the civil rights movement in the 60's and the Black Power movement in the 70's reduced overt experiences of racism and discrimination, there is a misconception that institutional racism no longer exist (Wing, 2015). Nevertheless, racial relations in the U.S. has undergone some positive changes; for example, our knowledge of race, racism and racial relations have increased. Race is now viewed as a sociopolitical concept, and captured the attention of many African American researchers who have attempted to understand coping strategies of people of color in adversity situations.

In addition, psychologists and other social science researchers are still wrestling with the historical legacy of the Black self-hatred thesis, popular during the 20th century (Clark & Clark, 1939, 1947; Horowitz, 1939; Kardiner & Ovesey, 1951). This thesis posited that because African American people are deprecated in mainstream U.S. society, subject to racial prejudice and discrimination while still overcoming the sequelae of slavery, they tend to

internalize society's negative attitudes toward them. This may translate into low self-esteem and other concurring disorders. Although numerous scholars have established the theoretical and empirical fallacy of the self-hatred thesis (e.g., Baldwin, Brown, & Hopkins, 1991; Banks, 1976; Brand, Ruiz, & Padilla, 1974; Rosenberg, 1981; Rosenberg & Simmons, 1972), its legacy has not been completely overcome.

African Americans are still affected by historical oppression that perpetuates racism and discrimination. Oppression can create a negative environment in which those experiencing the oppression adapt to the characteristics of mainstream culture. The current mainstream U.S. culture is ethnocentric with an eurocentric perspective in terms of appearance where light skin, blue eyes, and even blonde hair are preferred (Parmer, 2004; Pickney, 2012). White racial domination in the U.S. encourages this eurocentric viewpoint with individuals of color in deviation. This results in self-doubt and negative self-images about skin tone (Pyke, 2010) characteristic of internalized oppression. Internalized oppression is when a member of an oppressed group accepts negative criticism and stereotypes and believes that it is part of his or her self-image. African American children are often socialized through the media that perpetuates negative stereotypes (e.g., Clark & Clark, 1947; Spencer, 1984). Thus preference for skin color may be one indicator of internalized oppression and may ultimately influence self-concept, self-esteem and identity development.

Self-Concept

Self-concept is an important part of social identity development. There are two parts to self-concept: the existential self and the categorical self (Lewis, 1990). The existential self is a conceived notion of being separate from other entities. The categorical self is a matter of awareness of being a part of the world through groups and personal experiences. The development of self-concept is shaped and influenced by social interactions and social determinants such as parental attitudes, school, mass media, and social institutions such as court, government, church, business, and health (Banks & Grambs, 1972). Street (1998) viewed self-concept as an individual's perception of her or his identity in regard to various roles. Gottfredson (1985) suggested that self-concept is an individual's perception of himself or herself in relation to society. Gottfredson proposed that self-concept is composed of two dimensions: identities and self-esteem. Developmental research is beginning to focus more on identity (Honest & Yardley, 1987). Identities are the beliefs about or perception of the self whereas self-esteem is the evaluation of the self (Street, 1998; Rosenberg, 1979). Currently the terms "self-concept" and "identity" are not used synonymously but are viewed as separate constructs. Erikson (1956, 1968) referred to identity as consistency within an individual and a connection between persistent self-sameness and a persistent sharing of important character with other individuals.

Although American society in general has made progressive efforts towards diversity at the macro level, there are micro level racial identity issues that children deal with on a daily basis. Our social environment assists in children developing stereotypical views which promote individual biases for different racial groups (Bigler & Liben, 2006). Therefore monitoring changing racial attitudes within the context of the social development of Black youth is needed. Moreover, discrimination is detrimental to White as well as Black children's self-concept; hence it is important to study youths' views on skin tones and develop paradigms that attenuate children's negative perception of Black skin tone (Jordan & Hernandez, 2009). The original "Doll experiment" was conducted by Clark and Clark (1947) during the times of segregation focusing on Black children's self-concept, self-esteem, and self-identification in relation to skin tone examined the psychological effects of segregation. On the same vein, the current study was designed to investigate children's skin tone preferences and to expand on prior research on children's self-concept.

Prior to the 1940's, it was commonly believed that young children were unable to distinguish between racial differences and skin tone primarily owing to their lack of exposure to negative bias and prejudice in society at large (Bigler & Liben, 2007). However, later studies (e.g., Aboud, 1984) found we now know that racial awareness develops very early in life. Although racial identity develops around age eight (Aboud, 1984), children can identify their racial membership at the age of five, when self-awareness develops (Branch & Newcombe, 1986; Harris, 1992). The Clark and Clark (1939) study dispelled the long-held belief of racial ignorance in children by investigating the

development of racial identification and skin tone preference. The participants consisted of Black children of varying skin tones, age three to seven from northern and southern states. Each were asked to respond to eight statements by choosing one of four dolls (i.e., two black dolls and two white dolls). For questions one through four a majority of the children preferred the White doll over the Black doll. "Approximately two-thirds of the subjects indicated ... that they like the white doll best or that they would like to play with the white doll in preference to the colored doll" (Clark & Clark, 1939:175). The Black doll was chosen more often for negative qualities and characteristics. For example, 59% of the children chose the Black doll as looking bad compared to only 17% for the White doll for similar attributes. Finally, 66 % of the children identified the Black doll as looking like themselves whereas for the remaining 33%, chose the White doll. In addition, Clark and Clark found a correlation between self-identification with the Black doll and the age and skin tone of the participants with the majority of the older children choosing the Black doll as the doll that looked most like them compared to 36% of the younger children. The results of the study suggest that children have begun to form certain attitudes toward particular racial groups, are aware of race and can correctly identify themselves as belonging to a racial group. Further, Black children had a tendency to associate more negative attitudes towards the Black doll.

Recent interest on racial issues has influenced research on self-awareness and skin tone. Replication of the doll study has yielded mixed results. For example, Davis (2006) conducted a documentary focusing on whether children's perceptions of race and skin tone changed since the original doll study. Twenty-one Black children viewed two dolls identical except for skin tone (i.e., Black skin tone and White skin tone) and were asked similar questions used in the original study. Davis found that Black children preferred the White doll and reported positive traits for the White doll and negative traits for the Black doll.

Other studies have found slightly different results. Hraba and Grant (1970) examined 160 children (89 Black and 71 White), ages four to eight year old from the Lincoln, Nebraska public school system. In addition to the original doll study questions, participants were also asked to name and indicate the race of his or her best friend in order to investigate the behavioral consequences of racial preference and identification. Overall, they found that most of the children preferred the doll of their own race. According to Hraba and Grant:

The White children were significantly more ethnocentric on items one and two (the doll you would play with and the nice doll), there was no significant difference on item three (the doll that looks bad), and the black children were significantly more ethnocentric on item four (the doll that has a nice color) (p. 400).

The majority of the children correctly identified the race of the dolls. The results followed a different trend from the original study. Black children of every skin color from light to dark showed a preference for the Black doll. The explanation for this finding Hraba and Grant (1970) offered was that trend for Black pride present during the time period the study was released.

Also, the preference for the Black doll was prevalent at all ages and preference increased with age. There was no relation between the children's doll preference and the race of their friends.

Nearly four decades later, Jordan and Hernandez-Reif (2009) investigated preference for skin tones using computerized cartoon characters. Computerization was utilized for viewing of the dolls because of today's technological advances. Twenty preschool children from Alabama daycare centers listened to a moral story where a Black child was the hero. Participants were asked to choose between cartoon characters of varying skin tones (i.e., dark brown, light brown and white) who they want as a best friend. Jordan and Hernandez-Reif did not find any preference for skin tone for choosing a best friend. However, when using only Black and White cartoon characters, the children chose the doll of the same race as themselves. One interesting finding was that Black children were more likely to correctly identify the White cartoon character as being "White" than the White children. The researchers concluded that Black children are more competent at an early age in identifying race than White children. According to Jordan and Hernandez-Reif, Black children's internal biases may have influenced their choices. In contrast to the original doll study was the Good Morning America's three-part series "Black and White Now," (Ahuja, 2009). Nineteen Black children five to nine year old from Norfolk, Virginia were presented with questions from the original doll study. Results showed that 42% of the participants wanted to play with the Black

doll compared to 32% who wanted to play with the White doll. When asked which doll is the nice doll, the majority of the children chose Black doll or both dolls and 32% chose the White doll compared to 56 % who chose the White doll in the original study. The researchers suggested that race was not involved with the responses but the position of the doll in the room or how the doll appeared were factors (Ahuja, 2009). When asked which doll was more beautiful, the majority of the Black male children participants reported that "no doll" was more beautiful. However, 47% of the Black female children participants rated the White doll to be prettier. The researchers believed that the Black male children had more confidence than the Black female children. They also believed that Black children develop a preconceived notion about their race at a very early age.

The purpose of the present study is to examine preference for skin color among school-aged children. In 2010, CNN partnered with renowned child psychologist Margaret Beale Spencer. Spencer examined 133 children (i.e., White and African American) in two age groups (i.e., 4 & 5 and 9 & 10) from four schools in New York and four in Georgia in conjunction with CNN to replicate the original doll study. The participants viewed five pictures of a cartoon character in varying skin tones. Spencer found that Black and White children have a preference or bias towards lighter skin (Billante, 2010). According to Spencer, children in today's society have a preference for skin tones similar to their own. The children related positive attitudes and beliefs towards dolls with skin tones similar to their own. We anticipate similar results, that children participants will associate positive characteristics towards dolls that look most similar to them.

According to Jackson and Greene (2000), African Americans still have a preference for lighter skin and straighter hair texture but these preferences are less overt. Hair texture is subject to Eurocentric beauty standards and the idea of "good hair" and "bad hair" continues as a well-known concept among African Americans. The "good hair" represents the Eurocentric perspective where hair is considered to be of fine texture and straight. The "bad hair" is coarse and curly or what many view as tightly coiled, "nappy" and is the general natural hair texture of most African Americans. Because of these internalized Western Eurocentric beauty standards for hair, there is possibly a preference for long straight hair. Byrd and Tharps (2001) noted that wearing long straight hair was considered to be more socially acceptable for Black women after the emancipation period. Therefore we hypothesize that children participants will prefer the doll with the long straight hair.

In the present study, children participants viewed questions from the original doll study on a computerized online survey and responded by choosing one of four identical dolls or none of the dolls for skin tone preference. For hair texture preference, children participants had a choice of one of three identical dolls with different hair styles.

Method

Participants

A convenience sample of 50 participants consisted of 26 males and 24 females ranging from ages five to ten. Elementary school-aged children were chosen based on the belief that children between the ages of 5 and 12 are in the industry versus inferiority stage of psychosocial development (Erikson, 1968). However, the social environment of the 11 and 12 year olds includes the middle school social environment which differs from the social environment of elementary school-aged children. Therefore children over the age of 10 were excluded from participation. The racial/ethnic composition of the sample was African American (47) Latino American (2) and White American (1). Parents were asked to provide demographic information. Thirty-three parents completed the entire demographic sheet. Based on information from the demographic sheets, 20 parents reported being low socioeconomic status and 13 reported being middle socioeconomic status. Seventeen parents did not complete the entire demographic sheet therefore their socioeconomic status could not be determined. Regarding education, the majority of participant's parents reported completion of high school with some college.

Participants were recruited from a local after-school program using the following process. First, the director of the after school program was contacted to obtain permission to conduct the study and was also asked to distribute recruitment letters to interested parents. Second, parents of potential participants were contacted to ask permission for the child to participate in the study. Third, before the start of the study, each child participant was asked whether he or she agrees to participate. The only inclusion was the age of the participant. Participants must

be between the age of 5 and 10 to be part of the study.

Materials

The constructs of interest was the skin tone preference (i.e., dolls) and the self-concept (survey questions). The dolls were identical except for skin color, eye color, or hair color. Participants had a choice between four female dolls.

a) Doll A was a White doll with dark hair and dark eyes with a non-Eurocentric appearance; b) Doll B was a White doll with blonde hair and blue eyes representing the Eurocentric appearance and in this case adapted by the American culture for standards of beauty; c) Doll C was a light-skin tone Black or biracial (i.e., African American and White) with dark and dark eyes; and d) Doll D was a dark-skin tone African American with dark hair and dark eyes. The skin tones were chosen to determine which skin tone children participants have a preference for in our diversified society today compared to 50 years ago. Participants could choose any of the dolls to respond to the survey question or none of the dolls.

The questions were adapted from the original doll test by Clark and Clark (1947). The purpose of the original doll study was to examine the development of racial identification, racial preference and racial self-awareness. Three questions were added to obtain a better understanding of the influence of negative stereotyping (i.e., which doll is the nice doll and which doll is the mean doll). The third question was used to address preference for hair style. The three dolls were identical except for hair style. Doll A had long straight hair symbolizing the Eurocentric version of beauty for women. Doll B had short straight hair with no specific meaning but could possibly represent a less feminine appearance, and Doll C had curly or coiled looking hair symbolizing the natural look of individuals of African descent.

Polldaddy.com was utilized to create, administer and keep a record of participants' responses. Upon completion of creating the survey, polldaddy.com distributed a website link to be able to administer the survey online. There was an option of copying and pasting the link onto a search engine or clicking on the link to access the survey. Parents were asked to complete a demographic sheet to obtain information about the participants' age and gender. In addition, information on the participants' parent(s) socioeconomic status, marital status, education level was obtained.

Design

This was a correlational research design. Correlational studies are used when examining the relation between variables. The purpose of the design was to determine the relation (if any) between the skin tone preference and self-concept. Self-concept was operationalized via survey questions and skin tone was operationalized as dolls of varying skin tones. Survey questions were: 1) Which doll is the nice doll? 2) Which doll is the mean doll? 3) Which doll is the good doll? 4) Which doll is the bad doll? 5) Which doll is the pretty doll? 6) Which doll is the ugly doll? 7) Which doll do you want to play with? 8) Which doll is the White child? 9) Which doll is the Black child? 10) Which doll looks most like you? 11) Which doll has pretty hair?

Procedure

The study was conducted at a local after school program facility. Researchers informed the after school director and staff that the children needed to be in a room with minimal noise and distraction. Therefore participants were examined in the library which contained several computers. Participants were observed as individuals. Data was collected by the researchers with a minimum of two researchers always present during each session with a child to ensure that research was conducted in an ethical manner. The start time was placed on the demographic sheet. The participant was read the instructions and asked whether or not he or she agree to answer some questions about dolls. Questions were shown one at a time via computer and read slowly by the researcher. The survey showed four pictures of the dolls with letter options. Interviewers read each question to the participant and waited for the participant to respond. Participants responded by pointing to the doll, saying the letter of the doll or clicking the mouse by the doll of their choice. There was no time limit for participants to respond. After the participant responded, the researcher proceeded to the next questions until all 11 questions were answered. An identification number (random number generated by the online survey program) to ensure confidentiality was given to each

participant after completion of the study. Typically each session lasted 5 -7 minutes. Data was collected over a 3 month period.

Data Analysis

Both variables (i.e., self-concept and skin tone preference) in the present study were considered to be on a nominal scale of measurement. Therefore doll choice responses were numerically coded in the following manner for skin tone preference: a) Doll A = 1, b) Doll B = 2, c) Doll C = 3, d) Doll D = 4, and e) No Doll/None of the Dolls = 5. Doll responses for hair preference was coded in the following manner: a) Doll A = 1, b) Doll B = 2, c) Doll C = 3, and d) None of the Dolls = 4. With the exception of age, demographic variables were also coded for analysis. A Chi square analysis using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 yielded results.

Results

The data was summarized by frequencies and percentages for doll preference for each of the 11 questions in Table 1 and Table 2.

The present study utilized a nonparametric analysis of Chi square statistic which is appropriate for nominal data. In the present study, the variables "question" and doll choice were both measured on a nominal scale. Alpha level was set at .05 for significance testing. Chi Square test of independence using Cross tabs in SPSS was used because there were two unrelated variables (i.e., question and doll choice). Chi square analysis yielded significant results where $\chi^2(36, 50) = 475.10, p = .00$ suggesting there was a preference for doll depending on the question.

Post hoc testing examining the standard residuals for a two tailed test showed significant results regarding the doll choices of eight questions. For question 1, "Which doll is the nice doll" participants chose the biracial/light skinned black doll (36.7%). For question 2, "Which doll is the mean doll" participants chose the Black doll (54%). For question 5, "Which doll is the pretty doll", participants chose the Latino/Light-skinned Black doll (42%). For question 6, "Which doll is the ugly doll", participants choose no doll (28%). For question 7, "Which doll would you like to play with" the results indicated that participants were less likely to choose the White doll with dark hair (6%). For question 8, "Which doll is the White child", participants chose the White doll with blonde hair and blue eyes (90%). For question 9, "Which doll is the Black child", participants chose the dark skinned Black doll (96%). For question 10, "Which doll looks like you", the majority of participants chose the biracial/Light-skinned Black doll (42%). For question 11 (i.e., Which doll has pretty hair) participants chose the doll with the long straight hair (31.9%).

There were no significant results for questions 3 (i.e., Which doll is the good doll?) and question 4 (i.e., Which doll is the bad doll?). In other words, the majority of participants did not chose a specific doll in response to these questions.

A bivariate correlation was performed using the Phi coefficient test examining relation among demographic variables (i.e., gender, SES, and age), survey questions and doll choice. The Phi statistic is appropriate when the study variables are nominal. Results showed significant relation for gender and two survey questions for doll choice. First, the question of "which doll would you like to play with?" Male participants were likely to choose none of the dolls where $\phi_{11} = .489, p = .016$. For the other question, "which doll looks like you", male participants were likely to choose none of the dolls ($\phi_{11} = .571, p = .03$). There were no other significant correlations for gender and none for age or SES. The race variable was not analyzed due to the lack of variability in the sample and the majority of participants being identified as African American.

Discussion

Prior to Clark and Clark (1947), children were not accustomed to a culturally diverse environment as a result of segregation. The original doll experiment paved the way for racial integration of public schools six decades ago, and raised questions about the consequences of slavery for example, preference for skin tone. Clark and Clark advanced our knowledge about self-concept among young children. The current study was designed to investigate children's skin tone preferences and to expand on previous research on children's self-concept.

Ninety-eight percent of the sample was African American. When asked which doll is the Black doll, most participants choose the dark-skin tone Black doll. This illustrates racial awareness. When asked which doll looks

most like you, the majority of children participants chose the light skin tone doll rather than the darkskin tone doll. This held true even for those children with darker skin tone. Based on these results, the possibility exists that skin tone preference exists among young children. Although children were not questioned about the reason for their doll choices, some indicated that they did not want to look like the Black doll. This may indicate that children are not only aware of racial differences in regard to skin tone but societies' negativity associated with individuals of color.

For the questions on positive attributes, (i.e., "which doll is the nice doll" and "which doll is the pretty doll"), the majority of children participants chose the light skin tone doll. As hypothesized the results indicate a shift in children's preference for the White doll over the Black doll concerning positive attributes in relation to the current study. The majority of the children associated more positive attributes to the doll they reported looked like them, the biracial/light-skinned Black doll. The results are similar to Spencer (2010), who found that children in today's society will have preference for self and select skin tones similar to their own. This may indicate that Black children today have a positive self-concept in identifying the doll reported as having positive attributes. Participants choose the dark skin tone Black doll for the mean doll. This is similar to the results of Clark and Clark (1947) where participants chose the Black doll as the mean doll. This was an interesting response in light of the fact that the Black doll was not chosen for the "bad" doll or the "ugly" doll, possibly indicating that the term "mean" refers to perceived attitude toward the doll rather than the appearance of the doll. Although the dolls were identical except for skin tone, some children participants commented that the dark skin tone Black doll looked "mean". As expected for hair texture, most of the participants preferred the doll with long straight hair. Gender stereotypes developed from the Eurocentric beauty standards view straight hair long hair as more beautiful (Byrd &Tharpe, 2001; Hargro, 2011; Jackson &Greene, 2000). According to Hargro (2011):

Post emancipation African American culture did the double duty of investing in two things to "fix" their Blackness, their otherness. Skin bleaching and hair straightening were dual remedies. Skin bleaching has dramatically fallen out of fashion, and is now and is now seen as politically incorrect ritual of self-hatred. However, altering hair texture is still a booming business in African American communities (p. 11).

Additional Findings

There was an association between gender and the response for the questions "which doll would you like to play with and "which doll looks like you". The majority of male participants chose "none of the dolls" as the response illustrating that maybe male participants did not identify with a female doll or playing with a doll since this is not a gender appropriate activity. Gender identity is conformity to one's cultural definition of gender and develops around age two to three (Martin &Fabes, 2001). Gender bias is present as early as four years of age (Halim, Ruble, &Tamis-LeMonda, 2013) where boys believe that most people think that boys are better than girls (e.g., Yee &Brown, 1994). According to Gender-Schema Theory (Martin &Ruble, 2004), children learn more about activities designated as male and female. This includes preference for gender specific toys.

Moreover, researchers have realized the importance of racial awareness for minority groups (e.g., Cross, 1991; Hraba &Grant, 1970; Spencer 2010) in terms of social development. Previous research focusing on racial awareness and skin tone preference suggested that young Black children show a preference for White dolls over Black dolls (Davis, 2006) with more negative traits being attributed to the doll of their own race. This may be indicative of low self-esteem, negative self-concept or self-hatred (Clark &Clark, 1939, Stevenson &Stewart, 1958). As a result of Clark and Clark (1947), the fact that young children are aware of race and possibly their devalued status in society, the self-hatred thesis was developed. Yet, researchers of the present study found that the children participants overall had a positive self-concept. The idea of the self-hatred thesis was refuted by several researchers (e.g., Rosenberg &Simmons, 1972) that found self-esteem for minority groups is not affected by the perspective of societal devaluation (Rosenberg &Simmons, 1972). Rosenberg and Simmons summarized 12 studies of African American and White children's self-esteem and concluded that African American children's self-esteem was not lower than Whites. They attributed this finding to coping strategies. The results of Clark and Clark led to the belief that segregation was harmful to Black children and influenced the 1954 Brown vs. Board of

Education case by providing evidence to the Supreme Court that "separate but equal" was harmful for Black children psychologically. However, Rosenberg and Simmons (1972) argued that racial segregation, whether de facto or de jure, protects self-esteem and that African American children in integrated schools had lower self-esteem. The present study found that despite the experiences of viewing negative images and learning about negative stereotypes, African American children are still able to maintain a positive self image. Similar to previous research (e.g., Clark and Clark, 1947, Davis 2006), the results revealed a light skin tone bias. Spencer (2010) suggested stereotypes played a major role in the children responses to skin tone preferences and parents can help to dispel stereotypes internalization.

Among the strengths of this study was the control over experimenter bias. When conducting research, there is great concern over experimenter bias and this is especially true when dealing with vulnerable populations such as children who may be easily influenced by authority figures. Researchers in the present study attempted to control for experimenter bias by fully training all researchers implementing the study before data collection. Instructions were read to participants throughout the study and the child participant was allowed to select his or her doll preference without any interference. All precautions were taken to not influence the children as they responded to an online survey. Also, the use of a computer was an effort to modernize the study design and to control for experimenter bias associated with presenting the stimuli to participants.

Despite this, recruitment grew to be a demanding task and there was difficulty in obtaining children participants. Some organizations considered it unethical to conduct research on children. Other organizations agreed to allow the survey, but failed to respond afterwards. Consequently, we developed different methods to increase the odds of receiving responses, for example, organizations responded better when the word "testing" was not used when inquiring about children participants. Instead, we asked if children could participate in a survey.

Additionally, some parents refused to provide all of the demographic information requested. Although most were willing to provide the age and gender of the child, several were reluctant to provide socioeconomic status information due to feeling their privacy may be invaded. Furthermore, our sample was limited in regards to race and socioeconomic status. For the parents that did respond to socioeconomic questions, they reported being middle or lower socioeconomic status. There were no reports of household incomes that fell into the high socioeconomic status category. In addition, 93% of the participants were identified as African American. Both of these limitations decreased external validity of the study.

Regarding hypotheses not confirmed, there were no significant results for "which doll is the good doll" and "which doll is the bad doll". Perhaps children's perspective today concerning who is "good" or who is "bad" differs from those children in the 1940s and the perception of good and bad in terms of describing people has changed. Today, many public schools emphasize the importance of diversity and children have access to integrated schools.

Children are taught that we should not judge others based on skin color and that smoking, alcohol and drugs are bad. As a result, "good" and "bad" do not fit into neatly formed categories and are more subjective

Overall, children participants were not interested in playing with the White doll as they were 60 years ago in the original doll study. With diversity being more recognized in our society, there are dolls of every color or nationality on store shelves. African American children now have a choice of dolls to interact with in contrast to African American children decades ago.

Conclusion

In the year of 2015, the perceptions of race has somewhat changed. Future research should focus on the extent to which African Americans themselves make judgments based on skin tone. There is a misconception that skin tone preference only exists in children and that adults do not have this preference. For example, Jefferson and Stake (2009) found that 92.3 % of African American women in their study preferred a lighter skin tone. In addition, the role of racial identity development and skin tone preference should be explored longitudinally to determine developmental influences.

Clark and Clark (1947) wanted it to be known that to separate children based on race harmed children of all races. The doll experiment opened up our eyes about the effects of racism and internalized oppression. Although racism

is still a problem, there is hope. The teaching of diversity for children and adults as well should include, community support groups, collaborative, cooperative play and cultural fairs. Maher (2012) noted that parents play a major role in their child's understanding of race and racism. Positive attitudes and respect towards members of one's own race as well as others should be taught by parents. All children should be encouraged and be provided with a positive environment that teaches diversity and equality of individuals regardless of race, gender, and ethnicity for proper social development to occur.

Sidebar

Dr. Diane Byrd obtained a Bachelors of Arts at Mercer University and later attended the University of Georgia where she received a Master of Science, and a Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology. Presently, she is an Assistant Professor of Psychology at Fort Valley State University, teaching various classes in the Psychology program. Byrd's area of study is the social development of African Americans and other ethnic minority populations, although she is also interested in quantitative and qualitative research.

Address: Psychology, Fort Valley State University, 1005 State University Dr., Fort Valley, Georgia 31030. Ph: (478) 825-608, Email: byrdd@fvsu.edu

Yasmin R. Ceacal is a 1st year Masters of Social Work candidate at Kennesaw State University with a concentration in Behavioral Health. She also is currently a Graduate Research Assistant for the Inclusive Education Department at KSU, the Program intern at Homestretch (Transitional Housing Agency for Working Homeless Families) in Roswell, GA, a Residential Advisor at the independent living program A Change Generation in Decatur, GA and recently elected as President of Phi Alpha's Honor Society for Social Work. Yasmin's interest in African American's social development began in her senior year of undergrad and enjoys qualitative and quantitative research.

Email: yceacal@students.kennesaw.edu

Jansen Felton is currently seeking his Master's in Mental Health Counseling at Fort Valley State University. He is also a graduate writing assistant. His research interests are studying the psychological ramifications of racism on people of color, especially African Americans. He is also interested in studying gender and sexuality issues.

Jansen is currently co-writing a paper on Colorism

Email: jfelton4@wildcat.fvsu.edu

Carmen Nicholson is a graduate student at Fort Valley State University obtaining her Master of Science in Mental Health Counseling. She also matriculated at Albany State University and earned a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology with a minor in Education. Ms. Nicholson has earned many academic awards and achievements. Her research interest is the effects of maltreatment on the development of children. She aspires to be a Child Psychologist.

Email: Cnichol3@wildcat.fvsu.edu

David Martin, Fort Valley State University. Email: Dmarti17@wildcat.fvsu.edu

Lakendra Rhaney, Fort Valley State University. Email: lakendra15@gmail.com

Nakia McCray, Fort Valley State University. Email: nakia_mccray@yahoo.com

Jaceline Young, Fort Valley State University. Email: jacelineyoung@gmail.com

References

References

About, F.E. (1984). Social and cognitive bases of ethnic identity constancy. *Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 145:217-229.

Ahuja, G. (2009). What a doll tells us about race. ABC News. Retrieved from <http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/story?id=7213714&page=1&singlePage=true>

Baldwin, J.A., Brown, R., & Hopkins, R. (1991). The Black self-hatred paradigm revisited: An Africentric analysis. In R.L. Jones (Ed.), *Black Psychology* (3rd ed.), pp. 141-165. Berkeley, CA: Cobb & Henry Publishers.

Banks, C.W. (1976). White preference in Blacks: A paradigm in search of a phenomenon. *Psychological Bulletin*, 83:1179-1186.

Banks, J.A., & Grambs, J.D. Eds. (1972). *Black self-concept: Implications for education and social science*. New

York: McGraw-Hill.

Bigler, R.S. & Liben, L.S. (2006). A developmental intergroup theory of social stereotypes and prejudice. *Advances in Child Development and Behavior*, 34:39-89.

Branch, C.W. & Newcombe, N. (1986). Racial attitude development among young Black children as a function of parental attitudes: A longitudinal and cross-sectional study. *Child Development*, 57:712-721.

Brand, E.S., Ruiz, R.A., & Padilla, A.M. (1974). Ethnic identification and preference: A review. *Psychological Bulletin*, 81:860-890.

Bigler, R.S. & Liben, L.S. (2007). Developmental intergroup theory: Explaining and reducing children's social stereotyping and prejudice. *Current Directions In Psychological Science*, 16(3):162-166. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8721.2007.00496.x

Billante, J. & Hadad, C. (2010, May 14). Study: White and Black children biased toward lighter skin. Retrieved from <http://www.cnn.com/2010/US/05/13/doll.study/>

Byrd, A. & Tharps, L. (2001). *Hair story: Untangling the roots of Black hair in America*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Clark, K.B. & Clark, M.K. (1939). The development of consciousness of self and the emergence of racial identification in Negro preschool Children. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 10(4):591-599.

Clark, K.B. & Clark, M.K. (1940). Skin color as a factor in racial identification of Negro preschool children. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 11(1):159-169.

Cohen, L. (2011, January 24). The psychology of prejudice and racism. Retrieved from

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/handy-psychology-answers/201101/the-psychology-prejudice-and-racism>
CNN Pilot Demonstration. Retrieved from http://i2.cdn.turner.com/cnn/2010/images/05/13/expanded_results_methods_cnn.pdf

Cross, W.E. (1991). *Shades of Black*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Davis, K. Video documentary: A girl like me. Retrieved from <http://www.kiridavis.com>

Erikson, E.H. (1956). The problem of ego-identity. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 4:56-121.

_. (1968). *Identity: Youth and crisis*. New York: Norton.

Gottfredson, L. (1985). Role of self-concept in vocational theory. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 32:159-162.

Halim, M.L., Ruble, D.N., & Tamis-LeMonda, C.S. (2013). Four-year-olds' beliefs about how others regard males and females. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 31:128-135.

Hargro, B. (2011). *Hair Matters: African American women and the natural hair aesthetic*. Thesis, Georgia State University. Retrieved from http://scholarworks.gsu.edu/art_the_sis/95

Harris, D.J. (1992). A cultural model for assessing the growth and development of the African American female. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 20:158-167.

Honess, T. & Yardley, K. Eds. (1987). *Self and identity: Perspectives across the lifespan*. New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Horowitz, R. (1939). Racial aspects of self-identification in nursery school children. *Journal of Psychology*, 7:91-99.

Hraba, J. & Grant, G. (1970). Black is beautiful: A reexamination of racial preference and identification. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 16(3):398-402. doi:10.1037/h0030043

Jackson, L.C. & Greene, B. Eds. (2000). *Psychotherapy with African American women: Innovations in psychodynamic perspective and practice*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Jefferson, D.L. & Stake, J.E. (2009). Appearance self-attitudes of African American and European American Women: Media comparisons and internalization of beauty ideals. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 33:396-409.

Jordan, P. & Hernandez-Reif, M.E. (2009). Re-examination of young children's racial attitudes and skin tone preference. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 35(3):388-403. doi, 10.1177/0095798409333621

Kardiner, A. & Ovesey, L. (1951). *The mark of oppression*. New York: Norton.

King, J. (n.d.). The pattern pages - self-hate / self-destructive patterns. Retrieved from http://www.cyquest.com/pathway/patterns_self_hate.html

Kircher, M.L. (1971). Racial preferences in young children. *Child Development*, 42(6):2076-2078.

- Lewis, M. (1990). Self-knowledge and social development in early life. In L.A. Pervin (Ed.), *Handbook of personality*, pp. 277-300. New York: Guilford.
- Maher, M.J. (2012). *Racism and cultural diversity: Cultivating racial harmony through counseling, group analysis, and psychotherapy*. London: Karnac Book
- Martin, C.L.& Fabes, A. (2001). The stability and consequences of young children's same sex peer interactions. *Developmental Psychology*, 37:431-446.
- Martin, C. L. & Ruble, D.N. (2004). Children's search for gender cues: Cognitive perspectives on gender development. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 13:67-70.
- Parmer, T., Arnold, M.S., Natt, T., & Janson, C. (2004). Physical attractiveness as a process of internalized oppression and multigenerational transmission in African American families. *Family Journal*, 12(3):230-242.
- Pickney, C. (Spring, 2014). The effects of internalized oppression on the Black community. *Stylus Knights Write Showcase*, 94-100.
- Pyke, K. (2010). What is internalized racial oppression and why don't we study it? Acknowledging racism's hidden injury? *Sociological Perspectives*, 53(4):554-554.
- Rosenberg, M. (1979). *Conceiving self*. New York: Basic Books.
- _. (1981). The self-concept: Social product and social force. In M. Rosenberg & R.H. Turner (Eds.), *Social psychology: Sociological perspectives*, pp. 593-624. New York: Basic Books.
- Rosenberg, M. & Simmons, R.G. (1972). *Black and White self-esteem: The urban school child*. Washington, D.C: American Sociological Association.
- Spencer, M.B. (1984). Black children's race awareness, racial attitudes, and self-concept: A reinterpretation. *Journal of Child Psychiatry*, 25:433-44 1.
- Stevenson, H.W. & Stewart, E.C.A. (1958). A developmental study of race awareness in young children. *Child Development*, 29:399- 410.
- Street, S. (1998). Self-esteem: Justifying its existence. *Professional School Counseling*, 1(3):46-50.
- What Dolls Can Tell Us About Race in America. (2006, October 11). Retrieved from <http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/story?id=2553348>
- Wing, N. (2015). WSJ claims institutional racism no longer exists, ends up proving that it still does. *The Huffington Post*. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/wall-street-journal-racism_n_7624758.htm
- Yee, M.& Brown, R. (1994). The development of gender differentiation in young children. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 33:183-196. doi:10.1111/j.2044-8309.1994.tb 01017.x

DETAILS

Subject:	African Americans; Racism; Oppression; Perceptions; Children; Self image; Children & youth; Multiculturalism & pluralism; Attitudes; Skin; Self esteem; Self concept; Studies; Self representation; Race; Black Power movement; Tone; Blacks
Location:	United States--US
Publication title:	Race, Gender & Class; New Orleans
Volume:	24
Issue:	1/2
Pages:	186-202

Publication year:	2017
Publication date:	2017
Publisher:	Race, Gender and Class
Place of publication:	New Orleans
Country of publication:	United States, New Orleans
Publication subject:	Multi-Ethnic, Women's Studies, Men's Studies, Ethnic Interests
ISSN:	10828354
Source type:	Scholarly Journals
Language of publication:	English
Document type:	Journal Article
ProQuest document ID:	2119847048
Document URL:	http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/2119847048?accountid=10226
Copyright:	Copyright Race, Gender and Class 2017
Last updated:	2019-11-23
Database:	Alt-PressWatch,Ethnic NewsWatch,GenderWatch,Sociological Abstracts,ProQuest Central

LINKS

[Linking Service](#)

Database copyright © 2020 ProQuest LLC. All rights reserved.

[Terms and Conditions](#) [Contact ProQuest](#)