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Two studies of children aged between five and ten years old investigate the impact of affirmative action programmes on the ethnic identity of black and indigenous children in Brazil. The participants in the first study were children supported by affirmative action programmes: black *Quilombola* (n= 33) and indigenous (n= 32). Study two was carried out on black children (n= 77) not supported by affirmative action programmes. In the first study the children used nine different categories of skin colour to define themselves. The majority of the indigenous children defined themselves as "morena", while black *Quilombolas* defined themselves as "preto" (dark). In the second study the children used six different colours, and dark colours were rarely used. Although the children in both studies liked belonging to their group, most, particularly the *Quilombola* children, would like to be whiter.

In many countries and many periods, ethnic identity can be shown to have a strong influence on personal physical safety, political status, and economic prospects (Caselli and Colleman 2006). The roots of many conflicts can be explained by ethnic tensions, since ethnic identity is above all a collective identity (Westin 2010), as was the case for example in the Balkans, Rwanda, Burundi, Indonesia, and the Middle East.

Ethnic identity has been studied in diverse disciplines. In social psychology in particular, understanding how ethnic and racial minorities build up their identities is a central concern, especially in Brazilian society, which is so diverse.

As Tajfel shows (1982), belonging to a minority can have an impact on social identity, since the group is a provider of positive social identity for its members via a process of social comparison. Identity is not built in a social vacuum. It is marked by the group's access to power structures, as a vector of the political and economic conditions to which the group is subjected.

To investigate the impact of affirmative action policies on the ethnic identity of black and indigenous children in Sergipe, north-east Brazil, we studied three groups. Two were composed of black children (*Quilombolas* and residents of the city of Aracaju) and one of indigenous children belonging to the *Xokó* tribe.[1]

Blacks and indigenous people are at a disadvantage in Brazilian society. Ample statistical evidence shows that discrimination against them exists in relation to employment, income, and education (IBGE 2009; INSPIR 1999). Although blacks (*pretos* and *pardos*) represent 45.3 percent of the total Brazilian population of 170 million according to the 2000 census, their marginal position in Brazilian society continues and is unlikely to improve.[2]

This study received financial support from the Brazilian National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq) and the Federal University of Sergipe.

1 A quilombo was a gathering of runaway slaves who lived together in hiding, which reaffirmed their African culture (Carneiro 1964). The black people who lived in such groupings came to be called quilombolas.

2 The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics classifies skin colours in five categories: white (brancos), brown (pardos), black (pretos), yellow (amarelos), and indigenous.

In 2003 the monthly income of blacks in Brazil was approximately $390, as compared to the $ 816 earned by whites (2.09 times greater). Even though the average income of Brazilians had increased by 2009, there was practically no change in social disparities. White citizens earned an average of $941 dollars per month while black citizens earned only $479 dollars (the income of whites was 1.94 times greater) (IBGE 2009).

The situation for those 572,000 Brazilians who declare themselves to be indigenous (0.2 percent of the population) is even worse. Over half of this group (51 percent) have no fixed income and 32.5 percent have a monthly income of less than $ 576 (IBGE 2000).[3] Moreover, an advanced and continuous process of demonization (Schwarcz 1996) and extermination (Alvim 1998) is under way against the indigenous people of Brazil.

Since the differential distribution of power lies at the heart of identity dynamics in society (Westin 2010), our main assumption is that identity is associated with real (Sherif 1967) and symbolic (Tajfel 1974) group conflict. Specifically we are interested in the psychological or affective elements involved in these intergroup conflicts. We therefore sought to understand the implications of belonging to a minority protected by affirmative action policy for the ethnic identification of Brazilian children. We expected involvement in such programmes to have a positive impact on ethnic identity.

1. Social Identity of Minorities

Identity is "that part of the individual's self-concept which derives from their knowledge of their membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance of that membership" (Tajfel 1981, 255). Identity is formed in (and by) social relations among individuals and groups. Identity is thus very important in understanding and explaining interactions and relations among groups (Murrell 1998).

The determining criterion of belonging is that individuals define themselves and are defined by others as being part of a certain group (Tajfel and Turner 1986). The individual's membership of a group is only meaningful when compared with the similarities and differences between the in-group and the out-group. According to this theory, each individual has as many social identities significant groups or associations to which he/she belongs. The perception of differences in relation to other groups can result in a positive evaluation of identity and a subsequent favouritism for his/her own group or in a negative evaluation of his/her identity (Tajfel 1981). In this sense, the process of social comparison may produce conflicts between identities which may lead to violence and discrimination between groups (Tajfel 1974). The establishment of a negative social identity can result in a series of psychological and social processes which aim to re-establish a more positive social identity.

Turner and Brown (1978) highlight some of the main strategies used by individuals to re-establish a positive identity. One of these is individual mobility, by which it is possible to dissociate from a group; another strategy is social creativity, in which members of the group redefine the patterns of comparison, either by comparing the groups in a new light or by changing the values related to the status of the groups ("Black is beautiful"); the comparison remains but the system of values associated with it is inverted. In the social competition strategy members of the low-status group try to attain a positive identity by competing with the members of the higher status groups, thus altering the social structure.

Basing their work on Tajfel's Social Identity Theory, Blantz et al. (1998) broaden these strategies and propose ways of managing negative social identity. From this point of view members can a) redefine their group in terms of a common identity within the group; b) define themselves as unique individuals, as opposed to members of a group; c) try to compensate or reverse the existing relationship between ingroup and outgroup through collective action; d)

3 Conversions from the national currency to U.S. dollars were carried out using exchange rates of April 2, 2010.

choose a new comparison dimension; e) pursue individual mobility; or f) attempt to make the ingroup as similar as possible to the outgroup.

Children's identity and attitudes are the precursors of adult forms, fulfilling the same functions despite having a simpler structure (Aboud 1987). In this sense, childhood is a privileged development stage in the study of the influence of the social on the formation and expression of ethnic identity.

2. Prejudice and Ethnic Identity in Childhood

The social group is a provider of positive social identity to its members through comparisons with other groups regarding salient and valuable dimensions (Tajfel 1982). The outcome of social comparison is therefore crucial because it contributes to self-esteem. In this sense, bias is related to identity in two ways: Firstly, because in the search for positive distinctiveness the individual tends to favour the ingroup and depreciate the outgroup, and secondly because the members of stigmatized groups may undervalue their membership.

The ethnic identity of children and their attitudes towards their own and other groups depend on two overlapping development sequences. The first sequence involves the processes that dominate their experiences: from affective states to perceptions and finally cognitions. The second involves the focussing of attention, which can be directed at him- or herself, another member of the group, or a completely different group (Aboud 1988). According to the logic of the first development sequence, children are dominated by their emotions and preferences, which determine their attitudes towards ethnicity. They look for important information about a person from an emotional point of view; whether they are good or bad, for example.

Little by little, children start noticing the similarities and differences that exist between certain other people and themselves. From that moment, these perceptions will determine their ethnic attitudes. Aspects such as skin colour, language, clothes, and hair texture become evident to children, who use them as the bases for their ethnic identification and intergroup preferences.

When their ethnic attitudes become dominated by cognitive processes, their perceptions structure themselves around the classification of people in categories. Children start to understand that skin colour is based more on objective and permanent criteria, like inherited features, and not on superficial ones, like clothes.

A consensus seems to exist among those who study the development of ethnic identity that children become conscious of racial differences between the ages of three and six and become particularly active in their attempts to understand social groups in terms of ethnicity and gender, since these are the significant categories into which people are classified in our society. During this stage all children are capable of identifying themselves in relation to these categories.

As we have seen, Tajfel's definition of social identity involves three elements: categorization, self-categorization, and the positive or negative values associated with the social group. Racial categorization relates to the capacity to distinguish people in terms of physical features of a racial nature, such as skin colour, hair type and facial structure (Aboud 1988). It has been confirmed that at around six years of age children's ability to categorize themselves is as high as eighty per cent. Children's acquisition of the ability to categorize people along racial lines is accompanied by a still rudimentary perception of social status related to different groups (Clark and Cook 1988). This perception has an enormous social impact, since the process of racial categorization is the first step in the formation of racial attitudes, whether positive or negative (Katz 1987; Tajfel 1981). Ethnic socialization thus differs in important ways depending on the groups to which the child belongs. Children from minority groups are more aware of their ethnicity, and their ethnicity is more obvious to other children (Phinney 1991).

Studies show that the ability to self-categorize and notice the status of their own social group leads children to experience conflicting and ambivalent emotions about their racial group (Clark and Cook 1988). Children from low-status groups experience a discrepancy between positive feelings relating to the development of attitudes towards their own group and negative feelings associated with the

perception of an unfavourable social evaluation of their group (Corenblum, Annis, and Tanaka 1997). Other studies confirm that children belonging to high-status groups experience a consistency between the positive feelings associated with belonging to their own group and the value attributed to it by society, causing them to identify with their groups.

Hutnik (1991) emphasizes the complexity of ethnic identity in a scenario of unequal power relations of . In such situations, an individual can have a black phenotype (dark skin and negroid physical features) but define himself/herself as indigenous or even white. Nesdale and Flesser (2001) observe that children as young as five already show sensitivity to the status differences between their own group and others, and show that these differences condition their group attitudes. When children believe that it is possible to change group, those belonging to low-status groups more frequently desire to change than those belonging to high-status groups. Nesdale and Flesser show that recognition of the impossibility of social mobility, the acquisition of racial constancy, and the recent emphasis on ethnic pride contribute to growing acceptance of racial identity as ethnic minority children grow older. Killen and Stangor (2001), investigating judgements about exclusion and acknowledgement of stereotypes pertaining to race and gender in European-American children, show that children of all ages are aware of racial stereotypes.

In modern societies, it is the dominant groups that attribute ethnicity to minorities that are in subordinate socio-economic positions. In this sense, social exclusion and racism are directly linked to ethnic categorizations and identifications (Rex 1986; Westin 2010).

3. Racism and Ethnic Identity in Brazil

In a representative national survey, Turra and Venturi (1995) found that Brazilians used 135 different colours to define their own skin colour, in a kaleidoscopic spectrum from "sulphur" to "olive redhead", "white spotted"" and "white". In a quick break-down of their findings, we see that many more terms are associated with the colour white than with the colour black as a result of the ideological pressure in Brazil to become white (see Lima and Vala, 2004a).

The impact of an ideology that favours becoming white and its immediate correlation, "the cult of racial mixing", is a form of identity abandonment whereby a racist society can implant a type of social upward mobility. As Tajfel argues in his analysis of the psychosocial aspects involved in processes of identification (1981), in many cases an individual's decision to remain in or leave a group will depend on what the group contributes to the positive aspects of his/her identity that give him/her satisfaction. Social mobility or (dis)identification of minorities maintain the racist social structure and practices. Pressure in the system is released through "valves", and the pressure cooker boils without exploding. (Lima, 2007; Telles 2006). In this sense, the racial category "mulatto" is a kind of "escape hatch" in Brazilian racial ideology (Degler 1971).

This tendency has already been confirmed in children (França and Monteiro 2002). In their study of black, mulatto and white children aged between five and ten in Brazil, França and Monteiro confirm that white children perceive themselves as white in almost 80 percent of cases. The mulatto children see themselves as belonging to their group in 54 percent of cases, while the figure falls to 40 percent for the self-categorization of black children. White children evaluate their belonging in a positive fashion and black children evaluate their belonging in a negative fashion.

A set of compensatory policies is currently being proposed by public bodies in Brazil, with the aim of offering a solution to the problem of social disadvantage suffered by blacks and indigenous people. One type of affirmative action is intended to protect and guarantee property rights and means of subsistence for the remaining indigenous and *Quilombola* communities.

The question we pose is therefore: What impact do land rights policies aimed at *Quilombolas* and indigenous people have on the identity of children belonging to these groups?

Studies carried out in the United States examine the relationship between ethnic identity and affirmative action programmes. Schmermundand colleagues (2001) observe in African American college students a relationship between racial identity and attitudes toward affirmative ac-

tion. Elizondo and Hu (1999) find the same results with Latino students (see Crosby et al. 2003). In Brazil, to the best of our knowledge, no studies have previously been conducted on this issue. Our main hypothesis is that there is greater awareness of belonging and more positive ethnic identity among children covered by public affirmative action policy. In order to test this hypothesis, we conducted two studies.

4. Study 1: Affirmative Action Beneficiaries

4.1. Method

The participants were children receiving support from government affirmative action programmes. There were sixty-five children aged between five and ten, thirty-two of whom were indigenous and thirty-three of whom were black *Quilombolas*. Thirty-three were boys and thirty-two were girls.

The interviews were individual and took place in classrooms at their schools. The interviewer started by introducing him/herself to the child before explaining the instructions: "I want to write a story about children and their friends. So I decided to talk to a few children from this school to get ideas on how to write the story. I would like you to help me by answering some questions that I ask you. You should think about yourself and your friends. Can we begin?"

The stimulus material was a set of six photographs representing indigenous, black, and white children of both genders. A photograph of a male child was shown to boys and a photograph of a female child was shown to girls. The photographs were pre-tested in relation to the skin colour attributed to the child, ethnicity (indigenous or non-indigenous), physical appearance, and graphical quality.

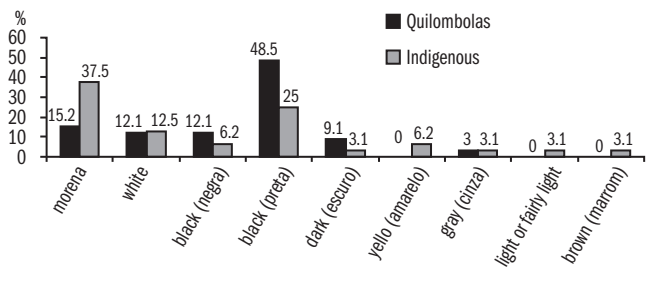
The independent variable was the group to which the children belonged (black or indigenous). The dependent variable analysed in the study was ethnic identity in terms of the group that the child chose to belong to, the feeling related to the group, the value attributed to the group, and the desire to be different from others. In order to evaluate the group to which they belonged, the children were initially asked what skin colour they thought they had. Next, the children were asked to identify which children they thought they resembled in the photographs. To evaluate the feeling associated with identity, we asked whether the child liked belonging to the social category of the chosen photograph on a four-point scale ("not at all", "a little", "more or less", "a lot"). To discover the value attributed to the group to which they belonged, we asked whether the child would like to look like another child belonging to another ethnic group (using the same four-point scale) and if so, which.

4.2. Results

A frequency analysis of self-perceived skin colour was carried out on the responses to the question: "What is your skin colour?" As Figure 1 shows, the children used nine different categories of skin colour to define themselves. The majority, thirty-four, defined themselves as black ("black", "dark" or "*preto*"). Even the indigenous children used this label most.

Black skin colour was more strongly affirmed in *Quilombola* children than in other children. Twenty-three *Quilombola* children (69.7 percent) used dark colours to define themselves in comparison with eleven indigenous children (34.3 percent), who see themselves above all as "*morena*" or brown (37.5 percent). It should be noted that the indigenous children were no different to the black children in terms of phenotype, since both groups have dark skin and other features in common. A desire to be white was also revealed by the eight children who defined themselves as white. Overall, however, strong recognition was found for being black.

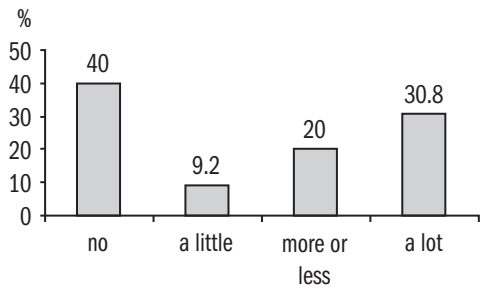
Figure 1: Self-perception of skin colour



In order to become established, social identification with a group also requires an emotional or affective commitment. To analyse this aspect, we asked the children if they liked having the ethnicity of the photograph they chose ("I like being black", "I like being indigenous", or "I like being white"). The scale ranged from 1 (I don't like it) to 4 (I like it a lot). A univariate analysis of variance indicates that, independently of the ethnic group chosen $F(1, 64) < 1$, *n.s*, the *Quilombola* ($M = 3.0$, *S.D.* = 1.0) and indigenous children ($M = 2.97$, *S.D.* = 1.1) like belonging to their groups. The mean results for both groups are close to 3 ("I more or less like it").

When the children were asked if they would like to be different or look like another group, almost half expressed a slight desire to be different or did not want to be different at all (49.2 percent). The others answered that they would "quite" or "very much" like to be different in order to belong to a different social category (see Figure 2). There were no differences between Quilombola and indigenous children in this respect, $X^2(3, n = 65) = 4.31$, $p = .23$ (*eta* = .12).

Figure 2: Desire to look like someone else ("Would you like to look like someone else?")



As Table 1 shows, the data does not imply a strong affirmation of identity. A Chi-square test $X^2(2, n = 50) = 1.19$, *n.s* (*eta* = .15), indicates that, independently of their ethnic group, the children would like to change phenotype or look more like another group. More than 60 percent of the *Quilombolas* indigenous children chose "white" as their goal of identification. Only five *Quilombola* children wanted to be "black" and six indigenous children "indigenous". The impact on both groups of children of an ideology that favours being white is notable. Over half of the children would like to be white.

Table 1: Desire for ethnic mobility ("Who would you like to look like?")

Choice \ Group	Black Quilombola	Indigenous	Total
Black	5 18.5%	2 8.7%	7 14%
Indigenous	5 18.5%	6 26.1%	11 22%
White	17 63%	15 65.2%	32 64%
Total	27 54%	23 46%	50 100%

5. Study 2: Without Affirmative Action

In study 1 we saw that the ethnic identification of children supported by government affirmative action programmes is ambivalent. They recognize themselves as belonging but at the same time would like to change their group in order to become whiter. What happens with other black children who are not protected by affirmative action programmes? Do they have a more negative ethnic identity? Would they show the same ambivalence between wanting to belong and being different? To answer these questions we conducted a second study involving urban black children.

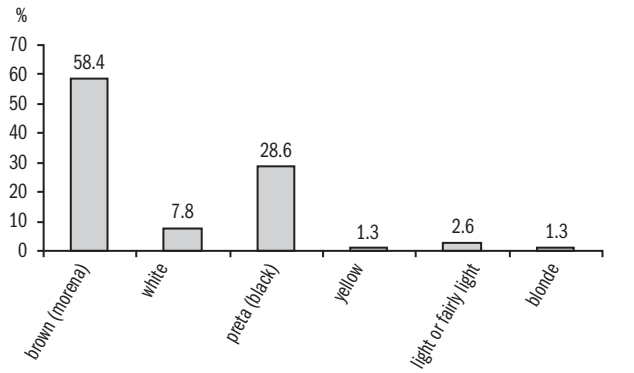
5.1. Method

The second study was carried out four months after the first one. The participants were seventy-seven black children aged between five and ten, thirty-eight boys and thirty-nine girls. All were black children residing in an urban part of Aracaju, the capital of Sergipe, and none were supported by affirmative action programmes. Once again, the study was carried out in state schools, and all of the procedures and materials were identical to those used in the first study with just two small differences. The first was that three interviewers defined the skin colour of the children in Aracaju. Only those considered to be black by at least two of the interviewers were selected for the study. The second difference was that the photos showed one black child, one white child, and one mixed-race child (*mulatto*).

5.2. Results

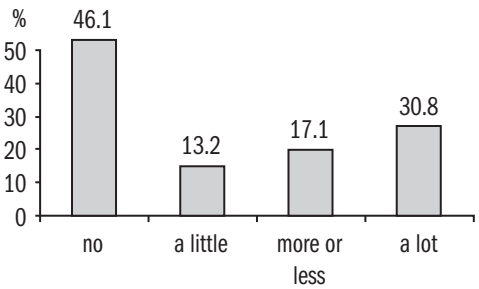
As Figure 3 shows, the majority of these children, 58.4 percent, defined themselves as "morena" or brown (forty-five children); only 28.6 percent defined themselves as black.

Figure 3: Self-image of skin colour



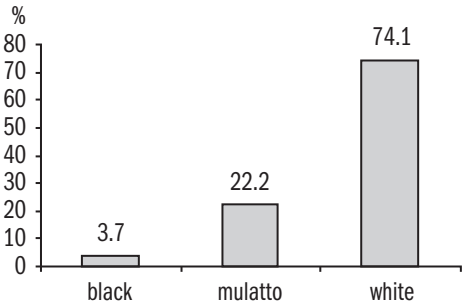
With regard to the emotional or affective commitment to their group, the results indicate, in common with those of study one,[4] that children like belonging to their group (M = 2.97, $S.D.$ = 1.14, a mean value reflecting the position "I quite like it") (see Figure 4). However, it should be pointed out that while children like being what they chose in terms of ethnic identification, this is not necessarily the group they belong to objectively.

Figure 4: Desire to look like someone else ("Would you like to look like someone else?")



In fact, when these children were asked if they would like to resemble another group, the vast majority said "yes". Only two children wished to remain black; 96.3 percent would prefer to be whiter, and 74.1 percent really intend to become white (see Figure 5). This desire for social mobility is greater among these children than among the *Quilombola* and indigenous children in study 1.

Figure 5: Ethnic mobility ("Who would you like to look like?")



6. Discussion

The purpose of this research was to analyse the impact of affirmative action policies on the ethnic identities of black and indigenous children in Brazil. Our principal hypothesis was that the ethnic identities of children belonging to groups benefiting from affirmative action would be more positive than the identities of children who did not benefit from these types of programme. Our results partially confirm this hypothesis.

The acceptance of their own skin color in *Quilombola* children is greater than among black urban children. Even indigenous children protected by affirmative action policies were more likely to define themselves as black than black children who were not protected by such policies.

We also found that the children would like to be different, although this desire does not imply total abandonment of their identity. The *Quilombola* and indigenous children

4 The results of an ANOVA test comparing the averages found in study 1 with those found in this study indicated no differences between children from the two studies $F(2, 141) < 1$, n.s.

who wanted to change sometimes wish to belong to the group of black and indigenous children. We believe that this result is due to widespread intermarriage between groups . Some *Quilombola* children did not exhibit the black phenotype, and many of the indigenous children did not exhibit the phenotype usually associated with the indigenous group, since they were mostly mulatto or black.

In general, the results show that children supported by affirmative action policies used identity strategies (Blantz et al. 1998) or play identity games differently from those who are not supported. The *Quilombola* and indigenous children have a more defined "identity policy" in a scenario of social competition in which they seek a more collective solution to alter the social structure. Black children not supported by affirmative action policies used social mobility strategies to change the subjective perception of their skin colour more frequently than other groups. These results indicate that identity is processed in a relational context defined by the power and position of the groups in their material and symbolic structure (Turner and Brown 1978; Tajfel 1981; Lima and Vala, 2004b).

Another way of reading the results is in the light of Kelman's approach to social norms (1958). To Kelman, the relationship between the individual and the social norm is configured by three processes: compliance, identification and internalization. We can surmise the reference groups of children protected by affirmative action policies (indigenous and *Quilombola*) press them to accept and identify with the norm of ethnic recognition. Nevertheless, they do not internalize this social norm and still try to change their phenotypes to become whiter. So their ethnic identification is still expressed in a superficial way, driven by material interests. But for the black children not protected by these policies, ethnic (dis)identification is stronger.

This scenario of ambivalent identities is typical of the modern era. On the one hand, the force of public policy is felt on identity affirmation, and on the other hand, the pressures of the racist world in which we live impose a hierarchical logic of difference and black inferiority. Children are aware of the negative perception of blacks in society, and the "escape route" chosen by some of them seems to be to choose a label that is closer to white, a phenomenon that was particularly apparent in the children from Aracaju. This pattern of results could be interpreted in accordance with the ideas laid out by Katz (1987) and Aboud (1988) about the impact of racism on ethnic identity.

However, there is not a complete separation between the black children belonging to the two groups in terms of the impact of racist stigmatization on their ethnic identification. The results show that the whitening ideology exerts a powerful force on all of the children in the study. Our results reflect the permanent ideological collision between the "world of the group" and the "outside world".

We conclude by affirming the positive impact of public policy on the construction of ethnic group identity, at least in heightening the awareness of belonging to an ethnic group, even if there is no desire to remain a member of that group. This fact is important because, on the one hand, it prevents identity abandonment in the guise of a desire to become white and, on the other hand, it allows opportunities for social cohesion to be constructed around group projects that produce social pressures aimed at redefining the social spaces occupied by groups within the power structure.

However, the initial impact of the affirmative action policies is not capable of combating racism and forming positive perceptions of ethnic minorities on its own. Two other strategies are necessary: one is more internal aiming to reduce group racism in itself; the other, which is more external, aims to enhance the political and economic power of minority groups in order to produce more positive social representations of groups and change the symbolic and material world of group relations. Future research investigating identity valorization strategies in this group of children could be highly illuminating.

Our research has limitations. The first is that the black children protected by affirmative action programmes live in a rural area, while the unprotected blacks live in an urban area. However, in terms of their economic status, age

and schooling, the two groups are very similar. Moreover, *Quilombola* children experience urban cultural contexts every weekend, when their families go to the city to shop and sell their produce. A second limitation concerns the use of different stimulus materials in the studies. Study 2 used the category "mulatto" while "indigenous" was adopted in study 1. We believe that this had little impact on the comparability of the data. The categories of membership (similarity) and contrast were preserved. Finally, study 2 took place four months after the first. Again, we do not think that this is a problem for comparison because race relations in Brazil are fairly stable and there were no "new racial facts" during the period. One important positive aspect of this study is that the question was studied in a natural and real setting without manipulation of any kind.

There are many important reasons to implement affirmative action programmes and, of course, they incur many costs (Crosby, Iyer, and Sincharoen, 2006). Our data demonstrate the critical importance of ensuring that members of historically excluded minorities in Brazil realise who they are as a group. These data demonstrate that affirmative action policies help to shape and strengthen the identities of ethnic minorities in Brazil

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